



Rosen Research Focus | Suja Chaulagain, Nan Hua & Youcheng Wang

# DECODING PATIENT DECISIONS

## The impact of perceived value on medical hotel stays

*UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management's academic luminaries, including Assistant Professor Suja Chaulagain, Professor Nan Hua, and Professor Youcheng Wang, probe the decision-making facets influencing stays at medical hotels. Their incisive research decodes how perceived benefits like convenience, along with perceived risks and overall perceived value, shape the modern patient's choices in the evolving healthcare landscape.*

In an era where health tourism is becoming increasingly mainstream, a pioneering study by Assistant Professor Suja Chaulagain, Professors Nan Hua and Youcheng Wang, and Dr. Melissa Farboudi Jahromi offers groundbreaking insights into the burgeoning concept of medical hotels. Their research ventures into the intricate dynamics influencing patients' decisions to opt for medical hotels—a hybrid hospitality service that caters to the health and comfort needs of medical patients.

Building upon a comprehensive analysis of customer value and its pivotal role in shaping consumer choices, the study meticulously examines the multifaceted factors that compel individuals to choose medical hotels over traditional healthcare facilities or standard hotels. It delves into the core elements of perceived value, including the quality of medical care, the level of comfort and hospitality, accessibility to medical services, and the overall cost-benefit analysis from the perspective of patients. By

exploring these dimensions, the research illuminates how medical hotels have evolved to offer a unique amalgamation of healthcare and hospitality, providing a serene and recuperative environment that significantly enhances patient satisfaction and intent to stay. This novel insight into consumer behavior within the niche market of health tourism underscores the growing importance of integrating patient care with hospitality services to meet the evolving demands of health-conscious travelers.

### THE NEXUS OF HEALTHCARE AND HOSPITALITY

The intersection of healthcare and hospitality within medical hotels is not only a response to evolving patient demands but also a testament to the shifting paradigms in the healthcare industry. As the emphasis on patient-centric care intensifies, these establishments provide a sanctuary where



space that transcends the clinical atmosphere of traditional hospitals. The research delves deeper into the psychological and emotional benefits of such an environment, positing that the blend of these two domains could lead to better health outcomes and elevated patient morale.

### UNPACKING THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The research team proposed a theoretical framework focusing on three primary areas: perceived benefits, perceived risks, and perceived value. Perceived benefits, such as the convenience of being in a homelike environment and the potential savings compared to prolonged hospital stays, were hypothesized to bolster the perceived

multiple variables, the team analyzed responses from 351 patients who had recently stayed in a hospital overnight. Their findings painted a clear picture: convenience and potential savings were significant draws, enhancing the perceived value of medical hotels. Conversely, performance risk and psychological risk were deterrents, potentially overshadowing the perceived benefits.

### THE POSITIVE LOOP OF VALUE AND INTENTION

A key discovery from the study was the positive correlation between the perceived value of medical hotels and the intention of patients to choose these facilities for future medical needs. This relationship underscores the importance of perceived value in the

## THE RESEARCH ILLUMINATES HOW MEDICAL HOTELS HAVE EVOLVED TO OFFER A UNIQUE AMALGAMATION OF HEALTHCARE AND HOSPITALITY.



Integrating patient care with hospitality services is of growing importance.

decision-making process of healthcare consumers, which can be a deciding factor in the growth of the medical hotel industry. The concept of perceived value extends beyond just the financial aspect; it encompasses the emotional comfort, privacy, personalization of services, and the seamless integration of high-quality medical care with exceptional hospitality services. This perceived value becomes a powerful metric that could predict and drive the success of the medical hotel industry. It suggests that when patients feel that their individual needs are met with dignity and their stay is coupled with the assurance of professional healthcare, their intention to return or recommend the facility to others increases. The research thereby pinpoints perceived value as a key lever for medical hotels, proposing that by enhancing value through strategic services and empathetic care, medical hotels can foster a loyal customer base that sees these facilities not just as a service, but as a preferred choice for holistic healing and wellbeing.

### NAVIGATING LIMITATIONS AND LOOKING FORWARD

While the study marks a significant stride in understanding the healthcare hospitality sector, it acknowledges its limitations—namely, the reliance on patients' perceptions

medical efficiency meets the comfort of a tailored hotel experience. The study seeks to decode the intricacies of this choice, examining the allure of medical hotels in providing a semblance of normalcy and autonomy to patients undergoing treatment. The confluence of professional healthcare services with the luxuries and conveniences of a hotel setting emerges as a significant driver of patient preference, offering a recuperative

value of medical hotels. On the flip side, perceived risks—including concerns about the adequacy of medical care (performance risk) and psychological discomfort associated with medical treatments—might detract from their appeal.

Utilizing structural equation modeling (SEM), a sophisticated statistical technique that helps to understand the relationship between

The healthcare landscape is evolving.



rather than experiences. Not all respondents had previously stayed at a medical hotel, which means their perceptions could differ significantly from the actual experience.

The researchers advocate for future studies to delve deeper, considering other factors that might influence perceived value and behavioral intentions, such as personal traits and contextual variables. They call upon future scholars to broaden the scope of research to include these and other unexplored factors.

