

# A Study on Brand Image Perceived Service Quality and Patient Satisfaction in the health Care sector

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Received: 17.04.2024

Revised : 16.05.2024

Accepted: 24.05.2024

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## ABSTRACT

The brand image and loyalty is a critical component of success in today's corporate environment. Loyal clients might indirectly aid in the promotion of services to individuals in their immediate vicinity. The purpose of this research is to examine the influence of brand image on general patient loyalty at Salem City Hospital. This is a quantitative study that combines an observational design with a cross sectional study design. The sample for this research consisted of 187 respondents working in the Salem City Hospital's outpatient department. The findings indicated that although brand image had a direct influence on patient loyalty, it had no effect on satisfaction-based loyalty. It is recommended that hospital management develop various marketing strategies to promote the hospital's existing health services, pay close attention to patient wait times because the average patient complains about doctors who are frequently late, and pay close attention to various brands or health services such as superior products. As a result, it has become a point of differentiation for the health services supplied by other institutions.

**Keywords:** Brand Image, Loyalty, Service Quality, Health Care Sectors and Patient Satisfaction.

## INTRODUCTION

Loyalty is a critical component of success in today's corporate environment. Loyal clients might indirectly aid in the promotion of services to individuals in their immediate vicinity. Faithful clients are often hesitant to change locations; in other words, someone who is loyal to a product will remain loyal to it even if the price increases. In the hospital industry, customer loyalty is shown by the customer's willingness to return to the same hospital for treatment if he or his family becomes ill. Customer Loyalty is shown by consistent purchasing behavior over an extended period of time as a result of a sequence of consumer choices. The high competition among hospitals makes companies compete to increase patient loyalty so they don't move to other hospitals. Intense competition will indirectly affect a hospital in maintaining market share, hospitals must work hard in maintaining patient loyalty.

For this reason, efforts to maintain patient loyalty are important things that must always be done by hospitals. Retaining consumers is an important thing that must always be done by the hospital.

Patient loyalty or loyalty is based on patient satisfaction and behavior. Patient loyalty to a hospital is one of the things that become a measure of the success of a process of providing health services. Loyal consumers will bring other consumers to use the same product.

Image is a set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions held by a person about an object, influenced by many factors that occur outside the company's control. Image is a representation of the assessment of consumers, both potential consumers and disappointed consumers, including other groups related to companies such as investors, agents and investors.

This assessment varies, both between groups and between individuals. Every patient wants good health cares because health care is one of the needs of everyone. Quality if the service offered to customers is in accordance with what is desired, it will provide satisfaction. At this time, users of health services, especially those who use quality public services, do not want to see the end result in the form of healing, but they also assess what they see and feel during treatment.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Yagci, Biswas and Dutta, (2009)** stated that the brand image refers to a set of perceptions in association with a brand and it reflects a customer's overall impression of a brand. Brand image has been widely studied in consumer purchasing behavior as it plays an important role in consumer decision making. The concept of brand image applies not only to tangible goods but also to business entities. Company brand image refers to the set of perceptions in relation to an organization's name and reputation; and it represents the factual and emotional elements of a firm. In today's competitive business environment, the company brand image has become a key success factor in all industries especially the service industry. A superior company image is the foundation for a service provider to hold its market position. It has strategic implications to attract and retain customers. In health care sectors, brand image plays a strategic role in assisting hospitals to outreach and to attract international customers for medical services.

**Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, (1988)** discussed the perceived service quality refers to the customer's assessment of the superiority or inferiority of the services provided by the organization. Service quality is the heart and soul of any service organization. It is a contributing factor to the success and survival of the firm. In the healthcare industry, receiving good quality care is a right of all patients and providing good quality healthcare is an ethical obligation of all healthcare providers. It is utmost important for the medical providers to improve their service quality from time to time by taking patients' perceptions and expectations into consideration.

