

Dental Tourism: Exploring Foreign Patients' Motivation for Choosing Aligner Treatment in Indonesia

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Abstract

Technological advancements in orthodontics, particularly aligner treatment, have made teeth straightening more convenient, attracting individuals with active lifestyles. The rise of dental tourism has led foreign patients to seek aligner treatment in Indonesia due to cost savings, quality care, and the opportunity to combine treatment with travel. This study employs a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the push and pull factors influencing patient decisions, using in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis at a Bali dental clinic. Data were analyzed using NVivo 14, with verification techniques such as member checking, audit trails, and triangulation ensuring research validity. The word cloud analysis highlights key factors affecting foreign patients' choices, including location, service quality, affordability, and digital promotions. Hierarchy charts reveal that perceptions of service, pre-treatment knowledge, treatment costs, and push-pull factors from home countries significantly impact decision-making, with affordability and positive experiences playing major roles. The project map emphasizes social media, particularly TikTok, as an essential marketing tool, alongside personalized care, flexible scheduling, and lower costs that attract patients from Australia, the UK, and Germany. Respondents highlighted the clarity of information provided by clinics, though some suggested improving English-language communication for better patient experiences. Indonesia's combination of affordable pricing, high-quality service, and seamless patient experiences strengthens its position as a preferred destination for aligner treatment. As dental tourism continues to grow, optimizing marketing strategies and improving service quality will be crucial in maintaining Indonesia's competitive edge in the global market.

Keywords: Aligner Treatment, Dental Tourism, Marketing Strategies, Patient Decision-Making, Service Quality

Introduction

Technological advancements in dentistry continue to evolve, particularly in orthodontics, with the development of aligner treatment for teeth straightening. The advantages of dental aligners make them a more comfortable alternative to conventional braces. Aligners are removable during eating or brushing, allowing for better oral hygiene maintenance (Brown, 2022). Additionally, the use of aligners enables patients to carry out their daily activities without experiencing the pain or discomfort commonly associated with the initial stages of traditional braces. This technology is particularly suitable for individuals with active and professional

lifestyles, as it requires fewer dental visits while still delivering optimal results (Anderson & White, 2018). The popularity of aligners has increased alongside growing public awareness of dental health and the rising demand for aesthetic dental treatments (Hennessy & Al-Awadhi, 2020; Papadimitriou et al., 2018).

From a patient's perspective, the decision to choose aligner treatment often involves complex psychological and emotional factors. The orthodontic treatment experience is not solely about clinical outcomes but also how the treatment impacts confidence, comfort, and lifestyle. Foreign patients who opt for aligner treatment abroad have diverse motivations, ranging from seeking high-quality yet affordable dental care to expecting a more personalized and exclusive healthcare experience.

Globally, dental care including aligner treatment has become a sought-after service among medical tourists. Dental tourism is a rapidly growing sector of medical tourism in various countries, including Indonesia. This phenomenon occurs when individuals travel abroad for dental care that is more affordable, of high quality, or offers the opportunity to combine medical treatment with tourism activities (Harsono & Suryadi, 2016; Putri & Arifin, 2021). According to dentaldepartures.com (2018), Indonesia particularly Bali is among the top ten global dental tourism destinations, alongside other Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia. The majority of patients seeking these services come from Australia, the United States, Canada, and New Zealand.

Several studies on dental tourism have explored the primary motivations of travelers seeking dental care abroad. Jaffar et al. (2017) identified key driving factors, including the quality of dental healthcare, access to treatment information, and cost savings. Other studies suggest that Indonesia savings remain the dominant factor in medical travel decisions (Kovacs & Szocska, 2013; Panteli et al., 2015), as well as the perceived economic value gained (Musa et al., 2011). However, prior research has largely focused on general factors rather than distinguishing specific types of dental treatments sought by foreign patients. Therefore, this

study aims to bridge this gap by exploring in-depth the push and pull factors influencing foreign patients' decisions in choosing dental tourism in Indonesia, particularly for aligner treatment. A phenomenological approach is employed in this study to examine the subjective experiences of foreign patients in selecting aligner treatment in Indonesia. Phenomenology focuses on how individuals interpret their experiences, allowing researchers to explore social, emotional, and cultural factors influencing patient decisions beyond economic or technical considerations. Through this approach, the study seeks to provide deeper insights into patients' expectations, satisfaction, and challenges during their treatment journey, shaping their perception of the quality of aligner services offered.

Based on this background, Indonesia has the potential to become a leading dental tourism destination due to its lower treatment costs and competitive service quality compared to other Southeast Asian countries. To maximize this potential, targeted marketing strategies based on a comprehensive understanding of foreign tourists' needs and preferences are required. This study will be conducted through interviews with foreign patients who have chosen aligner treatment in Indonesia. This method aims to identify key indicators in assessing the effectiveness of marketing strategies. The qualitative approach enables researchers to gain deeper insights into service quality, including evaluations of dentists' skills, clinic facilities, and utilized technology. Additionally, treatment costs influencing foreign patients' decisions, patient satisfaction including comfort and the impact of treatment on self-confidence will be explored. Brand awareness and personalized service experiences will also be analyzed to determine the extent to which patients perceive added value from the services provided. Furthermore, the tourism experience in Indonesia will be examined to assess how medical treatment can be integrated with tourism activities to create added value. Findings from these interviews are expected to contribute to refining dental tourism marketing strategies in Indonesia.

