

# THE ROLE OF EFFECTIVE INTERCULTURE COMMUNICATION IN MEDICAL TOURISM IN LITHUANIA

*Dr. Miglė Eleonora Černikováitė*

*Vilniaus Kolegija*

*DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52320/svv.v1iIX.343>*

## Abstract

Effective communication plays a critical role in international and multicultural settings, particularly within the rapidly growing medical tourism sector. Clear communication strategies help bridge linguistic and cultural barriers, fostering collaboration and building relationships that respect diverse viewpoints. In the medical tourism industry, which is projected to grow from USD 13.13 billion in 2021 to USD 53.51 billion by 2025, effective communication is essential for coordinating healthcare and logistics (Fortune Business Insights, 2023). Leading countries in this sector include Thailand, India, and Turkey, while Lithuania presents potential due to its quality healthcare and competitive pricing. However, it faces challenges such as insufficient governmental support and cultural communication barriers, hindering its growth.

This article aims to assess the impact of communication on medical tourism decisions in Lithuania, focusing on two primary areas: a review of existing literature pertaining to influencing factors and a comparison of intercultural communication styles among Lithuanian, Scandinavian, and British representatives. Employing research methods such as literature reviews, surveys, and descriptive statistical analysis, the study examines how medical organizations' communication is perceived by intercultural medical tourists. Findings indicate that clear and purpose-driven communication significantly enhances medical tourist experiences and evaluations of services, underscoring the importance of communication efficiency in the medical tourism sector.

**Keywords:** effective communication, medical tourism, intercultural relations, medical tourist experience, Lithuania.

## Introduction

**Relevance of the topic.** The significance of effective communication in medical tourism cannot be overstated. In a landscape characterized by diverse cultural backgrounds and linguistic differences, the ability to convey information accurately is crucial. Miscommunication can lead to misunderstandings regarding treatment procedures, costs, and medical tourist expectations, potentially affecting medical tourist satisfaction and overall healthcare outcomes (Kelly, 2023). Clear communication, therefore, serves as a bridge that connects healthcare providers and international medical tourists, fostering trust and promoting collaboration. Medical tourism often entails interaction between healthcare professionals and medical tourists from different cultural and social backgrounds. Effective communication enables the development of strong, respectful relationships, which are essential in providing culturally sensitive care. When communication is rooted in mutual respect and understanding, it alleviates anxiety and reassures medical tourists about their medical choices. This is particularly important in diverse settings where varying healthcare practices and beliefs exist (Purba, 2021). Successful medical tourism depends not only on the quality of healthcare services provided but also on the overall medical tourist experience. Effective communication enhances the medical tourist journey by ensuring that individuals feel heard, understood, and valued. This is critical in medical tourism, where medical tourists may already be apprehensive about traveling for treatment. A welcoming atmosphere, cultivated through purposeful communication, can lead to positive outcomes and medical tourist loyalty (Gries et al., 2022).

The growth of the medical tourism industry has significant economic implications for healthcare providers and host countries. According to a report by Fortune Business Insights (2023), the global medical tourism market is projected to grow from USD 13.98 billion in 2010 to USD 1.9 billion in 2020. The medical tourism market is expected to grow from USD 13.13 billion in 2021 to USD 53.51 billion in 2025. This is an increase of more than 20% (Fortune Business Insights, 2023). Destinations such as Thailand, India and Turkey are leading the medical tourism sector, driven by factors such as cost-effectiveness and quality of care (Fortune Business Insights, 2023). To capitalize on this growth, countries like Lithuania must enhance their communication strategies to attract more international medical tourists. By articulating their healthcare offerings clearly and effectively, providers can promote their services more successfully in a competitive global market. In the competitive landscape of medical tourism, countries that excel in communication will have a distinct advantage. While destinations like Thailand and India currently lead the sector, Lithuania possesses the attributes required to emerge as a

strong contender, including quality healthcare services and competitive pricing. (Baltrūnaitė, 2023) However, without targeted investment in communication strategies aimed at international audiences, Lithuania risks underutilizing its potential in the medical tourism sector (LRT, 2023).

**Research problem.** The significance of effective communication in medical tourism is crucial for ensuring medical tourist satisfaction and positive healthcare outcomes. However, existing literature lacks comprehensive studies that directly link communication strategies with medical tourist experiences and perceptions of care in the context of medical tourism. Furthermore, there is a need to investigate how effective communication can be leveraged by emerging medical tourism destinations, such as Lithuania?

**Subject matter of the research** – intercultural communication patterns with medical tourists from Nordic region and British Isles in Lithuania.

**Research aim** – This study aims to investigate the relationship between effective communication and medical tourist experiences in medical tourism in Lithuania.

