

Bibliometric Analysis of Dental Tourism: A Global Perspective

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Abstract

Dental tourism, or traveling abroad for dental treatment, has gained popularity in recent years due to its cost-effectiveness, availability of advanced comprehensive dental procedures, and accessibility to dental care. This scientific paper is to provide a bibliometric analysis of dental tourism research and highlight the extension, development, and trends in the field. The study uses bibliometric techniques to analyze scientific publications related to dental tourism, published between 2010 to 2021, using the PubMed database. The analysis provides an overview of the publication output, authorship patterns, international collaborations, citation analysis, and research themes. The study found that dental tourism has become an increasingly popular research topic, with a steady increase in the number of publications over the past two decades. The USA and the UK are the leading countries in terms of publication output and citation impact, with a growing number of studies from emerging economies such as India, Turkey, and Thailand. The study also identified key research themes in the field, including patient motivations, quality of care, ethical considerations, and economic implications. The study concludes by discussing the implications of the findings for policymakers, practitioners, and future research.

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Introduction

Dental tourism: Act of traveling to another country for the purpose of obtaining dental treatment (American Dental Association-2008). Dental tourism, the practice of traveling abroad for dental treatment, has gained significant attention over the past decade due to its potential economic and medical benefits. Patients from the developed world, USA, Canada, and the UK travel to developing countries such as Thailand, India, and Mexico to receive cost-effective oral health care. This trend has led to a progression in the dental tourism industry, with an estimated 3-4 million patients traveling for dental treatment each year¹.

High-cost dental care publicized as a potential solution in manifolds concerns about the quality of care, patient safety, and ethical considerations, tourism protocol. As a result, researchers from different disciplines have conducted numerous studies to understand the phenomenon and its implications.

Bibliometric analysis, a quantitative method to critically explore the existing literature including

advantages, limitations, barriers and lacunae in specific research field. Comprising valuable insights into the growth, development, and trends of dental tourism research. This method allows for the analysis of publication output, authorship patterns, citation impact, and research themes².

Bibliometric is the tool to measure scientific activity of published scientific research literature (i.e. articles, books, conference proceedings) considering output volume, science quality, interdisciplinary network) (eg. output volume, science quality, interdisciplinary network)³.

Current bibliometric profiling of dental tourism is to comprehend various constraints evident in published literature. In view of the publication, output, authorship patterns, citation impact, and research themes of dental tourism research. Insights of dental tourism research's growth, development, and trends and its implications for policymakers, practitioners, and future research.

The worldwide dental market has augmented at the CGAR of 5% over the previous five years with the Asian

markets having the highest growth of 10% followed by the US at almost half the rate of 5.5%. Market trends show that India is all set to become the single largest nation for dental products and supplies. With over 5000 dental laboratories and over 297 dental institutes. As of 2017, the entire market size of the Indian Dental market was calculated to be about \$ 2 billion USD and is predicted to expand at CGAR of 6.97% over the span of 2016-21⁴.

As of March 2019, independent studies reveal that the dental industry in India is likely to develop at an unprecedented rate of 20-30% Y-O-Y (year on year,) with investment firms establishing multispecialty facilities offering general dentistry and specialty services. Simply assessing the size of the possible market is enough to offer us the magnitude of potential⁵. As indicated by the Market Data Forecast research, the worldwide dental tourism market is predicted to develop at a compound annual growth rate of 12.22% from 2022 to 2027⁶.

As a consequence, the market size is predicted to expand to USD 5,967.63 million by 2027 of USD 3,353.13 million by 2022. Additionally, the same report already said, the dental tourism market has been categorized into preventive curative and rehabilitative oral health care⁷.

In 2021, prosthodontic treatment accounted for more than 30% and is predicted to expand with a CAGR of 13.2% from 2018-2025. Apart from the low dental insurance coverage, cost of the dental treatments is also extremely high first world countries. For instance, a patient requiring root canal treatment might cost up to \$600 and a tooth crowning may cost around \$40000. However, some procedures cost around \$35-125 in developing nation⁸.