This study is anticipated to provide new insights for dental service providers in Indonesia to better understand the preferences and needs of foreign tourists, thereby enabling

the development of more effective dental tourism marketing strategies. Additionally, tourism managers can design programs that integrate dental treatment with tourism experiences, offering added value for visitors. Moreover, the findings of this study hold significant implications for policymakers. The results can serve as a foundation for developing policies that support the growth of dental tourism in Indonesia, including enhancing healthcare service standards and providing training for medical professionals. This research not only contributes to theoretical discourse but also offers practical recommendations to strengthen Indonesia's position as a premier destination for dental tourism, particularly in aligner treatment.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach to explore the motivations of foreign patients in choosing aligner treatment in Indonesia. The research was conducted at a dental clinic in Bali, a major destination for medical tourists. Several key concepts defined in this study include dental tourism, aligner treatment, as well as push and pull factors influencing patients' decision-making processes. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted to understand patients' experiences and perceptions, while observations captured the dynamics of clinical interactions. Additionally, clinical reports and promotional materials were analyzed to strengthen the study's findings.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, with inclusion criteria such as foreign patients who had traveled to Indonesia for aligner treatment within the past two years and had sufficient experience with the treatment. The study excluded domestic patients, those who had not yet completed their treatment, and individuals unable to communicate in English. Variations in age, country of origin, and reasons for selecting Indonesia were considered to ensure data diversity. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive approach,

comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. NVivo 14 was utilized to manage data and assist in identifying patterns across interviews, observations, and documents.

To ensure the validity of the findings, multiple verification techniques were employed, including member checking, audit trails, and triangulation. Member checking allowed participants to review and confirm the researcher's interpretations, while audit trails ensured transparency throughout the research process. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from various methods (interviews, observations, and document analysis) and multiple sources (patients, dentists, and clinic staff) to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Through this approach, the study aims to provide deeper insights into the phenomenon of dental tourism and aligner treatment in Indonesia.

Results and Discussion



Figure 1. in the Word Cloud Frequency. Dental Tourism: Exploring the Motivation of Foreign Patients in Choosing Aligner Treatment in Indonesia

A word cloud analysis (Figure 1) highlights that terms like "Indonesia," "Bali," "clinic," "treatment," "aligner," and "cost" frequently appear in discussions about dental tourism, emphasizing the importance of location, service quality, and affordability in patient choices. Words such as "website," "marketing," "online," "experience," and "recommendations" further indicate the key role of digital promotions and accessible information in attracting international patients, particularly from New Zealand. Foreign patients often choose aligner treatments in Indonesia due to the overall positive experience, including affordability, patient satisfaction, and effective communication. Digital platforms like WhatsApp and Zoom enhance clarity and accessibility, while patient referrals strengthen Indonesia's reputation in the orthodontic market. However, language barriers remain a challenge, underscoring the need for English-speaking staff to improve communication and build trust. Moreover, as shown in the Hierarchy Chart Part 1, pre-treatment knowledge—gained from online research, reviews, TikTok videos, and personal recommendations—is the most influential factor in patients' decision-making.

1. Hierarchy Chart Part 2: Perception of Service Quality

Clarity and Sufficiency of Information on Aligner Treatment is the most frequently discussed aspect regarding the perception of service quality. Foreign patients generally appreciate the clear and accessible information provided by clinics in Indonesia, particularly through digital platforms like WhatsApp and Zoom, though some suggest improving communication by employing English-speaking staff. Additionally, while direct comparisons with home-country services are less frequently mentioned, many patients from Australia, Germany, and Singapore consider the quality of care in Indonesia to be comparable or even superior, with personalized attention being a key strength that enhances patient satisfaction.

2. Hierarchy Chart Part 3: Information Access and Treatment Costs

Cost factors play a crucial role in treatment decisions, especially within the Indonesian context, where affordable healthcare makes the country an attractive destination for international patients, particularly from the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Italy, who benefit from significantly lower costs. However, payment methods remain a challenge, especially for patients from countries with limited banking infrastructure, such as Timor-Leste. While patients from nations like Germany may not experience a significant cost advantage, they are drawn to the personalized care offered by Indonesian health centers, highlighting that service quality also influences treatment choices. To enhance Indonesia's position in medical tourism, it is essential to improve financial systems for international transactions and continue prioritizing personalized care to strengthen long-term patient relationships.

3. Hierarchy Chart Part 4: Push Factors from Home Countries

Challenges in Aligner Treatment in Home Countries serve as the primary push factors driving foreign patients to seek treatment in Indonesia. Key issues include high costs, limited services, and long waiting times, with patients from Timor-Leste highlighting the absence of aligner options and those from Australia, the UK, and Singapore expressing concerns over expensive and delayed dental care. Additionally, dissatisfaction with previous dental experiences, greater flexibility, and affordability in Indonesia further reinforce patients' decisions to seek aligner treatment abroad.