**Kirsner and Federman (1997)** analysed the patient satisfaction refers to the degree to which the patients desired expectations, goals, and preferences are met by the health care provider and or service. Patient satisfaction can be explained as an interactive process which reflects patients' quality assessment on the medical services experienced. It has been found that patient satisfaction is important for the healthcare service providers in the following three areas: (1) maintaining their relationships with the patients satisfied patients are returned customers (2) identifying areas of strength and weaknesses in the organization, and (3) association with their financial benefits. Consequently, patient satisfaction is another key success indicator for the healthcare service providers.

## Background of the Study

With the improvement of the level of oral diagnosis and treatment in India, urban and rural residents have enhanced the awareness of dental health care greatly, and their demands for dental medical services are increasing. Residents have increased their investment in dental health. At the same time, as the living standards and income levels increase, the demands for health programs such as health checks, health treatments, and health beauty are also growing rapidly. While service demands become more and more important.

In recent years, the Indian government gradually privatizes healthcare services. Under this context, the private healthcare sector is growing rapidly and becomes a highly marketable healthcare industry. The vigorous development of private clinics is conducive to solving the health-related problems of short supply of healthcare services in hospitals, general hospitals, and community hospitals. On the other hand, the competition of private clinics becomes more intensive. In this situation, building patient loyalty towards dental clinics is quite important for health service providers.

## Statement of the Problem

Drastic changes in environmental factors forced companies to provide customers error free services. Since, patients are prevailing healthcare services from hospitals therefore, service quality and high standards for hospitals are very important. People are going to hospital in very susceptible condition in a hope that doctors will provide them the best cure in a gracious and pleasant atmosphere.

The condition of hospitals is very critical. The physical look of the hospitals, the tools, services, the behavior and knowledge of the doctors, communication with the patients, all need assessments. Lack of accredited body, no proper performance evaluation system, and weak regulatory mechanism has distracted customers' point of view regarding healthcare quality, hence, motivated the researcher to study the healthcare quality and conclude its impression on Patients' commitment and loyalty.

## Objectives of this study

To study the brand image, perceived service quality and patient satisfaction in the health care sector at Salem City, Tamil Nadu.

To analyse the brand image and loyalty in the health care sectors

To measure the service quality and patient satisfaction in the health care sectors

### Research Methodology

This is a deductive approach to test the available theories; hence a quantitative technique is adopted. Questionnaires adopted from various author has modified for this research in various public and private hospitals of Salem City, Tamil Nadu.

### Sampling Technique

For data collection, a total of 300 questionnaires distributed among the patients of public and private hospital. Data collected from those patients they were prevailing the services and from recently discharge patients and their family members through non-probability convenience sampling technique.

### Measurement Scale

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Berry (1994) analysed the servqual scale with minor modification done be Babakus and Mangold, (1992) adopted for healthcare quality that consist of fifteen items. The measurement scale adopted by Allen and Mayer (1990) for affective and calculative commitment with slight modification is adopted for measuring commitment in this study and it consist of seven items. Patients' loyalty two aspects have taken for the current study. The Foster and Cadogan, (2000) scale adopted for Patients' loyalty that comprises of six items.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The current research is based on primary data to evaluate the effect of perceived service quality on commitment and customer loyalty. The adopted instruments utilized for collection of data from the hospitalized and recently discharged patients in various public and private hospitals of Salem. Collected data was then put into SPSS for further analysis. The subsequent table shows the descriptive statistics and reliability of the instrument. Cronbach's alpha suggests that all the instrument are highly reliable by providing the alpha score more than 0.7 (Santos, 1999).

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Internal Reliability

Variables	Mean	SD	Cronbach'sAlpha
Servqual	46.52	9.81	0.91
Tangibiity	9.36	2.58	0.87
Reliability	9.23	2.49	0.87
Responsiveness	9.27	2.40	0.88
Empathy	5.95	1.69	0.88
Assurance	12.68	3.16	0.87
Loyalty	19.09	3.84	0.87
AttitudinalL	9.69	2.40	0.88
BEHloyalty	9.39	2.14	0.88
Commitment	18.54	4.25	0.86
AFcommitment	9.24	2.33	0.87
Calcommitment	9.30	2.32	0.87

Source: Primary Data Computed.