Approvals from various regional Government authorities, particularly in emerging nations such as Brazil, India, Malaysia, and Thailand, advent of driving the progression of the dental tourism evident. Dental tourists seek out comprehensive procedures ranging from veneers, crown and bridges, prosthesis, root canals to dental implants. Most of the oral health seeking is cost effective, with the additional benefit of gratification. India is culturally rich and attractive, with world-class beaches, mountains, hill stations, historical landmarks, forts, temples, and cathedrals to visit.

There are several health spas, relaxation institutes, and meditation centers. They give therapeutic therapy to the body, mind, and spirit, allowing travelers to rest, regenerate, and refresh themselves together with inexpensive dental procedures. Yoga with holistic health benefits reduces stress a common risk factor of

Non-communicable diseases including oral health, aids in post-surgical recovery and prognosis.

Oral health practitioners emphasize the augmentation and effectiveness of adjuvant therapies to current practice guidelines. It has been revealed the developing demand for esthetic dentistry tooth bleaching, veneers of teeth, reshaping dental cosmetics due to awareness more cognizant about the appearance⁹. Elevating opportunity, several international corporations began invest in emerging arenas of dental manufacturing and developing amenities.

Experienced health practitioners, good English speaking medical staff and trained esoteric staff, combination of allopathic with alternative systems of medicine, availability of super specialty centers, advanced diagnostic equipment and the availability of these premium services at comfortable cost-effective destination locations¹⁰. As far as dentistry is concerned, most of the local dentists are reluctant to handle foreign patients considering issues linked with treatment offered by dentists in another country and different dental operations to be performed within a short period of time. Simultaneously overseas travelers quest for health care companies authorized by agencies jointly working for a collaborative health care source.

Rising expenses of healthcare and dental procedures in opulent nations is prompting people to explore dental tourism in cost effective means. Additionally on comparing cost, availability and affordability of oral health care seeking evolving world such as India, Thailand and China is substantially lower. This indicate an increase in dental tourism demand in developed nations¹¹. The procedure of securing a medical visa for such therapies is substantially quicker and easier, hence enhancing the flow of patients into foreign nations for treatment.

“Rising adoption of technologically sophisticated medical equipment in emerging economies, along with higher government supported investments in the development of the healthcare infrastructure in these nations is projected to enhance the market in the subsequent years.

Promotional strategies such as the construction of internet campaigns promoting cost-effective services supplied by health institutions are aiding to the growth in the development manufacturing and business¹². Delivery of undivided attention in terms of care, as well as supply of suitable consumer's interest for taking up on appealing medical tourism packages, determining treatment choices as well as leisure possibilities. This necessitates the bibliometric analysis is to identify the most influential authors, journals, and articles to determine the research

trends and the most popular research topics in dental tourism. To examine the geographical distribution of research in dental tourism and identify the countries that are contributing the most to the field. Scrutinize the citation patterns and identify the most cited articles to combat lacunae in research, barriers and limitations to overcome that need further investigation in the field of dental tourism.

Methodology

The study uses bibliometric techniques to analyze scientific publications related to dental tourism, published between 2010 and 2021, using PubMed database. The search terms used for the study were "dental tourism" and "medical tourism and dentistry." The search was limited to peer-reviewed articles published in English. The search yielded a total of 139 publications, which were analyzed using biblioshiny software and Vos viewer v 1.6.19

Eligibility Criteria:

The articles which were published in English, dated from the year 2010 to 2021 were included in this review. The search terms for articles were Dental tourism; dental and tourism either in the title or abstract. Full text original

research articles were considered. Unpublished articles in press and personal communications were excluded.

Inclusion Criteria:

Original research articles.

Exclusion Criteria:

Review articles, case series, case reports and letters to the editor and articles for which only abstract was readable were excluded from the article.

Search Method for Identification of Studies:

For the identification of the studies included in this review, we devised the search strategy for each database. The search strategy used a combination of controlled vocabulary and free text terms.

Results

Descriptive bibliometric analysis –

[Table 1](#) shows the essential extracted information of 113 articles published between 2010 and January 2020 from the PUBMED database. Those articles have been published in 90 sources consisting mainly in scientific journals. The number of keywords used is nine times higher than the number of relevant items.