4. Hierarchy Chart Part 5: Pull Factors Attracting Patients to Indonesia

The most frequently mentioned benefits include flexible and comfortable treatment methods, relatively fast results (around six months), and significantly lower costs, particularly for patients from Australia, the UK, and Germany. Additionally, the convenience of scheduling treatment while vacationing in Bali enhances Indonesia's appeal by allowing patients to combine medical care with leisure activities. On the other hand, Clinic Facilities and Staff Hospitality are less frequently discussed topics. While not as prominent as cost and treatment quality, some patients note that Indonesian clinics are modern, clean, and well-equipped. Furthermore, the hospitality of the clinic staff receives positive feedback, with patients from Germany, the UK, Australia, and Singapore specifically appreciating the friendly and communicative service. This suggests that patient-centered care plays a crucial role in strengthening the positive perception of aligner treatment in Indonesia.

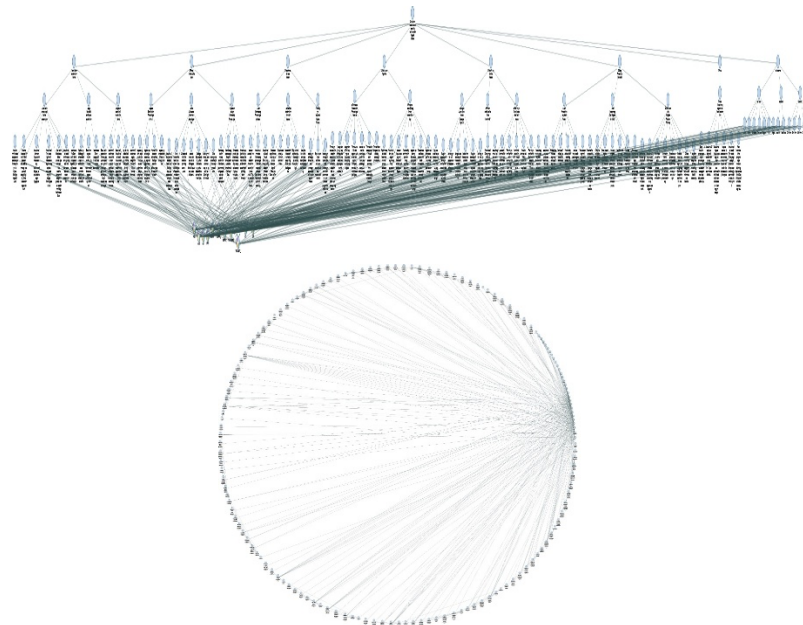
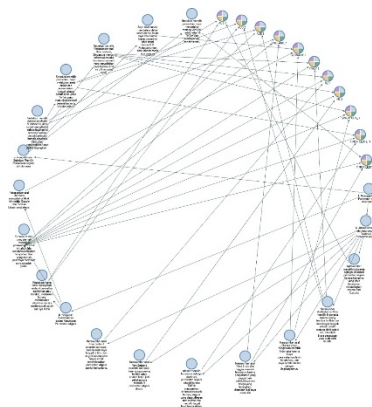
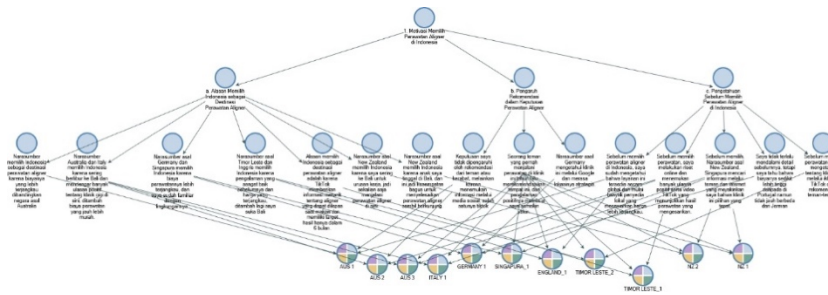


Figure 2: Project Map – Dental Tourism: Exploring the Motivation of Foreign Patients in Choosing Aligner Treatment in Indonesia

Indonesia is emerging as a top destination for dental tourism, particularly for aligner treatments, driven by three main factors: affordability, ease of access to information, and positive patient experiences. Platforms like TikTok play a pivotal role in drawing in international patients by highlighting the simplicity and quick results of aligners, often within six months. Patients from countries with high dental care costs, such as Australia, Germany, and New Zealand, are attracted by Indonesia's lower prices and often combine treatment with vacations or family visits. The combination of these factors, along with prior positive experiences at clinics, especially in Bali reinforces Indonesia's appeal in this growing market. Another key reason for this trend is the perception of high-quality dental services in Indonesia. Many international patients report that treatment quality is on par with, or even superior to, what they receive at home. They particularly appreciate the friendly staff, hygienic facilities, and clear, efficient communication via WhatsApp and Zoom. However, improving clinic staff's English communication skills remains an important area for development to better accommodate international clientele. If addressed, along with continued attention to service quality and patient guidance, Indonesia could further solidify its reputation as a leading destination for affordable and high-quality dental care.