### Hypothesis Testing

Given an adequate measurement model, the hypotheses developed for this study were tested by examining the proposed structural model. As seen from the AMOS output, the structural model provides an adequate fit. All the indices of  $\chi^2/df = 1.995$ , GFI = 0.946, RMSEA = 0.051, TLI = 0.960, CFI = 0.967, and PNFI = 0.767

meet the requirement of good fit. Table 2 presents the results of the direct relationships depicted in the research model (H1 to H4). The results show that all of the path coefficients for the hypothesized direct relationships are significant at  $p < .001$ . Hence, H1 to H4 were supported by the data.

**Table 2.** Results of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesized Path	S.R.W $\beta$	Critical Ratio	Supported (Yes/No)
H1:Brand Image $\rightarrow$ Perceived Service Quality	0.470	6.982*	Yes
H2:Perceived ServiceQuality $\rightarrow$ Patient Satisfaction	0.586	8.801*	Yes
H3:Perceived ServiceQuality $\rightarrow$ Brand Loyalty	0.337	5.109***	Yes

H4:Patient Satisfaction → Brand Image	0.517	7.715***	Yes
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Source: Primary data, \*p-value < 0.001. S.R.W = Standardized Regression Weight.

Baron and Kenny (1986) method was used to examine the mediation effect of patient satisfaction in the relationship between perceived service quality and behavioral intention and proposed that three preliminary conditions must be met to determine the mediating effect. They are: (1) the predictor variable (perceived service quality) is positively and significantly related to both the mediator variable (patient satisfaction) and the dependent variable (brand image) (2) the mediator (patient satisfaction) is positively and significantly related to the dependent variable (brand image) and (3) after controlling for the mediating variable (patient satisfaction), the impact of the predictor (perceived service quality) on the dependent variable (brand loyalty), should still be remained significant but reduced in strength (for partial mediation) or should no longer be significant (for full mediation).

### Findings and Recommendations

Based on the results of the statistical analysis of this study, several findings were worth noting. Firstly, hospital's brand image was evidently shown to have significant positive influence on patients perception on the quality of the medical services provided by the hospital. This finding is consistent with those of brand image is often used as a platform by patients to create impression and perception of the service quality of the hospital. Given the importance role by the hospital image, the management must understand what forms a positive brand image among the consumers and allocate a reasonable amount of resources for branding purpose. This may be achieved by improving their services and refining the current marketing strategies. Hospitals may actively participate in social media, improve media advertising, enhance public relations, and engage in any other means which can promote the hospital image in the eyes of medical tourists.

### CONCLUSION

Findings revealed that there is a positive and significant impact of service quality on Patients' loyalty. It suggests that if the healthcare provide error free services, that will produce more loyal customers. Loyal customers will remain with the company and is a source of positive word of mouth. The service quality effects patients' commitment in public and private hospitals of Salem. Path analysis performed for this purpose and found that service quality and Patients' commitment are positively and significantly associated. Result suggests that enhanced level of service quality will improve patients' commitment. Committed patients' is a source of strong bond between service providers and receivers.

This study was also a comparative study, to acknowledge the perceptions of Patients' of healthcare quality and patients' loyalty. The current study concludes that service quality effects Patients' loyalty when Patients' commitment mediates. It also empirically tested the difference of the healthcare quality, Patients loyalty and commitment in public and private hospitals of Peshawar. This study theoretically contributed by proposing a new model with different combination of the selected variables.

The current study focus was to test the role of commitment as a mediator in healthcare. However, in future other variables such as; corporate image, patients' relationship, patients' satisfaction may be tested as a mediator. The scope of the current study may also be extended geographically, by adding more cities of Tamil Nadu. The socio-economic, cultural and political aspect may also be examined in future research.

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