**Research objectives:**

1. To review scientific literature on effective cross-culture communication ( linguistic and cultural considerations) in medical tourism.
2. To investigate how communication affects medical tourist satisfaction and healthcare outcomes in medical tourism
3. To identify the communication barriers providers, face with international medical tourists from different cultures.
4. To recommend, what communication strategies enhance the medical tourist experience in emerging medical tourism markets like Lithuania

**Research methods:** scientific literature review, quantitative research survey and descriptive data analysis.

## **1. Literature review**

### **1.1. The Importance of Intercultural Communication**

Globalization has interconnected societies, economies, and cultures, making intercultural communication vital for cooperation and understanding. Advances in technology, particularly the internet and social media, enable instant interaction across cultural boundaries. Effective intercultural communication—defined as the ability to convey and interpret messages between different cultures—is essential in today's global landscape, particularly for multinational businesses. These companies rely on strong international communication to foster partnerships, enhance customer relationships, and drive market growth. (Chen&Starosta, 2018). Intercultural communication is a symbolic, interpretive, transactional and contextual process in which people from different cultures create shared meanings. Other authors further define intercultural communication as the ability to cooperate with people from different cultures, to understand and adapt the communicative message rather than the differences (Gudykunst, Kim 1997). Although intercultural communication is now widespread in more or less almost all aspects of modern society and in various different business spheres due to the ever closer and closer links between different countries and cultures, there are exceptional businesses, usually multinational businesses or those operating on a global scale, in a number of different regions, which are based on successful and purposeful international communication, without which the future of such businesses would not be possible (Griffith, 2002) In an increasingly interdependent world, mastering intercultural communication is crucial for success.

### **1.2. Intercultural Communication theories**

Communication scholars, influenced by research in psychology, view culture as a set of learned, group related perception. Hofstede (1984), defines culture as “the programming the mind”. Hofstede (1984) explains, how these patterns are developed through interactions in social environment and with various groups and individuals. Culture becomes a collective experience because it is shared with people who live in and experience the same social environments (Martin, Nakayama, 2022). Betancourt (2002)

has different opinion, according to him, culture refers to a “socially constructed and historically transmitted pattern of symbols, meaning, premises and rules. Culture is not only experienced as perception and values, and contextual but the concept of culture involves emotions (embodied ethnocentrism) (Betancourt et al., 2022). A more recent approach to culture influenced by cultural studies scholarship, emphasizes the heterogeneity of cultural groups and the often conflictual nature of cultural boundaries (Martin, Nakayama, 2022).

The relationship between culture and communication is complex. A dialectical perspective assumes that culture and communication are interrelated and reciprocal. Cultural groups influence the process by which perception of reality is created and maintained: “All communities in all places at all times manifest their own view of reality in what they do. The entire culture reflects the contemporary model of reality” (Geertz, 2017). Effective communication is crucial in professional intercultural settings, where understanding and adapting to cultural differences is paramount for building medical tourist trust and satisfaction (Kyprianou, 2022). By recognizing these cultural variations, healthcare providers can tailor their communication approaches, thereby enhancing medical tourist experiences and increasing the number of international medical tourists seeking Lithuanian medical services (de Maria Martin et al., 2024)

Intercultural communication scholars are interested identifying these culture differences in perception and behavior and then trying to understand how these differences impact communication between individuals with varying backgrounds.

**E.T. Hall's intercultural communication** work provides essential insights into high and low context communication styles (Kyprianou, 2022). In this framework, Lithuanians are characterized by a high-context style, where non-verbal cues and personal relationships play a crucial role in conveying meaning. Conversely, the British Isles exhibit a low-context communication style that values clarity and directness. This distinction may foster misunderstandings if not acknowledged, as Lithuanians tend to rely more on implicit communication, while British speakers favour explicit messages. Despite these differences, both cultures exhibit a monochronic approach to time, appreciating punctuality and structured interactions. Understanding these nuances can help healthcare providers bridge the communication gap and foster stronger relationships with their international medical tourists. (Hall,1966).

**G. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions.** Theory further elaborates on intercultural variances by examining six dimensions that influence communication styles and behaviours (Holmes et al., 2013).

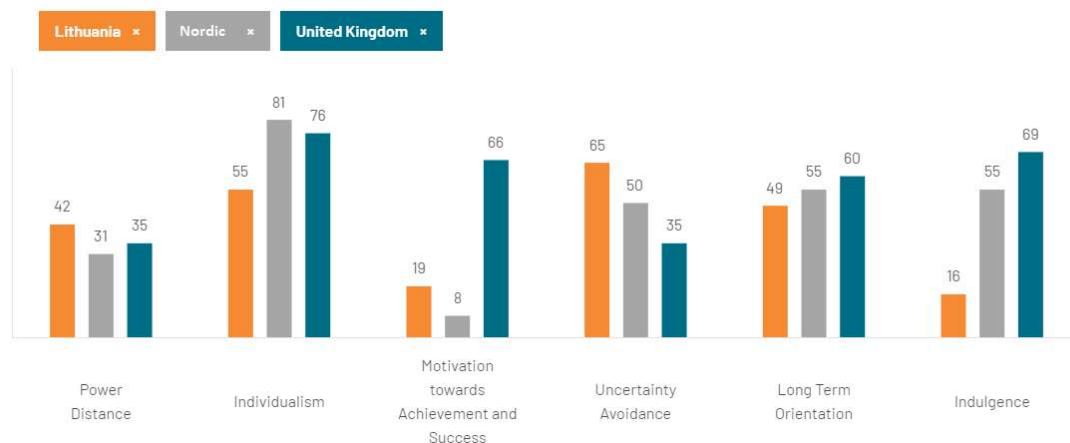


Figure 1. Hofstede’s Culture Dimensions

Source: made by author according: <https://www.theculturefactor.com/country-comparison-tool>.