Topic 1: Motivation for Choosing Aligner Treatment in Indonesia

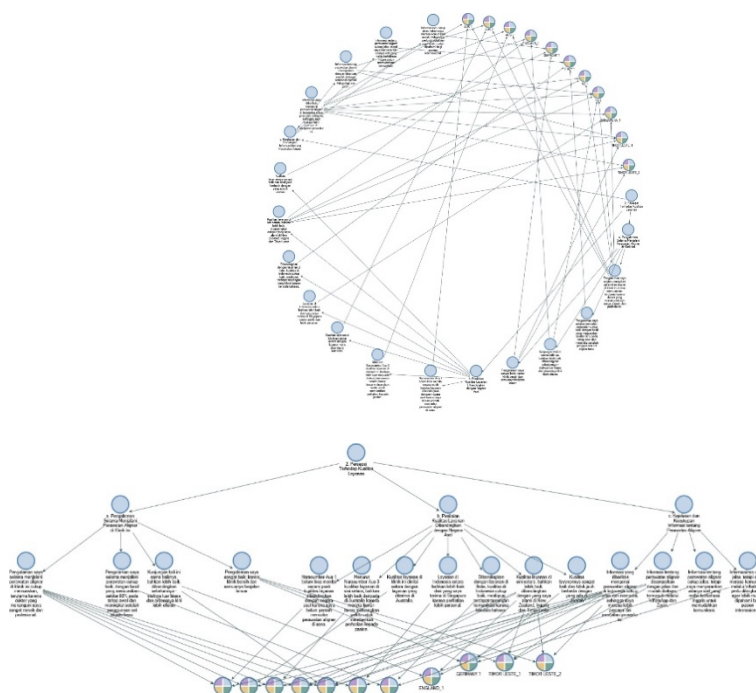




Project Map – Section 1:

The Project Map on "Motivation for Choosing Aligner Treatment in Indonesia" reveals that affordability is the main reason patients opt for treatment in the country. Social media, particularly TikTok, also plays a key role by effectively promoting aligner benefits such as ease of removal and a short six-month treatment period. This platform has become influential in attracting international patients through informative and engaging content. Additionally, factors like positive past experiences, friend recommendations, and proximity to Bali further influence patient choices. Respondents from countries like Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore cited these reasons for selecting Indonesia as their aligner treatment destination.

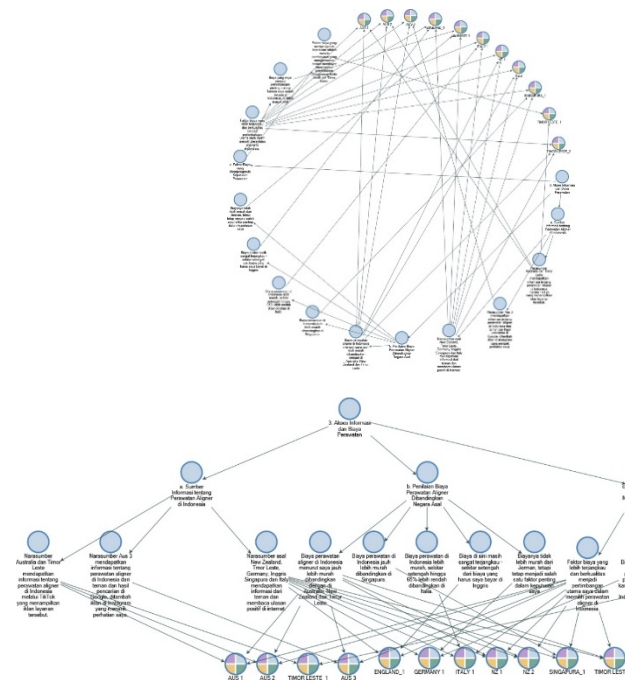
Topic 2: Perception of Service Quality



Project Map – Section 2:

The Project Map on "Perception of Service Quality" shows that aligner treatment in Indonesia is generally perceived as satisfactory. Some international patients, especially from Italy, New Zealand, and the UK, even rated the services equal to or better than those in their home countries. They appreciated the friendliness of the staff and the personalized care provided. However, there were concerns about communication, particularly the need for staff with better English skills. Although platforms like WhatsApp and Zoom provided sufficient information, their communication effectiveness still needs improvement.

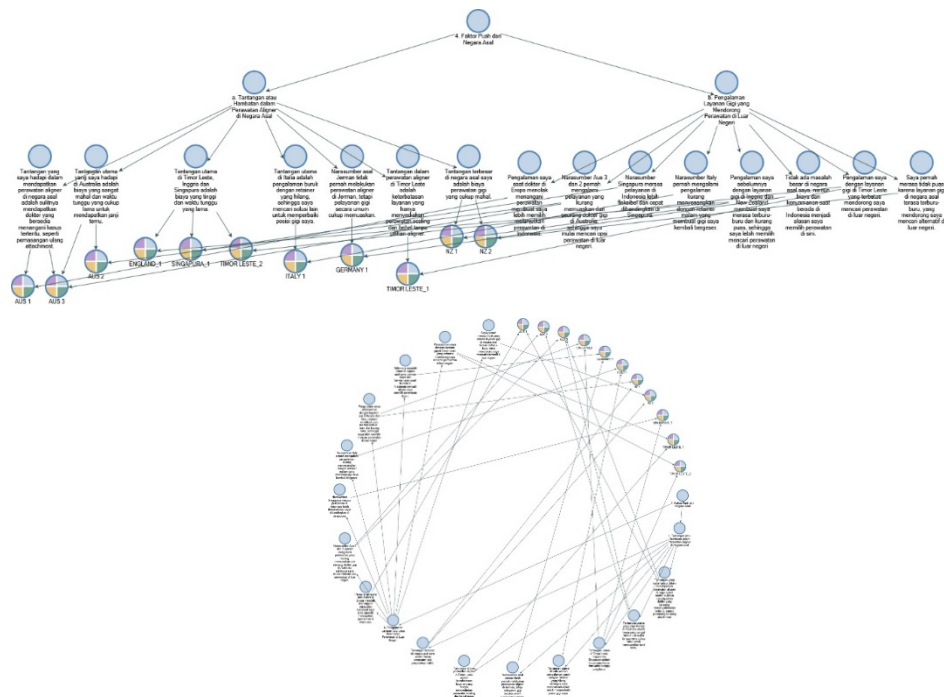
Topic 3: Access to Information and Treatment Costs