Table 1 - Descriptive Bibliometric Analysis

Description	Results
MAIN INFORMATION ABOUT DATA	
Timespan	2010:2023
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	90
Documents	112
Annual Growth Rate %	-6.81
Document Average Age	6.36
Average citations per doc	0
References	1
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	496
Author's Keywords (DE)	496
AUTHORS	
Authors	626
Authors of single-authored docs	16
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	17
Co-Authors per Doc	6.44
International co-authorships %	23.21

DOCUMENT TYPES	
case reports	1
case reports;journal article	5
clinical study;journal article	1
clinical trial;journal article	1
comment;journal article	1
comment;letter	3
editorial	1
editorial;english abstract	1
english abstract;journal article	1
historical article;journal article;research support, non-u.s. gov't	1
interview	1
journal article	56
journal article;research support, n.i.h., extramural	2
journal article;research support, n.i.h., extramural;research support, non-u.s. gov't	1
journal article;research support, non-u.s. gov't	17
journal article;research support, non-u.s. gov't;research support, u.s. gov't, non-p.h.s.	8
journal article;research support, u.s. gov't, non-p.h.s.	2
journal article;review	6
letter	2
review;book	1

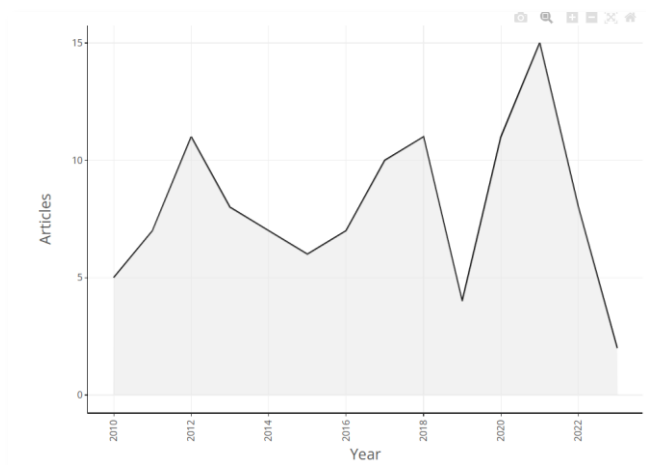


Figure 1. Annual Scientific Production

[Figure 1](#) represents the annual scientific report which shows 2021. It can be seen from the table that there was declined in publication in 2019 due to unprecedented

covid 19 situation which is now increasing as the dental tourism trends are again increasing with time.

The analysis of research themes identified four main themes in the literature related to dental tourism: patient motivations, quality of care, ethical considerations, and economic implications.

Patient motivations include factors such as cost, access to advanced dental procedures, and perceived quality of care. Quality of care is an important concern for patients considering dental tourism, as it relates to the safety and effectiveness of treatment. Ethical considerations relate to issues such as informed consent, transparency, and accountability in dental tourism. Economic implications include the impact of dental tourism on the local dental industry and the potential for economic growth and development.

Author’s keywords

This section provides information between the keyword’s “Dental tourism”. Researchers insert multiple keywords into the articles. This analysis is essential to determine the research trend, identify any gaps in “Dental tourism” and identify the fields that can be interesting as research areas. [Figure 3](#) shows the Word cloud map show that humans is the maximum used keyword followed by medical tourism. Least used keywords are state dentistry / economics suggestive of more research to be done on these fields.

It is interesting to notice that the countries with a major number of publications on “Dental Tourism” are the one with higher partnership rates meaning that they have shared information and helped each other to find scientific relevant results. USA, Australia, and Belgium are the countries that were found to have the most significant networking rates with other countries which are sometimes very far away from each other and which were shown to be conditioned by policies and practices related to healthcare mobility.