Although Lithuania, Nordic countries and the G. Britain are classified as individualistic cultures, a critical distinction lies in the degree of formality and hierarchical attitudes in their communication. Lithuanians and Nordic countries representatives often engage in formal interactions that respect hierarchical structures, while individuals from the British Isles lean towards a more casual and egalitarian communication approach. This disparity is essential for medical professionals to consider, as

it can shape the dynamics of medical tourist-provider interactions. Furthermore, while all cultures demonstrate a pragmatic orientation, the emotional expressions and satisfaction levels differ significantly, with Lithuanians and people from Nordic countries tending to be more reserved compared to their British counterparts who actively express emotions and seek personal fulfilment (The Culture Factor, 2024).

**H. Giles' theory of accommodation (2016)** offers additional perspectives on effective communication by emphasizing the importance of linguistic adaptation in intercultural interactions (Poornima & Subramanian, 2024). The concepts of convergence and divergence elucidate how language styles can either harmonize or create distance between speakers. For successful communication between Lithuanians and people from the G. Britain, healthcare providers can leverage the insights gathered from Hall's and Hofstede's classifications. By consciously adapting their communication styles to resonate with the medical tourist's cultural background, medical professionals can ensure a more harmonious and effective dialogue, fostering a sense of trust and understanding during the healthcare experience (Poornima & Subramanian, 2024).

In summary, understanding the intercultural communication styles between Lithuanians and people Nordic countries and G.Britian is crucial for medical tourism specialists aiming to enhance medical tourist satisfaction and increase the influx of international medical tourists. By integrating Hall's high-context and low-context communication frameworks, Hofstede's cultural dimensions, and Giles' accommodation theory, healthcare providers can develop nuanced strategies that respect cultural differences. Such addictiveness not only improves clarity and connection between providers and medical tourists but also positions healthcare institutions to thrive in an increasingly globalized medical market, ultimately leading to better outcomes and sustainable growth within the medical tourism sector.

### **1.3. The Evolution and Impact of Medical Tourism**

Medical tourism is actually a relatively new concept, but it has been around since ancient times "when pilgrims from the Mediterranean region travelled to a small area in the Sardonian Gulf called Epidaurus to visit the shrine of Asclepius, the God of healing" (Rai, 2014). With the advent of modern transportation and telecommunications, the phenomenon has evolved significantly, allowing individuals to seek medical care across international borders more easily than ever before (Harsh, 2024). Medical tourism not only offers medical tourists options for procedures that may be more affordable or accessible elsewhere, but it also presents a unique opportunity for healthcare systems around the world to participate in a competitive and growing market (Chiarenza, 2012)

Medical tourism is now described in the academic literature as the process of "travelling to a foreign country to seek medical attention" (Hong, 2016), or when "crossing national borders to improve one's health" (Crooks et al., 2010). Foreign medical tourists travelling to other countries to access the medical services they need or want often face a variety of cultural, linguistic, and logistical challenges, which can be facilitated or, conversely, accentuated by the quality of communication. Communication in this field takes place in several contexts and consists of interactions at all stages of the medical tourism process. The communicative actions and behaviours associated with each stage demonstrate the fundamental role of interpersonal, intercultural, organisational, mass, and digital communication for both medical tourists and providers (Mason, 2023). Medical tourism is closely linked to globalisation, and globalisation plays an important role in the growth and dynamics of the medical tourism industry.

For businesses offering international health services, cultural competence in healthcare must be a priority. Cultural competence in health can be defined as the ability of hospitals or clinics to provide care to medical tourists with different values, beliefs, and behaviours, including tailoring services to meet medical tourists' social, cultural, and linguistic needs (Betancourt et al., 2002). Cultural competence is particularly important in the context of medical tourism, where medical tourists from diverse cultural backgrounds travel to receive healthcare services far from their homes. Cultural sensitivity and awareness in communication remove barriers, reduce the likelihood of errors, and ensure better outcomes. According to the National Centre for Cultural Competence, "Cultural competence requires that healthcare providers and their staff are able to appreciate diversity, conduct self-assessment, manage the dynamics of difference, acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge, and adapt to diversity and culture in the contexts of the individuals and communities served" (Medical Tourism Magazine, 2023).

## 2. Methodology

**Research Methodology.** This study employs quantitative research method. The quantitative aspect focuses on structured, closed-ended questions from medical tourist experience questionnaires, while the qualitative component delves into customer comments to uncover deeper insights regarding international communication perceived by medical tourists at Beauty & Aesthetics clinic (which doesn't want to disclose its name) in Lithuania. This mixed-method approach is chosen to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how communication quality influences medical tourists' decision-making and overall experience.

**Research Problem.** The primary research problem addressed in this study is understanding how international communication is perceived by international medical tourists at Beauty & Aesthetics Clinic. The research seeks to explore the influence of this communication on medical tourists' decision-making and their satisfaction with the services provided. It recognizes the importance of effective communication in medical tourism, where medical tourists often consider various factors such as cost, quality, and cultural sensitivity before making healthcare choices abroad.

**Aim and Objectives.** The aim of this research is to analyze the role of communication in the experiences of medical tourists undergoing plastic surgery at Beauty & Aesthetics Clinic. The specific objectives include:

1. Evaluating how clarity, speed, and cultural sensitivity of communication impact medical tourist satisfaction and decision-making.
2. Understanding customer perceptions of the communication received during the planning phase of their surgical procedures.
3. Identifying communication strategies for improvement based on qualitative analysis of medical tourists' comments.