Project Map: Section 3

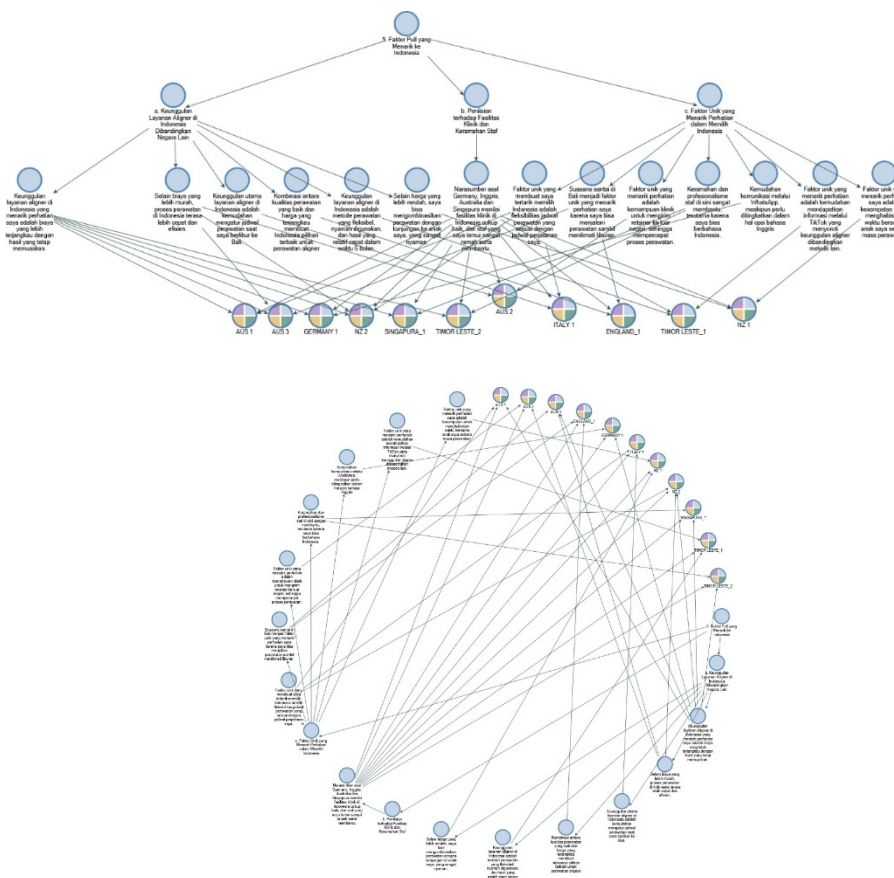
The project on "Access to Information and Treatment Costs" reveals that social media platforms like TikTok, Google, and Instagram play a key role in informing international patients about aligner treatment in Indonesia. Patients from countries such as New Zealand, Timor-Leste, Germany, and the UK often relied on peer recommendations and online reviews to make informed decisions. TikTok was especially influential, showcasing the ease and effectiveness of aligner use, which boosted patient confidence. Treatment in Indonesia was generally found

Topic 4: Push Factors from Home Countries



The Project Map on "Push Factors from Home Countries" reveals that various limitations in aligner treatment drove patients to seek care in Indonesia. Despite access to quality dental services, some, like a German respondent, had never received aligner treatment. Others, such as those from Timor-Leste, faced minimal options limited to scaling and braces. High costs, long waiting times, and technical difficulties were common challenges in countries like Australia, the UK, and Singapore. Additionally, dissatisfaction with rushed consultations and ineffective treatments pushed patients to seek more flexible, affordable, and efficient dental services in Indonesia.