Figure 2. word cloud map

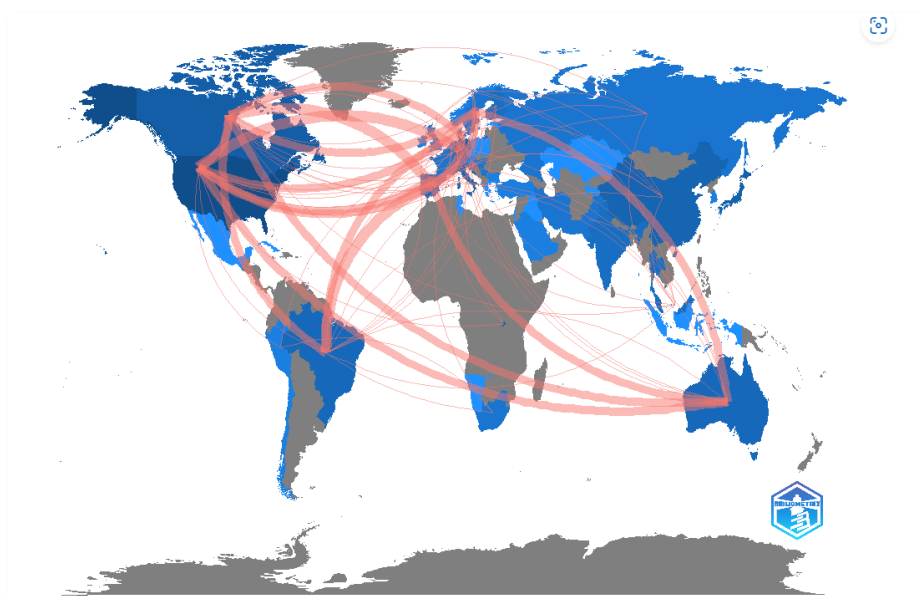


Figure 3- shows the cooperation path in the world: the blue color on the map represents the existence of research networks with other nations.

