

MICE and Medical Tourism in Singapore

Jaeho Lee Senior Researcher, Southeast Asia Team, Center for Emerging Economies Research (jhlee@kiep.go.kr)
Nari Park Researcher, Southeast Asia Team, Center for Emerging Economies Research (nrpark@kiep.go.kr)

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1. Singapore, Service Hub Country of Asia

Singapore has achieved a high level of economic growth in spite of disadvantages in the city state. The world highest level of economic freedom in Singapore provides a free business environment for foreign investors, which made Singapore to be the best business destination in Asia for the multinational corporations. Singapore has pursued a comprehensive economic development plan by Economic Strategies Committee (ESC). ESC has promoted a 10-year economic development plan with following three priorities; high-skilled people, an innovative economy and a distinctive global city. In order to implement those objectives, ESC recommended sev-

en key strategies to sustain economic growth as stated in Figure 1.

2. MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Exhibitions)

Singapore, an exemplary hub state of Asia, has developed to be a world best MICE country with a record growth in international meetings during recent years. According to the statistics of Union of International Associations (UIA), Singapore had ranked number one on the world's top international meeting destination by hosting 919 international meetings.

Figure 1. Economic Priorities and Strategies by ESC



Source: ESC(2010), p. 13.

Table 1. No. of International Meetings (by country)

2009			2010			2011		
Rank	Country	No	Rank	Country	No	Rank	Country	No
1	USA	1,085	1	USA	936	1	Singapore	919
2	Singapore	689	2	Japan	741	2	USA	744
3	France	632	3	Singapore	725	3	Japan	598
4	Germany	555	4	France	686	4	France	557
5	Japan	538	5	Belgium	597	5	Belgium	533
6	Belgium	470	6	Spain	572	6	Korea	469
7	Netherland	458	7	Germany	499	7	Germany	421
8	Austria	421	8	Korea	464	8	Austria	390
9	Italia	391	9	UK	375	9	Spain	386
11	Korea	347	10	Austria	362	10	Australia	329

Source: UIA(www.uia.org).

The socio-cultural background that uses English as an official language, world top level infrastructure and business opportunities given by many multinational corporations contribute in making Singapore the world's best MICE destinations. In addition to these socio-cultural backgrounds, the Singapore government has played an important role to promote MICE industry. Singapore Tourism Board

(STB) establishes policies to promote and nourish the tourism industry. Regarding MICE sectors, STB provides comprehensive services such as planning and hosting international meetings and conventions through BTMICE (Business Travel + MICE) department. Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau (SECB) also supports the hosting of BTMICE sectors, and takes care of every process related to international meetings. The

Singaporean government also has implemented a series of policies to promote MICE industry such as building strategic clusters with related sectors, creating high value-added national images, “all-in-one” strategies by integrated resorts, maintaining high quality with SECB, etc.

The Marina Bay Sands and the World Resort Sentosa shall be the most exemplary MICE corporations in Singapore. These large-scale

integrated resorts provide so called “all-in-one” services that contain MICE events, entertainment activities, shopping, casinos, etc.

The SWOT analysis on Table 2 shows the characteristics of MICE in Singapore, and Singapore is forecasted to maintain sustainable growth with integrated resorts, high quality strategies and economic growth in emerging Asia.

Table 2. SWOT Analysis on MICE of Singapore

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multinational Corporations - World-class infrastructures - English as an official language - Integrated Resorts - Strong government promotion policies - Socio-political stability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limits of City State - High-price level - Scarcity of traditional Asian images
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic growth in east Asia - Sufficient potential demand from China - Strategic cluster with related sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost increase - Competition with neighboring countries

3. Medical Tourism

With a rapid growth in international arrivals for medical care, Singapore has emerged as

representative medical tourism country in Asia. A series of push and pull factors contributed to the growth of medical tourism industry in Singapore as stated in Table 3.

Table 3. Push and Pull Factors of Singapore Medical Tourism

Push Factors	Pull Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medical cost increase in advanced countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advanced medical technology and service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The need to reduce increase factors on insurance premium in advanced countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moderate price of medical service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waiting time increase in advanced countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved credibility of medical service in emerging countries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demand increase by aging society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Convenience for medical tourists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mid class increase in emerging Asian countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better Accessibility for foreign medical tourists with IT development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase in general tourism demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Medical and tourism combination service

The high level and standardized medical service of Singapore have contributed being one of the leading medical tourism destinations in Asia. In addition, the geographic location, language, and cultural intimacy also contributed to the growth of medical tourist arrivals in Singapore.

The Singaporean government has promoted medical tourism as new growth engine through the health care department in STB, and also focused on the medical science and service quality increase for the long-term competitiveness. Singapore founded Healthcare Services Working Group (HSWG) in order to develop the new growth engine, and announced a seven-policy advise to

promote medical tourism. Singapore had adopted a public healthcare system funded by tax until 1984. In 1984, Singapore liberalized the public healthcare system and established the for-profit hospital system. With this medical liberalization, medical brands such as the Raffles Medical Group and Parkway Holdings could develop as the leading medical groups with free marketing and profit making activities. The SWOT analysis on Table 4 shows the characteristics and prospects of medical tourism in Singapore. Medical tourism in Singapore is forecasted to maintain the sustainable growth with the growth of the wealth in emerging countries, synergy effects from related industries, intensified competition among for-profit hospitals.

Table 4. SWOT Analysis on Medical Tourism in Singapore

Strength	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geographical location and cultural intimacy - Systematic promotion policy by government - Diversified marketing activity of for-profit hospitals - One-stop service of Singapore medicine and national brands on medical tourism - Continuous inflow of high-level medical workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High price compared with neighboring countries - Limitation on tourism resource as city-state - Lack of local medical workforce
Opportunity	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable economic growth in Asian countries, and middle class increase - Synergy effect by the development of bio-medical industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intensified competition with neighboring countries - Improved medical service level in neighboring Asian countries - Demand decrease in medical tourism with financial crisis

4. Conclusion

By benchmarking this Singapore medical tourism case study, the Korean government can find a few policy implications in order to implement MICE promotion policies such as intensifying strategic functions of government organizations, human resources, international mutual marketing system, clustering with related sectors, a symbolic image by building

integrated resorts, etc. In the field of medical tourism, a series of strengths in the medical tourism of Singapore such as integrated organization for medical tourism, education and training for the medical workforce, a diversified marketing system, combination of general tourism contents, utilizing the IT system, and limited liberation to for-profit hospitals, shall be able to provide policy implications to the Korean government. KIEP