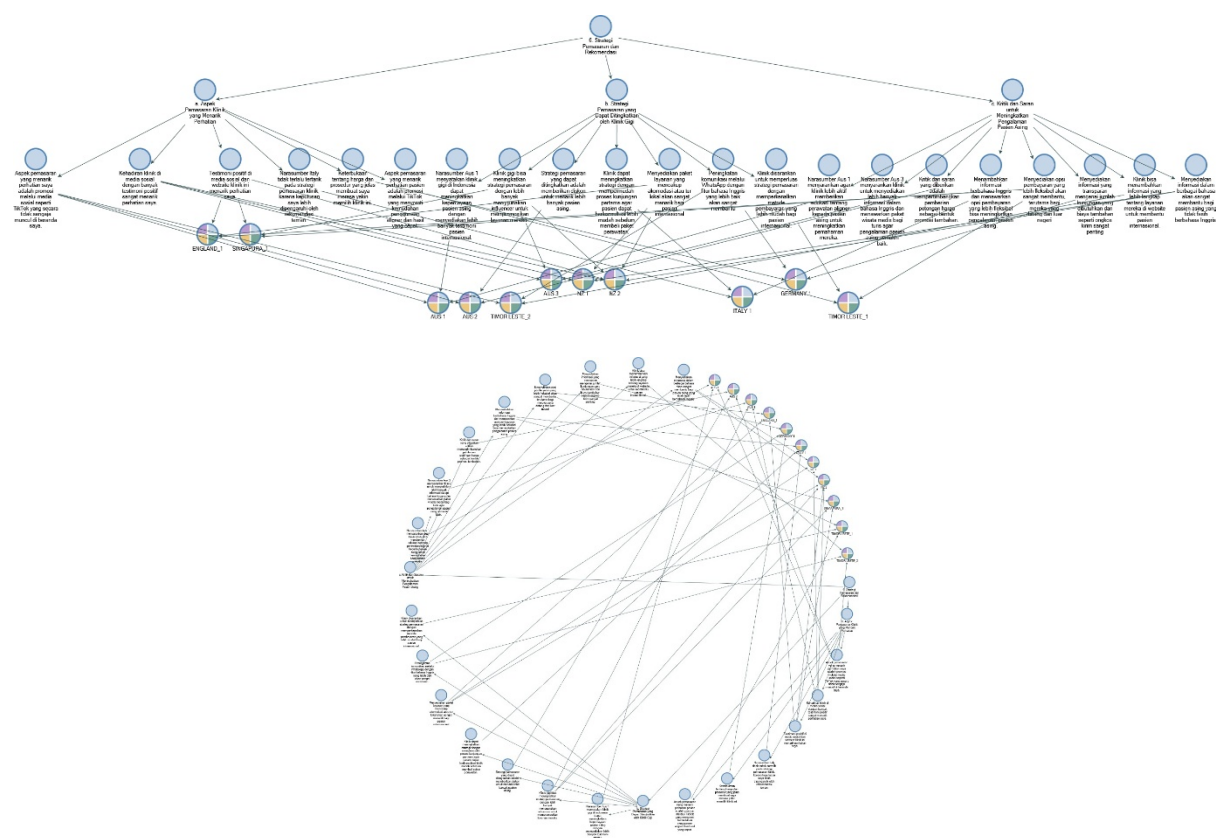
Topic 5: Pull Factors Attracting Patients to Indonesia



Project Map – Section 5:

The Project Map on "Pull Factors Attracting Patients to Indonesia" reveals that aligner treatment advantages are a major draw for international patients. Key benefits include comfort, flexibility, and quick results within six months. The treatment's affordability, especially compared to countries like the UK, Italy, and Australia, makes Indonesia appealing. Patients also value the convenience of scheduling treatment during vacations in Bali and appreciate the clean, comfortable clinics with friendly, professional staff. Additional factors such as overseas retainer delivery, smooth WhatsApp communication, and Bali's relaxing environment further enhance Indonesia's attractiveness for dental tourism.

Topic 6: Marketing Strategies and Recommendations



Project Map: Section 6

The Project Map on "Marketing Strategies and Recommendations" highlights that social media-based marketing, particularly on TikTok, effectively captures patients' attention. Promotions emphasizing the ease of aligner use and rapid treatment results serve as key attractions. Positive testimonials from previous patients shared via social media and clinic websites play a crucial role in building trust among prospective international patients. Although social media marketing has proven effective, dental clinics are advised to enhance their strategies by expanding payment options to accommodate international patients, such as offering more accessible digital payment methods. Additionally, clinics are encouraged to provide service packages that include accommodation or local tourism experiences to attract more foreign patients. Enhancing communication through WhatsApp with improved English-language support is also a key recommendation to ensure a more seamless experience for international patients. Australian patients specifically suggested that clinics actively educate

foreign patients about aligner treatment to improve their understanding of the procedure and expected outcomes.

Topic 7: Conclusion

The Project Map on "Conclusion" highlights that the overall experience of patients undergoing aligner treatment in Indonesia has been highly satisfactory. Patients from the United Kingdom, Singapore, New Zealand, and Germany expressed their intention to recommend the clinic to their friends due to the high-quality service and more affordable treatment costs. Additionally, Australian patients emphasized that the treatment outcomes were highly satisfactory and comparable to those in their home country. Patients also acknowledged that aligner use requires strong discipline, with a minimum of 20 hours of wear per day to achieve optimal results within the expected timeframe. Overall, patient experiences across various countries indicate that the decision to choose Indonesia for aligner treatment is driven by a combination of lower costs, high-quality service, and overall comfort during their stay. Patients feel that this decision not only benefits their dental health but also provides a pleasant and rewarding experience throughout the treatment process.

Topic: Respondent Data

The Project Map on "Respondent Data" shows that patients choosing aligner treatment in Indonesia come from diverse nationalities, including Australia, the UK, Germany, and Singapore. Most patients are from English-speaking countries, indicating the importance of English communication in attracting international clients. The gender distribution is nearly equal, with slightly more male patients, suggesting that both men and women seek dental alignment for more than just aesthetic reasons. The majority of patients are in the 41–60 age range, reflecting their financial ability to invest in long-term dental care. However, younger patients aged 20–40 also appear, showing increasing early awareness of dental health.