### **BRIDGING GAPS, BUILDING FUTURES**

This pivotal study illuminates critical pathways for synergy between the healthcare and hospitality sectors, especially within the burgeoning domain of medical tourism. The detailed insights offer a roadmap for medical hotel operators and healthcare providers to navigate the intricacies of the medical tourism market effectively. By delving into the nuances of customer value, the research underscores the importance of balancing perceived risks against benefits. This balance is not merely a business consideration; it is a cornerstone for cultivating trust and satisfaction among patients who travel for medical care.

For operators in the medical hotel industry, these findings are more than empirical data; they represent a clarion call to fine-tune services and offerings to align with patient expectations and needs. The strategic mitigation of risks—be it concerns about

clinical outcomes, privacy, or service quality—paired with the amplification of benefits such as convenience, comfort, and comprehensive care, could be decisive factors in a patient's decision to choose a medical hotel.

Moreover, the implications of this research ripple out to inform policy-making and strategic planning. Policymakers and industry leaders are provided with evidence-based insights that can guide the development of health tourism policies. These policies, if sculpted with a keen understanding of patient psychology and the determinants of customer value, can bolster the competitiveness of a region as a medical tourism destination.

## *THE RESEARCH TEAM PROPOSED A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOCUSING ON THREE PRIMARY AREAS: PERCEIVED BENEFITS, PERCEIVED RISKS, AND PERCEIVED VALUE.*

Strategically, this could lead to an infusion of innovative designs in healthcare service delivery that prioritize patient wellbeing and satisfaction. The concept of 'empathetic and patient-centered care' emerges as a central theme, advocating for services that extend beyond clinical excellence to include emotional support and holistic care. In essence, the study advocates for a future where health

tourism is not just about crossing borders for treatment but is an integrated, patient-centric experience that begins the moment a patient considers traveling for medical care.

By championing a customer value perspective, the research offers a lens through which medical hotels and healthcare providers can envision and enact a future where the health and comfort of patients are paramount. It's a future that hinges on bridging gaps between patient expectations and service delivery, and ultimately, on building robust, patient-focused futures in the realm of health tourism.

### **A STEP TOWARDS INFORMED DECISION-MAKING**

Assistant Professor Suja Chaulagain, Professor Nan Hua, Professor Youcheng Wang, and Dr. Melissa Farboudi Jahromi have laid down a foundational piece of research that bridges the gap between theory and practice. Their work lights the way for medical hoteliers to craft experiences that resonate with patients' values, expectations, and needs.

As the healthcare landscape evolves, the harmonization of medical efficacy with the comfort of hospitality will likely become more pertinent. This study not only contributes a vital piece of knowledge to this emerging field but also spotlights the patient's voice in the narrative of healthcare innovation.

In conclusion, while medical hotels may still be in their infancy, the insights garnered from this study offer a promising glimpse into a future where health and hospitality converge to deliver care that is as comforting as it is curative. The work of Chaulagain, Hua, Wang, and Farboudi Jahromi marks not the end but the beginning of a journey towards comprehensively understanding and serving the modern patient's needs.

# RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Drs. Chaulagain, Hua, and Wang investigated patient choice dynamics for medical hotels, analyze customer value, and investigate decision-making processes for healthcare consumers.

## REFERENCES

Chaulagain, S., Jahromi, M.F., Hua, N., & Wang, Y. (2023). Understanding the determinants of intention to stay at medical hotels: A customer value perspective. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 112, 103464. [doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103464](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103464)

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## PERSONAL RESPONSE

### **How did your personal experiences or observations in the healthcare industry lead you to investigate the role of perceived risks and benefits in patient choices for medical hotels?**

// A hospital stay is often an unpleasant yet unavoidable experience for patients. However, during my tenure in the healthcare industry, I observed that integrating hospitality elements within healthcare environments can positively affect patient experience, reduce anxiety, and improve their comfort, ultimately enhancing their overall hospital stay experience. I also noted that the majority of patient complaints were related to the staff's hospitableness, the environment of the facility, and the amenities and food services, which can be proactively addressed by adopting hospitality principles. Thus, a concerted effort to blend hospitality with healthcare could lead to significant improvements in patient satisfaction and overall healthcare outcomes. Medical hotels are great examples of such initiatives which combine medical care with hospitality services in a hotel-like environment and present a great alternative to traditional hospital stays. Thus, we initiated this study to understand patients' perception of perceived benefits and risks of staying in medical hotels. Our findings indicate that prospective patients consider both the negative and positive aspects of medical hotels when deciding whether to utilize them. As such, both the healthcare and hospitality industries, including medical tourism destinations, should articulate the benefits such as cost savings, convenience, and hospitable features of these facilities, and take steps to mitigate patient anxiety and psychological discomfort as they pursue innovative projects that merge elements of both sectors to improve service quality and enhance patient satisfaction. //



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Dr. Suja Chaulagain is an Assistant Professor at Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida. Her research foci are the areas of the integration of hospitality and healthcare, elderly consumer behavior in the hospitality and healthcare industries, senior housing and relocation, and medical and wellness tourism.

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