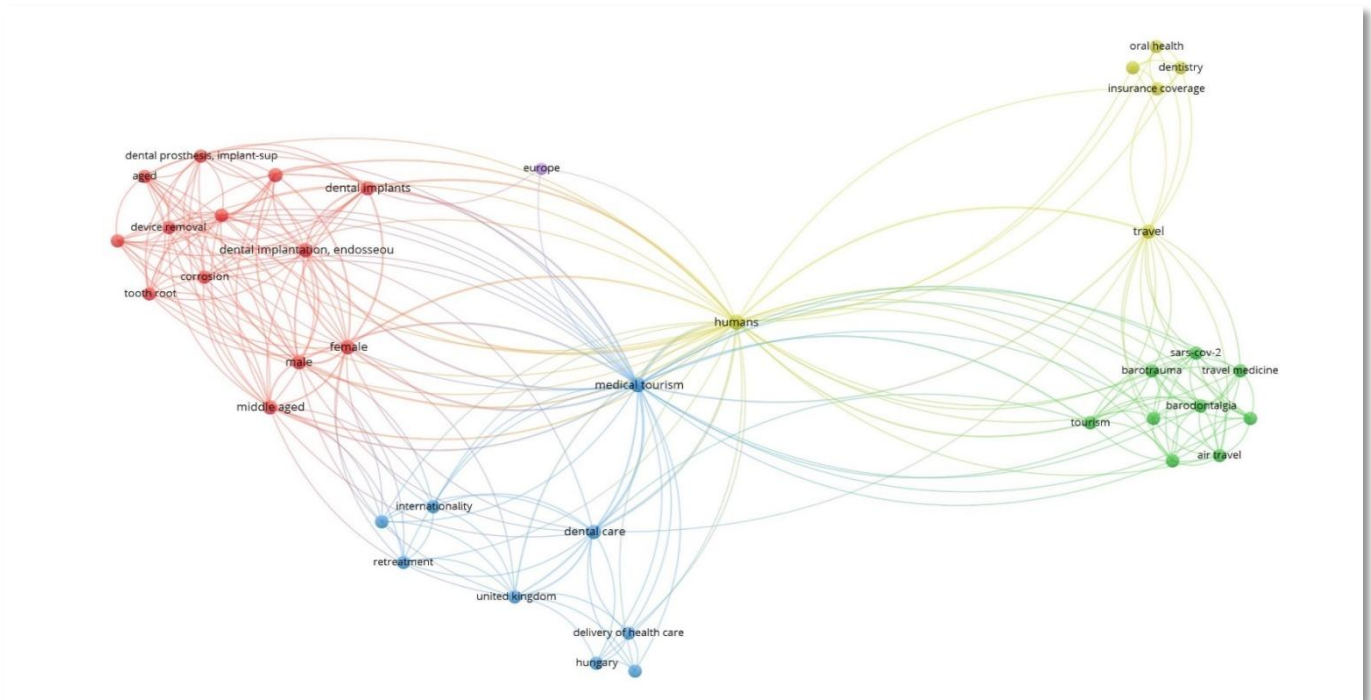


Figure 4- bibliometric analysis using Vos viewer v 1.6.19

The analysis of the publication output shows 38 keywords, which were grouped into 5 clusters in which Cluster 1 include Dental implant; dental prosthesis; Denture Cluster 2 include travel medicine, travel, Covid. Cluster 3 include Delivery of Health Care, quality of healthcare, cluster 4 Include dental insurance Coverage & travel. Cluster 5 showed dental tourism in European world.

The analysis of the publication output shows a steady increase in the number of publications related to dental tourism over the past two decades. The USA and the UK were the leading countries in terms of publication output, followed by Thailand, India, and Turkey. The analysis of authorship patterns showed that dental tourism research is primarily conducted by multidisciplinary teams, with dentists, medical professionals, and social scientists collaborating on research projects. The analysis of international collaborations revealed a high degree of collaboration among researchers from different countries.

Discussion

Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative research method that involves the use of bibliographic databases to analyze the publication patterns and trends of a particular field. In the context of dental tourism, bibliometric analysis can provide insights into the research output, publication patterns, and trends in this field.

Dental tourism, also known as dental travel or dental vacation, involves traveling to a foreign country for dental

treatment. This practice has gained popularity in recent years due to the lower cost of dental care in some countries, coupled with the opportunity to combine dental treatment with a vacation. As a result, there has been an increase in research interest in dental tourism.

Bibliometric analysis of dental tourism can provide insights into the research output in this field. By analyzing bibliographic databases such as Scopus or Web of Science, PubMed researchers can identify the most productive authors, institutions, and countries in this field. They can also identify the most cited articles and journals, which can provide insights into the most influential research in this area.

One study that conducted a bibliometric analysis of dental tourism was published in the *Journal of Travel Medicine* in 2017. The study analyzed articles published between 2000 and 2016 in the Scopus database. The results showed that the number of publications on dental tourism had increased steadily over the years, with the majority of articles published in dental and medical journals. The study also found that the most productive countries in terms of research output were India, Turkey, and Thailand.

Another study published in the *Journal of Oral Rehabilitation* in 2019 analyzed the publication patterns and research trends in dental tourism. The study analyzed articles published between 2000 and 2018 in the Web of Science database. The results showed that the number of publications on dental tourism had increased over time,

with a significant increase in the number of articles published in the last five years. The study also identified the most cited articles and journals in this field, which provided insights into the most influential research in dental tourism.

Bibliometric analysis of dental tourism can provide valuable insights into the research output, publication patterns, and trends in this field. This information can be used to identify research gaps, prioritize research areas, and inform policy decisions related to dental tourism. As dental tourism continues to gain popularity, bibliometric analysis can provide a useful tool for monitoring research trends and identifying areas for further research.

Current bibliometric analysis determines the trends of dental tourism in terms of journals, country mapping, research origins, citation and all vital metrics determining inside the umbrella terms of comprehensive dental care and tourism.

There are relatively scarce literature relating dental tourism with promising factors for successful accomplishment. Above all feeble research and fewer grey literature where prospective futuristic aim is anticipated. Oral health associated dental treatments are acknowledged to be most expensive to be met. Primary, secondary and tertiary care among first world countries is high incredulous with amalgamation of public health services availability. Among the third world countries where health care seeking is through both public as well as private system. The professionalism is limited the need and supply norms were unmet. Demand for health care is camouflaged due to resource explosion and thus leading to de-professionalization. Resulting main motive of cost control among third world countries. So, to reinforce the profession with new vistas and growth newer options to be promoted with better accessibility and affordability. Thus cumulating dental tourism as the comprehensive term including multidisciplinary approach and fostering entrepreneurship which can be extremely cost beneficial for public health care, professional health care delivery and the private practitioners as well.