**Research Instrument** The primary research instrument used in this study is a preoperative questionnaire consisting of 15 questions. This questionnaire, sent to medical tourists before their scheduled plastic surgery, consists of various closed-ended questions including single-answer, multiple-choice, and Likert scale questions. Additionally, an open-ended comment section allows medical tourists to provide qualitative feedback regarding their experience and communication with the clinic.

**Sample Size.** The sample size for this research comprises 194 respondents (with margin error 6.5%) who completed the preoperative questionnaire during the months of August-September, 2024. The population being discussed consists of approximately 1,500 patients yearly from the Nordic countries and Great Britain. This sample focuses on the plastic surgery department, which has the highest number of medical tourists, thus providing a more representative data set for the study.

**Research Organisation.** The study focuses exclusively on Beauty & Aesthetics Clinic in Lithuania that specializes in medical tourism, particularly in the area of plastic surgery. The organisation caters to international medical tourists, providing insights into the unique challenges and considerations in communication within this sector.

**Research Ethics.** Data collection meets ethical requirements by ensuring informed consent, protecting participant privacy, and promoting transparency throughout the research process. Informed consent entails fully informing participants about the nature, purpose, and potential risks of the study, allowing them to voluntarily agree to participate. Privacy protection involves safeguarding personal information and ensuring that data is anonymized or securely stored to prevent unauthorized access. Additionally, transparency is upheld by clearly communicating how the data will be used, analyzing its implications, and disseminating findings responsibly.

## 3. Research results

This empirical study employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative with qualitative analyses to quantify and contextualize the experiences of medical tourism patients when interacting with a foreign clinic. The quantitative component utilized a structured pre-operative survey, designed to gather measurable data on various facets of the patient experience, including communication at different stages of the process.

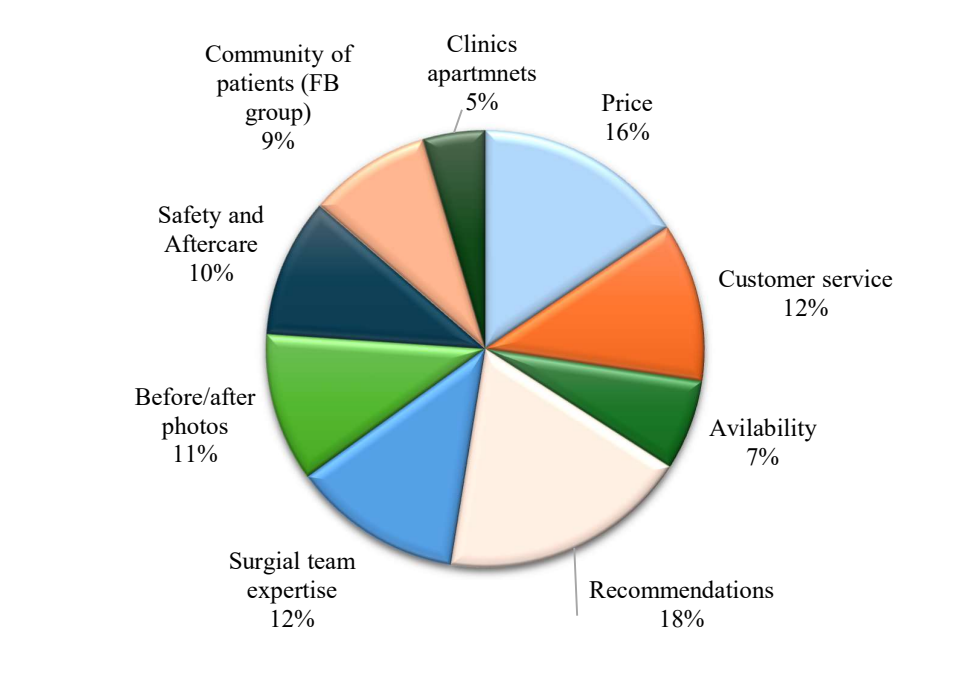


Figure 2. Importance of Communication in the Choice of Medical Tourism

Figure 2 illustrates respondents' answers to a key question regarding their reasons for selecting a foreign clinic for treatment. Among 194 participants, 18% respondents identified recommendations, 16% price, 12% customer service and as a significant factors. Customer service accounted for 12% of all responses, underscoring its importance in the decision-making process for patients. Comparison of Factors Interestingly, other factors, such as price, before-after photographs, and the presence of a patient community on social media platforms, garnered more mentions than customer service. Thus, while communication plays a critical role, it is part of a broader set of influencing factors that patients consider before opting for medical tourism.