DISCUSSION

1. Analysis of Motivational Factors for Patients Choosing Aligner Treatment in Indonesia

Based on the analysis of word clouds and hierarchy charts, several motivational factors influence foreign patients in choosing aligner treatment in Indonesia. These include affordability, service quality, ease of access to information, and previous positive patient experiences. Utilizing the push and pull factor approach (Constantin et al., 2020), this study found that push factors, such as high treatment costs in the country of origin (Journal of International Dental Association, 2023; Pratiwi et al., 2020), limited orthodontic services (Raharja et al., 2022), and long waiting times for treatment (Andreassen & Strese, 2024; International Healthcare Research Journal, 2018). Drive patients to seek aligner services abroad. These factors, especially affordability and service availability, were particularly significant for patients from countries like Timor Leste, Australia, and Italy.

On the other hand, pull factors that attract patients to Indonesia include lower costs (Pratiwi et al., 2020; Journal of International Dental Association, 2023), high service quality and professional care (Saha et al., 2024; Journal of Medical Science and Clinical Research, 2024), and strong patient recommendations (International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications, 2024; International Healthcare Research Journal, 2018). Digital marketing, especially through platforms like TikTok and Instagram, also plays a crucial role in influencing patient decisions (Constantin et al., 2020; Raharja et al., 2022; Andreassen & Strese, 2024; International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research, 2020). Social media acts as the primary information source, enabling clinics to showcase testimonials, treatment processes, and price comparisons, thereby enhancing trust and interest among international patients.

2. Analysis of Foreign Patients' Perceptions of Service Quality, Information Access, and Treatment Costs Using the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) Approach

Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), the decision of foreign patients to undergo aligner treatment in Indonesia is significantly influenced by their attitudes,

subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The attitude toward treatment is shaped by both push and pull factors—such as long waiting times and high treatment costs in their home countries (push), versus lower costs, better services, and easier access to information in Indonesia (pull). These factors create a more favorable perception of Indonesian dental services. Supporting studies emphasize the importance of staff friendliness and clear communication in ensuring patient satisfaction (Saha et al., 2024; American Journal of Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics, 2020). Furthermore, effective communication and accessible information delivery play a crucial role in building trust among foreign patients (Journal of Medical Science and Clinical Research, 2024). A positive attitude is also driven by the perception of higher value and affordability, as shown by Jaapar et al. (2017), contributing to the favorable evaluation of dental tourism in Indonesia.

Subjective norms also play a central role in influencing patient decisions, where social influence, such as recommendations from friends or exposure to content on social media platforms like TikTok, significantly impacts their choice. Hollebeek et al. (2014) highlighted how social media engagement affects healthcare decisions, while Musa et al. (2011) underscored the powerful role of word-of-mouth marketing in the context of dental tourism. Additionally, perceived behavioral control, such as ease of contacting clinics, convenience of travel, and challenges in payment systems, also affects patient willingness to undergo treatment in Indonesia. Patients who perceive higher control over the treatment process—especially in terms of access to information and travel experience are more likely to proceed with treatment (Panteli et al., 2015). To further attract international patients, Indonesian clinics are encouraged to offer flexible payment methods, streamline administrative procedures, and provide clear, multilingual communication to enhance patients' confidence and overall experience.

3. Static Analysis with Destination Competitiveness Theory Approach in Dental Tourism

Based on the Destination Competitiveness Theory (Dwyer & Kim, 2003), a destination's attractiveness in the dental tourism sector is influenced by various factors such as

affordability, service quality, accessibility, and institutional policies. In this study, Indonesia demonstrates strong competitiveness as a dental tourism destination for aligner treatments, particularly for patients from Timor Leste, Australia, and the UK. Core resources such as significantly lower treatment costs and high service quality are major attractors (Kovacs & Szocska, 2013; Fetscherin & Stephano, 2016). Patients also praised the friendliness and attentiveness of Indonesian medical staff, enhancing Indonesia's appeal. Supporting resources, such as the availability of modern dental clinics and ease of access, further contribute to the destination's competitiveness (Veerasoontorn & Beise-Zee, 2010). Prior positive experiences in Indonesia also help foster patient trust in returning for healthcare services.

Institutional factors and destination management strategies play an equally vital role. While some administrative issues, like limited currency payment options, were noted as obstacles, the adoption of more flexible policies could enhance Indonesia's competitiveness (Panteli et al., 2015). Additionally, destination marketing via social media platforms such as TikTok has proven effective in attracting international patients (Constantin et al., 2020). Word-of-mouth promotion from satisfied patients also significantly influences potential new patients (Musa et al., 2011). Combined, these factors suggest that Indonesia, with continued strategic enhancements and policy support, has strong potential to remain a leading destination in the dental tourism industry for aligner treatments.

4. Analysis of Research Results with the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) Approach in Dental Tourism

The Actor-Network Theory (ANT), as introduced by Latour, Callon, and Law, provides a useful framework for understanding how dental tourism is shaped by networks of both human and non-human actors. In the context of aligner treatment in Indonesia, patients' decisions are influenced not only by personal preferences but also by the complex interplay between actors such as patients, doctors, clinics, government regulations, technology, and economic infrastructure. Human actors—especially patients, doctors, and clinics—play pivotal roles in

building the dental tourism network. Patients are not passive recipients but active agents who influence others through reviews and word-of-mouth, as highlighted by Musa et al. (2011). Clinics and healthcare providers, supported by competent medical staff and quality services, serve as essential trust-builders, aligning with Johnston, Crooks, & Adams (2016) who emphasized the critical role of medical competence and infrastructure in attracting international patients.