Wide lacunae in this field of health care delivery system, the research in this field too is in infancy globally and inclusive lesser evidence based health care planning is implemented and incorporated in India. This wide gap need to be chockfull to integrate need, demand and professional proficiency. Which need back up from multiple domains of health and tourism department, entrepreneurship is also a futuristic feature for growth of private practitioners in these domains. Linkages with other health care systems, policy makers and government to take action for executing policies.

There should be standardization protocols and guidelines with suitable, affordable process to give health care a more creative and conducive innovative model in the health care sector. There is little in literature on this issue, there undiscovered themes or gaps in dental tourism can be found by metrics untouched and less focused in the evidence based hierarchy on health care delivery and seeking mechanism. Hence through bibliometric analysis we may enlighten the cluster wise research augmentation in various parameters relating to dental tourism to fill the gap for reshaping the newer health care avenues.

On retrieval of published literature the spectrum quantitative quotient collection through content analysis on 139 publications on Dental tourism using PubMed database from the year 2010 to 2021 is extracted. The annual publications though slow and gradual increments on Dental tourism showing increasing trends from the year 2010 to 2018, then there was steep decline from 2019 to 2020 due to unprecedented covid 19 situations due to restriction along the borders and protocols on travel with health facilities uncovered with many global and local do's and don'ts, which further recovered and sudden spike in health infrastructure and travel renounced with research, maximum of 15 documented articles recovered in the year 2021. The trend of publications declined from 2018 to 2020. The analysis of author keywords show that "delivery of health care", "dental implant and prosthesis", "covid", were emerging key terms in the publications, which can be used as a guideline for future research as well. British Dental Journal, the most impactful journal in the field of dental tourism. Through the analysis of research themes of top-cited documents, the top six major factors were found to be marketing, economic & political, social & cultural, ethical, technological & governmental. The core subject matter of the literature and these six themes are concerned with factors that affect the decision making process of the patients in choosing their destination; of which emotional factors as described in discussion section are relatively under-studied. Future studies might assess Dental tourism through above-mentioned factors in this field of study.

Some places may be simultaneously acting as countries of origin and destination in the medical tourism marketplace. High-income countries may service overseas elites whilst at the same time their citizens choose to travel as medical tourists to Lower and Middle Income Countries for treatments. Conversely, the emergence of lower cost treatments in Thailand, India or parts of Eastern Europe will attract individuals from higher income countries who pursue treatments on the basis of cost.

The main reason for expanding dental tourism is the reduced cost of the treatment in the developing countries dentals. Dental tourism has become more popular with the expansion of the European Union. This allowed for greater mobility, both for the qualified dentists and for the patients who can treat their dental problems in another country where they find the best treatment plan.

Kamath et al. (2005) explain the function of dental tourism in India, whereby tourist collect information about dental tourism on the internet, in magazines or through other agencies. Thus they can choose from different kind of dentists and clinics, and 20 after that, the patient only has to contact the travel agency that organizes everything else; accommodation, passport or visa, plane tickets and the travel itinerary. When the patient arrives at the destination, the dentist provides the tourists with the surgery or dental care and the travel agency manages the rest of the itinerary.

However, according to **Kamath et al. (2015)** the simplest and cheapest way to do dental tourism is when the patient contacts the clinic in the selected country directly and does not involve a travel agency, therefore the tourist do not need to pay commission fees. In addition, in India most of the clinics have connections with certain hotels if the patient asks for recommendations for accommodation (Kamath et al., 2015).

The research from **Kovacs and Szocska (2006)** has shown that according to dentists, after lower cost (83.5%), good quality (35%), the combination of dental care and vacation (27.4%), and avoiding waiting lists (27%) play an important role in the decision-making process of the destination.

Österle, Balázs, and Delgado (2009) explain that dental tourism differs from other types of medical tourism because dental care is less emergency-dominated. This contradicts Kamath et al.'s (2015) findings because according to the patients who travel abroad for dental care, but the chosen destination has no touristic value and the citizen only chooses that destination because of the most convenient offer, they cannot be considered as dental tourists.