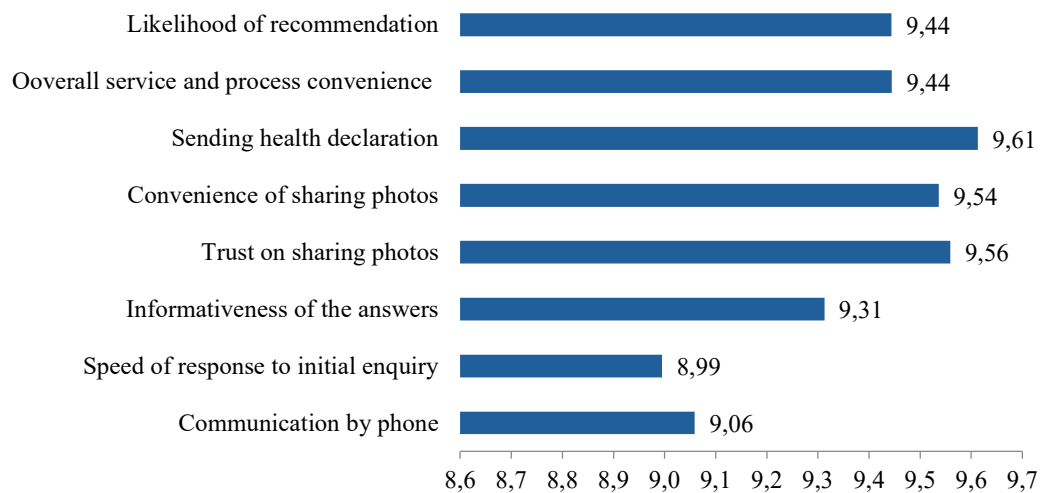


Figure 3. Effectiveness of Communication and Trust

Figure 3 indicates a high level of satisfaction among respondents regarding various aspects of a communication with patients—likely related to a healthcare or digital platform, given the mention of health declarations and photo sharing. The ratings range from approximately 8.99 to 9.61, with all scores being above 8. This demonstrates that users generally find the service very satisfactory across all dimensions evaluated. Key Strengths: Trust on Sharing Photos (9.56): This high score suggests that users

feel secure when sharing photos through the service. Trust is critical in healthcare-related services, particularly regarding sensitive information. Sending Health Declaration (9.61): This is the highest score, highlighting that the users not only comply with requirements but also find the process straightforward and efficient. Informativeness of the Answers (9.31): Users feel adequately informed by the responses they receive, which can enhance their trust and overall experience Overall Service and Process Convenience (9.44): This score implies that the process is seen as streamlined and efficient, contributing to a positive user experience.

Likelihood of Recommendation (9.44): This suggests a strong endorsement from users, indicating that they would recommend the service to others, which is a powerful indicator of customer loyalty and satisfaction. Areas for Continuous Improvement: There might be opportunities for fine-tuning certain services, such as enhancing response speed (8.99) even further or ensuring that the communication remains consistently high-quality.

**Analysis of Patients' Comments** on Clinic Communication. Even 131 out of 194 patients (67.53%) provided comments explaining their likelihood to recommend the clinic. Analysis of these comments revealed that a notable 77.01% were positive. The positive aspects of communication in the clinic are highlighted by several key factors that enhance patient experience. Many patients expressing appreciation for prompt answers to inquiries. Clear and informative communication established trust, as patients feel well-informed about procedures, pricing, and pre-surgery requirements. Additionally, the personalized service provided by staff fosters a sense of individual attention, with numerous patients remarking on the helpfulness and support they receive. This supportive atmosphere is particularly crucial in the medical tourism context, where patients may experience anxiety; encouraging phrases like “reassurance of the doctors” enhance feelings of safety. The utilization of technology and social media, such as Facebook groups, offers informative and reassuring insights into real patient experiences. Furthermore, professionalism and transparency are evident in the clear pricing and absence of aggressive sales tactics, which helps patients feel respected and valued. Lastly, a strong commitment to aftercare is reflected in the attention given to post-operative support, indicating that the clinic prioritizes patient well-being long after surgeries are completed. However, 32, 99% patients have identified several negative aspects of communication related to their surgical experiences, including delays in receiving critical responses, which can erode confidence in the process. Many expressed disappointment over the lack of specific information, such as before and after photos for intimate surgeries, revealing an intercultural communication gap that impacts decision-making. There is also a demand for clearer timelines and processes, as some patients reported having to repeatedly inquire about pricing. Additionally, anxiety surrounding readiness for surgery due to medical evaluations highlights the necessity for continuous communication to manage expectations. Furthermore, concerns raised in public forums regarding serious complications illustrate the importance of clinics addressing negative feedback proactively to foster transparency and maintain a supportive community. Overall, the empirical results indicate that effective communication greatly influences the patient experience in medical tourism. The communication of personal of the clinic is largely viewed as commendable, with many patients expressing satisfaction with responsiveness, clarity, and personal care. However, there are identifiable areas for improvement. Enhancing timeliness in responses, providing specific information where expectations are not met, and addressing public concerns proactively will further elevate the patient experience. Establishing a framework for consistent, empathetic communication—especially around anticipated anxieties—will help cultivate the trust and comfort patients seek when embarking on medical tourism.

#### 4. Discussion

By commenting the in terms of **intercultural communication style**, from the findings of this research we can state, that Lithuanians generally prefer directness and clarity in their communication style, favoring straightforward expressions and assertiveness, which aligns with Hofstede’s (1985) dimensions that characterize Lithuania as a high individualism society. While Lithuanians demonstrate respect and professionalism, their direct approach stands in stark contrast to the more reserved communication styles found in Scandinavian countries, where indirect discourse and consensus are often

prioritized. In these cultures, emotional expressions tend to be understated, reflecting a societal inclination toward egalitarian values. In comparison, British communication emphasizes politeness and tact, often characterized by indirectness that can obscure direct requests or complaints. These diverse communication styles can complicate the exchange of vital healthcare information and impact the overall patient experience. Hall's theory (1966) of high-context and low-context communication further illuminates these differences. Scandinavians tend to utilize a high-context style, where indirectness is employed to maintain social harmony. In contrast, Lithuanians exhibit low-context communication preferences that prioritize straightforwardness. This divergence in communication styles highlights the need for heightened awareness in healthcare environments to ensure effective transmission of critical information to patients from various cultural backgrounds

**Regarding time and timeliness**, Lithuania shows a growing emphasis on punctuality and efficiency within professional settings, although variability remains based on individual and organizational norms. Hofstede's (1985) differentiation between monochronic (linear, time-conscious, prioritizing punctuality) and polychronic (more flexible, relationally oriented) cultures becomes evident in this survey. In contrast, Scandinavian countries place a significant premium on punctuality, fostering a culture that demands timely responses and respects time commitments, which is particularly important in healthcare communications. The British perspective on time maintains a balance, valuing punctuality while exhibiting a more flexible approach in social contexts. This divergence in time perception can lead to misunderstandings and unmet expectations among patients seeking care abroad.