In addition to human actors, non-human elements like digital technology and government policies also act as significant connectors in the dental tourism network. Social media platforms such as TikTok serve as gateways for patients to discover dental services in Indonesia, supporting Constantin et al. (2020)'s findings on the marketing role of social media in cross-border healthcare. Meanwhile, government regulations and payment systems can either enhance or hinder access to services, with Panteli et al. (2015) stressing the importance of supportive policy frameworks for foreign patients. The interaction among these actors reflects ANT's principle of interdependence, where disruptions in one element, such as regulatory barriers can affect the entire system. As Veerasoontorn & Beise-Zee (2010) noted, sustainable growth in medical tourism relies on the synergy between human and non-human actors within a dynamic and responsive network.

5. Marketing Strategy Analysis to Increase the Attractiveness of Dental Tourism

This study highlights the significant influence of service marketing strategies on foreign patients' decisions to seek aligner treatment in Indonesia, especially within the context of dental tourism. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), health services possess unique characteristics intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability—that require a distinct marketing approach. Market segmentation, as part of the strategic process, is crucial in identifying target audiences based on geographic, demographic, psychographic, and behavioral factors. Most foreign patients originate from countries with high orthodontic costs or limited healthcare services, such as Timor Leste, Australia, and the UK. Digital marketing plays a central role in

reaching these segments, as supported by Chaffey and Smith (2017), while effective dental tourism strategies also involve multilingual information, treatment packages with accommodation, and flexible payment systems (International Healthcare Research Journal, 2018). Positioning Indonesia as a high-quality yet affordable orthodontic destination is also key, leveraging competitive pricing, qualified professionals, and advanced technology, as supported by Pine and Gilmore's (1998) experience-based marketing approach.

Furthermore, the application of the 7P marketing mix model—Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence—offers a comprehensive framework for developing effective strategies in dental tourism (Booms & Bitner, 1981). Clinics must ensure international-standard aligner treatments (Product) at competitive prices (Price), with accessible locations (Place) and strong digital promotion strategies including social media and patient testimonials (Promotion), as supported by Hollebeek et al. (2014) and Raharja et al. (2022). Skilled healthcare professionals (People), efficient service processes (Process), and clean, comfortable facilities (Physical Evidence) further enhance patient trust and satisfaction. Evaluation of marketing effectiveness should include customer satisfaction, brand awareness, service experience, and perceived value (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The findings confirm that foreign patients value the affordability, service quality, and personalized care received, indicating that Indonesia has strong potential to grow as a competitive dental tourism destination.

Conclusion

This study explores the motivational factors influencing foreign patients in choosing aligner treatment in Indonesia, using the push and pull factor approach alongside the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Destination Competitiveness Theory, and Actor-Network Theory (ANT). The findings reveal that push factors, such as limited orthodontic services, high costs, and long waiting times in the patients' home countries drive them to seek treatment abroad. On the other hand, pull factors like lower treatment costs, higher service quality, and the influence

of digital marketing through social media make Indonesia an attractive destination for aligner treatment. From the TPB perspective, patients' decisions are shaped by their positive attitudes toward Indonesian services, social norms influenced by friends and social media, and a strong sense of control in accessing healthcare in Indonesia. According to the Destination Competitiveness Theory, Indonesia's dental tourism competitiveness is supported by affordable pricing, service quality, healthcare infrastructure, government policies, and effective digital marketing strategies. The ANT approach emphasizes that patient decisions are not solely individual but result from the dynamic interactions between patients, doctors, clinics, digital technologies, and government policies within a complex dental tourism network. Understanding these interrelated factors offers valuable insights for the healthcare and medical tourism industries to enhance Indonesia's global positioning as a leading dental tourism destination.

This study contributes to the theoretical development of dental tourism by reinforcing the push-pull model, particularly highlighting the role of digital marketing and social media as significant pull factors—an area not extensively explored in previous research. It also integrates the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with push-pull dynamics, showing that patients' perceived behavioral control increases with easier access to information and flexible payment options. Furthermore, it supports Destination Competitiveness Theory by demonstrating how digital strategies and previous patient experiences shape a destination's competitive advantage. Lastly, the study applies Actor-Network Theory (ANT) to healthcare services, revealing that patient decisions result from interactions between various actors, including healthcare providers, patients, government regulations, and digital platforms.

To strengthen Indonesia's position as a leading dental tourism destination—particularly for affordable, high-quality aligner treatments—several strategies should be implemented. Dental clinics must optimize the use of TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube for promotional purposes, adopt international service standards, and provide multilingual information on digital

platforms. Additionally, offering flexible payment methods (e.g., credit cards, PayPal, crypto) and collaborating with tourism stakeholders for medical travel packages will enhance Indonesia's global appeal. Future research could employ quantitative methods to measure push-pull factors' impact, conduct comparative studies within ASEAN, explore social media influence on patient choices, assess regulatory impacts, and investigate long-term loyalty among international patients.

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