Enache, Manuela-Rozalia, and Morozan (2013) conducted a research on dental tourism in Romania, where they stated that from 2010 dental tourism grew rapidly. Dental tourism in Romania started to grow in 1997, when private clinics started to develop, and their services were comparable with international ones. Romanian dentists' good communication skills in English served as a major advantage. Besides that, Romania is a popular destination because of the relatively short treatment period, the clinics' top medical technological equipment and the incorporation of innovations. As for

the treatments: in Romania, dental tourists received mainly dental implants, facets, crowns, whitening, etc. (Enache et al., 2013).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this bibliometric analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the growth, development, and trends in dental tourism research. The findings have important implications for policy makers, practitioners, and future research in this field. Policy makers should take into account the global impact of dental tourism and work towards creating a coordinated international response. Practitioners should be aware of the ethical and quality of care issues related to dental tourism and work towards providing safe and effective treatment. Future research should focus on addressing the gaps in the literature and exploring new avenues for research in this dynamic field.

There is necessity to encourage dental tourism in India as it will increase the country's health finances. Due to unprecedented covid situations dental tourism has declined in the past few years, therefore there is need to do further research on the topic in terms of multidisciplinary collaboration of multi sector and Corporate Entrepreneurship setups.

Recommendations

Dental tourism being a rapidly expanding field, there should be a guiding approach to manage proper dental treatment combined with the holidays. A tour itinerary should be established before visit so that the patient may enjoy the vacations combined with the dental care.

There should be authentic source which should include all the details along with the contact and address. Along with these medical facilities should also be supplied to treat emergencies. The answer should be within 24 hours with critical information, including different pricing estimates for the dental treatment. Most of the treatments should be executed on the same day, still there is need to develop a schedule and strategy for your oral health treatment.

It is for the patient to decide on the therapy they choose to take from the choices best offered. They may also select preliminary dates and can opt in advance for planning their surgical guidance. If necessity arises, scheduling for a telephone consultation with the chosen surgeon at a mutually convenient time should also be made. Before coming there should be a comprehensive strategy to arrive and leave according to their treatment plan. Thus, there is need to create contacts with local travel agents to give you aid in the voyage plan.

Aside from dental care charges, vacationers should be able to explore as India is a great nation with various landscapes and cultures. While you travel, India gives a broad assortment of tourist alternatives, including people, tribes, food, faiths, dance styles, music, arts, crafts, adventure, sport, spirituality, and history; even these varies from state to state. Hence, in addition to the therapy, a travel guide should be supplied so that the visitors may understand the richness of India.

It is recommended that there should be a single established office which should include consultation and treatment planning to understand dental need and develop a treatment plan along with travel agent to arrange travel and accommodations, including flights, transportation and lodging also there is a need to collaborate with dental surgeons who are performing the treatment with the follow up plans. There are different cases in dentistry performed with the use of AI. This technology is helpful for best coordination in the appointment of a patient with the dentist. It alerts the check-up before causing the dental diseases and any other types of allergies. It can be useful to a performed different case like a reminder to avoid smoking or tobacco to the patient. It seems useful for treatment planning and clinical diagnosis and also helpful to manage insurance and paperwork. AI has a high capability to predict and control infection and save the extra step of the dentist. It helps to make proper dental implants and fixed denture prosthetics. By using this technique, doctors and staff achieve more efficiency and effectiveness. Artificial intelligence is rapidly advancing which is being incorporated in every field, with advances in dentistry this can very useful in future even in the field if dental tourism as it can be useful to reduce the time and can prevent unnecessary recalls for minor detailing .AI can help to take a virtual tour of the whole procedure even it can be useful for proper knowledge of the treatment being performed.

Review Highlights

What Is Already Known?

Dental tourism is a practice where individuals travel to another country to receive dental treatment at a lower cost or to access high-quality dental care. It has gained popularity due to the potential cost savings and the availability of a wide range of treatments. Dental tourism destinations often have well-trained dentists and modern facilities equipped with advanced technologies. Patients can combine their dental appointments with travel and tourism experiences, exploring a new country while receiving dental care.

What Does This Study Add?

This article emphasizes on the lacunae in the field of dental tourism, there are certain topics that are still to be researched in this field. it is important to research and plan carefully, considering factors such as the reputation of dental clinics, communication, and potential risks. Keeping up-to-date with the latest information and seeking professional advice are essential for making informed decisions about dental tourism.

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Conflict of interest

None

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