When it comes **to handling anxiety and building trust**, there are notable differences as well. According Gilles' Insights (2016) on empathy, the importance of emotional intelligence and empathy in intercultural communication. Building trust in a healthcare context is foundational, especially as Lithuanians may struggle to voice anxieties despite valuing transparent interactions. In Scandinavian cultures, trust is paramount, and transparent, empathetic communication is expected to cultivate strong patient-provider relationships. Conversely, the British approach to healthcare is often tinged with scepticism, mandating that providers work diligently to build trust through consistency and empathetic engagement.

To navigate these intercultural differences effectively, healthcare providers must focus on several key areas for improvement. Enhancing timeliness is critical, especially for patients from Scandinavian countries, who highly value prompt and direct communication. Additionally, providing specific information and detailed explanations regarding healthcare procedures can help satisfy Lithuanian patients who appreciate thoroughness and clarity. Proactive communication is essential to pre-emptively address potential concerns, particularly for patients anticipating anxieties about their care. Finally, the interplay of directness, empathy, timely responses, and specificity in communications can bridge gaps among diverse patient backgrounds, ultimately improving the medical tourism experience.

## Conclusions

1. Intercultural communication has emerged as a crucial aspect of globalization, necessitated by the interconnectedness of societies and cultures. Defined as the ability to convey and interpret messages across different cultures, effective intercultural communication fosters collaboration, enhances relationships with customers, and drives market growth. Scholars highlight that this communication process is symbolic and contextual, emphasizing the need to understand and adapt to cultural differences to establish trust and cooperation. The importance of mastering intercultural communication becomes even more pronounced in the thriving realm of medical tourism, where healthcare providers must navigate varying cultural expectations and communication styles to ensure patient satisfaction and streamline international healthcare interactions. In the realm of intercultural communication theories, various frameworks shed light on the intricate relationship between culture and communication styles. Recognizing the unique communication styles and cultural nuances of different groups allows practitioners to tailor their approaches, thus fostering trust and connection. As medical tourism continues to grow, institutions that prioritize effective intercultural communication and cultural competence are better positioned to succeed, ensuring positive outcomes for both healthcare providers and international medical tourists.



2. The research highlights the essential role of communication in enhancing medical tourist satisfaction and healthcare outcomes. Participants emphasized customer service as a key factor in choosing a medical tourism clinic, with communication being a crucial aspect of this service. Respondents particularly valued effective verbal communication, indicating that it contributes significantly to positive patient experiences. Furthermore, timely email responses were deemed important, especially among patients from cultures that prioritize punctuality, which reinforces the need for swift interaction to build trust and satisfaction. Qualitative feedback supports these insights, with many comments praising positive communication experiences. Overall, the findings suggest that improving communication can enhance patient satisfaction and potentially lead to better healthcare outcomes in medical tourism.

3. Despite the positive feedback regarding communication, there are inherent challenges that providers may face when interacting with international medical tourists from diverse cultural backgrounds. The research indicates notable communication differences between cultures, such as the more formal communication style preferred by Lithuanians and patients from Nordic countries compared to the more ambiguous approach common in the British Isles. These disparities may result in misunderstandings or misinterpretations during provider-patient interactions.

4. To enhance the medical tourist experience in emerging markets like Lithuania, medical clinics should implement several communication strategies: provide cultural competence training for staff to understand diverse patient backgrounds, adopt clear and structured communication methods to convey medical information effectively, utilize technology such as multilingual chatbots for better communication, employ empathetic communication techniques to build trust, empathy, timely responses, and specificity in communications, could establish a feedback mechanism for continuous improvement based on patient input, and create online communities for past and potential patients to share experiences and foster connection.

## References

1. Baltrūnaitė, A. (2023, March 9). Medical tourism in Lithuania: a threat to Lithuanians to go without treatment or an opportunity to enrich the whole country? Alfa.lt; NEWS CENTRE. <https://www.alfa.lt/verslas/verslo-naujienos/medicininis-turizmas-lietuvoje-gresme-lietuviams-likti-be-gydymo-ar-galimybe-praturteti-visai-valstybei/282836/>
2. Betancourt, J., Green, A., & Carrillo, J. (2002). Cultural competence in health care: emerging frameworks and practical approaches.
3. Chen, G.-M., & Starosta, W. J. (1998). A review of the concept of intercultural awareness. 27-54. <https://core.ac.uk/reader/56699010>
4. Chiarenza, A. (2012) *Developments in the concept of 'cultural competence'*. In *Inequalities in Health Care for Migrants and Ethnic Minorities*; Ingleby, D., Chiarenza, A., Devillé, W., Kotsioni, I., Eds.; Garant: Antwerp, Belgium, 2012; pp. 66–81
5. Crooks, V. A., Kingsbury, P., Snyder, J., & Johnston, R. (2010). What is known about the patient's experience of medical tourism? A scoping review. *BMC Health Services Research*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6963-10-266>
6. De-María, B.; Topa, G.; López-González, M.A. (2024) Cultural Competence Interventions in European Healthcare: A Scoping Review. *Healthcare* 2024, 12, 1040. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare12101040>.
7. Fortune Business Insights. (2023). Medical Tourism Market. In Fortune Business Insights. <https://www.fortunebusinessinsights.com/industry-reports/medical-tourism-market-100681>
8. Geertz, C. (2017) *The Interpretation of Cultures : Selected Essays*. 3rd edition New York :Basic Books
9. Gries, P. H., Yue Chiu, C., & Benegal, A. (2022). Globalization and Intercultural Relations. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190236557.013.573>

10. Griffith, D. A. (2002). The role of communication competencies in international business relationship development. *Journal of World Business*, 37(4), 256-265. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1090-9516\(02\)00092-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1090-9516(02)00092-5)
11. Gudykunst, W. B., & Kim, Y. Y. (1997). *Communicating with strangers*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
12. Hall, E. T. (1966). The hidden dimension. *The Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied*, 69(1), 7-9.
13. Harsh N. (2024, February 26). Exploring the Growth and Trends of Medical Tourism Industry. Medium; Medium. <https://medium.com/@narwatharsh01/exploring-the-growth-and-trends-of-medical-tourism-industry-76fe89bcd84e>
14. Hofstede, G. (1984). Cultural Dimensions in Management and Planning. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 1, 81-99. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01733682>
15. Holmes, P., Fay, R., Andrews, J., & Attia, M. (2013). Researching multilingually: New theoretical and methodological directions. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 23(3), 285-299. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12038>
16. Hong, Y. A. (2016). Medical Tourism and Telemedicine: A New Frontier of an Old Business. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 18(5). <https://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.5432>
17. Kelly, B. (2023, March 13). Why Is Intercultural Communication Important" Peep Strategy. Peep Strategy. <https://peepstrategy.com/why-is-intercultural-communication-important/>
18. Kyprianou, A. (2022,). Unlocking Hall's Cultural Dimensions: The Secret to Opportunity abroad - Preply Business. Preply.com. <https://preply.com/en/blog/b2b-hall-cultural-dimensions/>
19. Lithuanian Medical Tourism Cluster. (n.d.). Lithuanian Medical Tourism Cluster LITCARE - KlasterLT. ClusterLT. <https://klaster.lt/klateris/lietuvos-medicinos-turizmo-klasteris-litcare/>
20. LRT. (2023, 9 August). Medical tourism in Lithuania: great potential, but different priorities. Lrt.lt; lrt.lt. <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/sveikata/682/2053021/medicinos-turizmas-lietuvoje-potencialas-didelis-bet-prioritetai-ki>
21. Martin J.N., Nakayama Th. K. (2022) *Intercultural communication in contexts*. Publish. McGraww Hill, p. 481
22. Mason, A. (2023). Medical Tourism and Communication. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.1461>
23. Medical Tourism Magazine. (2023). Cultural Competency and the Medical Travel Patient Experience. [www.magazine.medicaltourism.com](http://www.magazine.medicaltourism.com). <https://www.magazine.medicaltourism.com/article/cultural-competency-and-the-medical-travel-patient-experience>
24. Poornima, A. S., & Subramanian, S. (2024). Fostering Global Wellness: Harnessing Social Media to Enhance Cross-Cultural Trust to propel Medical Tourism Ensuring Economic Growth. *European Conference on Social Media*, 11(1), 216-224. <https://doi.org/10.34190/ecsm.11.1.2408>
25. Purba, A. R. (2021, November 8). The Effects of Globalization on International Communication in the World Business. *Papers.ssrn.com*. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3962731](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3962731)
26. Rai, A. (2014). Globalization and Medical Tourism: A Spatial Study. *Indian Journal of Spatial Science*, 5, 14-23. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313247973\\_Globalization\\_and\\_Medical\\_Tourism\\_A\\_Spatial\\_Study](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313247973_Globalization_and_Medical_Tourism_A_Spatial_Study)
27. The Culture Factor (2024). Country comparison tool. [Theculturefactor.com](http://Theculturefactor.com). <https://www.theculturefactor.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=ireland%2Clithuania%2Cunited+kingdom>
28. Tolga Gül, Ahmet Değirmencioğlu, Benay Bulut, Erhan Dağ, Yusuf Baştürk, & Mehmet Dagli. (2022). Health Service Quality and Patient Communication In Medical Tourism. *Journal of Tourismology*, 8(1), 115-137. <https://doi.org/10.26650/jot.2022.8.1.1059252>

*Dr. Miglė Eleonora Černikováitė  
Vilniaus Kolegija*

### Santrauka

Globaliam kontekste komunikacija įgauna itin svarbų vaidmenį, užtikrindama sklandų keitimąsi informacija įvairiose kalbinėse ir kultūrinėse srityse. Tikslinga bei aiški komunikacija padeda išvengti galimų nesusipratimų, skatina bendradarbiavimą ir stiprina ryšius tarp skirtingų kultūrų atstovų. Todėl svarbu, kad tarptautinės komunikacijos pagrindas būtų grindžiamas abipuse pagarba ir supratimu. Veiksmingas bendravimas yra ypač reikšmingas tarptautinėje ir daugiakultūrinėje aplinkoje, kaip sparčiai augančiame medicinos turizmo sektoriuje. Aiškios bendravimo strategijos padeda įveikti kalbinius ir kultūrinius barjerus, skatina bendradarbiavimą ir kuria santykius, kuriuose gerbiami skirtingi požiūriai.

Medicinos turizmo sektorius, kuris, kaip prognozuojama, išaugs nuo 13,13 mlrd. JAV dolerių 2021 m. iki 53,51 mlrd. dolerių 2025 m., reikalauja veiksmingo bendravimo koordinuojant sveikatos priežiūrą ir logistiką. Pirmaujančios šalys šiame sektoriuje yra Tailandas, Indija ir Turkija, tačiau Lietuva taip pat turi potencialo dėl kokybiškų sveikatos priežiūros paslaugų ir konkurencingų kainų. Vis dėlto Lietuva susiduria su iššūkiais, tokiais kaip nepakankama vyriausybės parama ir kultūriniai bendravimo barjerai, kurie stabdo jos augimą. Tad bendradarbiavimas ir efektyvus komunikavimas yra būtini siekiant užtikrinti, kad Lietuva pasinaudotų medicinos turizmo galimybėmis ir sustiprintų savo pozicijas globalioje rinkoje.

Šio tyrimo tikslas – ištirti tarpkultūrinės komunikacijos poveikį medicininio turizmo pacientų iš Skandinavijos ir D. Britanijos sprendimų priėmimo procesams ir patirčiai. Tyrimometodologija: tyrime taikytas trijų krypčių metodas, siekiant ištirti bendravimo įtaką medicinos turizmo pacientų sprendimų priėmimui ir patirčiai. Pirma, pacientams suskirstyti pasitelktos įvairių mokslininkų nustatytos bendravimo ir kultūrinės klasifikacijos. Antra, buvo atlikta anoniminė pacientų apklausa, siekiant įvertinti jų požiūrį į medicinos organizacijos vykdomą komunikaciją. Trečia, išanalizuoti apklausos duomenys taikant aprašomosios statistikos analizės metodus, siekiant nustatyti, kokią įtaką bendravimas turėjo pacientų patirčiai ir paslaugų vertinimui. Tyrimas parodė, kad veiksmingas tarpkultūrinis bendravimas yra labai svarbus siekiant užtikrinti teigiamą pacientų patirtį ir daro didelę įtaką organizacijos paslaugų vertinimui. Tyrimo išvadose pabrėžiama, jog veikiant globalizacijos sąlygomis, būtinybė pripažinti ir gerbti kultūrinius skirtumus bendraujant skirtingose kultūrose, o tai yra ypač svarbus aspektas medicinos srityje. Šiomis aplinkybėmis, sveikatos priežiūros paslaugų teikėjai turi sumaniai orientuotis įvairiuose kultūrinuose lūkesčiuose ir bendravimo stiliuose, kad užtikrintų pacientų pasitenkinimą ir optimizuotų tarptautinį sveikatos priežiūros paslaugų teikimą. Veiksmingą tarpkultūrinę komunikaciją galima apibrėžti kaip gebėjimą perduoti ir interpretuoti pranešimus skirtingose kultūrose, kas stiprina savitarpio pasitikėjimą ir santykius su klientais. Šis procesas yra ir simbolinis, ir kontekstinis, todėl, norint sukurti pasitikėjimą ir bendradarbiavimą, reikia suprasti kultūrinius skirtumus. Šiomis aplinkybėmis Skandinavijos ir D. Britanijos salų medicinos turistų tyrimas parodė, kad bendravimas yra esminis veiksnys, padedantis didinti medicinos turistų pasitenkinimą ir sveikatos priežiūros rezultatus. Dalyviai nurodė, kad ypač vertinamas veiksmingas žodinis bendravimas ir savalaikis atsakinėjimas elektroniniu paštu. Tačiau tyrime taip pat nustatyti iššūkiai, susiję su skirtingais kultūriniais bendravimo stiliais. Norint pagerinti medicinos turistų patirtį Lietuvoje, grožio ir estetikos klinikos turėtų įgyvendinti kelias svarbias komunikacijos strategijas. Pirmiausia, būtina rengti kultūrinės kompetencijos mokymus darbuotojams, kad jie geriau suprastų įvairių kultūrų pacientus. Taip pat turėtų būti taikomi aiškūs ir struktūrizuoti komunikacijos metodai, leidžiantys veiksmingai perduoti medicininę informaciją. Šiuolaikinės technologijos, tokios kaip daugiakalbiai pokalbių robotai, taip pat galėtų pagerinti bendravimą. Empatiškas bendravimas, savalaikiai atsakymai ir konkretumas bendraujant, padėtų stiprinti pasitikėjimą, o grįžtamojo ryšio mechanizmas leistų nuolat tobulinti paslaugas atsižvelgiant į pacientų nuomonę. Galiausiai, kuriant internetines bendruomenes, buvę ir potencialūs pacientai galėtų dalytis patirtimi ir palaikyti ryšį.

**Pagrindiniai žodžiai:** Efektyvi komunikacija, medicinos turizmas, tarpkultūriniai santykiai, medicinos turistų patirtis, Lietuva