

BRAND EQUITY DIMENSIONS ON BRAND TRUST AND BRAND SATISFACTION: A STUDY IN A PRIVATE HOSPITAL

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ABSTRACT

Healthcare providers face a formidable obstacle in the seemingly endless stream of tasks necessary to provide quality care to patients. Among them, branding is one of the most important actions since it helps to establish a company's identity and reputation in the marketplace. Branding is the practice of associating a certain identity (such as a name, logo, slogan, or other identifier) with a business or its products in order to elicit a certain response from consumers. Branding is responsible for anything from the tunes used in commercials to the color schemes of

affiliated logos to the emblems that represent certain healthcare institutions. Branding is frequently referred to as identity management due to the fact that it creates identities for businesses and the products. Primarily, branding is the beginning of the marketing communications process. The research focuses on the brand equity of private hospitals. It also contains the following aims that are connected to the primary goal of the research. i) to understand the interdependence of the brand equity aspects of the chosen private hospitals ii) to assess the influence of brand equity factors on private hospital brand trust and satisfaction. Customers of multi-specialty hospitals are used to gauge brand equity and its dimensions, as well as brand trust and satisfaction. Tamil Nadu is well-known for its medical tourism, with a large number of regular and long-term patients from all over the globe. Customers of multi-specialty hospitals are target responders, and the number of their population is unknown. Convenient sampling procedure is used to obtain 100 sample responders. During the data collection and interview schedule, the inpatients are immediately met. Multi-specialty hospitals are only recognized seriously since they offer services for the majority of patients who need treatment for many diseases. For this reason, multi-specialty hospitals with more than 100 beds are being examined

Keywords: Brand Equity Dimensions, Brand Trust and Brand Satisfaction and Private Hospital

INTRODUCTION

Brand equity is the totality of a consumer's knowledge, perceptions, and emotions about a brand, and it represents the value the consumer places on that brand. According to Hellier (2003), a consumer's level of satisfaction is influenced by their opinion of a brand's perceived equity. Customer happiness has been shown to be a significant factor in establishing a company's reputation. Organizations that are able to produce considerable equity for their customers are able to boost customer satisfaction, whereas companies who are already capturing substantial equity in the marketplace are able to lower consumer satisfaction. *Fouzia Ali, et al.(2015)[5]*. Much of a company's brand equity may be attributed to the confidence its customers have in its products or services. Because it boosts a brand's market share and revenue to the point where they may outpace their primary rivals, brand equity is a very valuable asset. Brand equity is a multifaceted measure that takes into account several other factors, including, but not limited to, a company's "brand image," "brand identity," "brand awareness," "brand loyalty," and "brand association," among many others. *He, H. and Li (2011)[7]*. Brand equity results from a company's persistent marketing efforts over time. Brand equity refers to the relevance of how well or poorly a product is perceived by the general public. An increase in brand value is the ultimate result of a favourable opinion. Concisely informing customers of the benefits of your product is essential while attempting to build a name for it. In order to spread the word about their wares, companies pour a lot of money into marketing. Thus, significant care must be taken

before continuing the conversations to ensure the branding problem is dealt with effectively and thoroughly. Careless formulation will have a negative impact on future advertising and other forms of promotion since branding initiatives serve as the cornerstone of all marketing communications. Due to the dynamic nature of the environment and the associated conditions and challenges, the persist will always be there as a means of preserving the significance of established identities. *HowardiViszaAdha and Wiry Utami (2021)[9]*.



Theoretical Foundation

The term "loyalty" was used to measure the actual act of a customer's continuing preference, while "equity" was used to investigate the impact of consumers' memories on their buying behaviours. These two assessments went hand in hand with each other. A small but growing body of research has examined the correlation between satisfying customer service and repeat business. *Ervyn, Fiske and Malone (2012),[3]* looked at what factors contributed to and affected customers' happiness with the hotel industry. The study's author encouraged the mediator to play a role in smoothing out differences in service quality and customer satisfaction and return rates. There is a shortage of research that analyzes the function that consumer pleasure plays as a mediator between brand equity and brand loyalty. When seen through the perspective of consumer pleasure, features of brand equity are shown to have a strong association with customer loyalty. The author investigated the role of patient satisfaction as a full and partial

mediator, setting the stage for future research on the association between the two variables. This is because there is a large body of research showing that happy customers are more loyal to the brands they like. *Grace and Cass (2005)[6]*. The most recent developments expand upon the body of work by including trustworthy societal standards and elements of nature.

Brand Equity in Hospitals – An Overview

Brand equity is a qualitative sign of a brand's positive reputation as perceived by consumers when the brand is evaluated apart from any other factors. Brand equity is the monetary and non-monetary worth of a brand. The trust consumers have in a company's name determines how much of a price hike they can justify making for their goods or services. Brand equity, which develops over time, may be seen as the advantage a certain brand has over its competitors and/or generic alternatives. The healthcare industry is thriving worldwide because the vast majority of individuals will need medical attention at some time in their lives. The facility's continued success is a testament to the quality of these medical services, which in turn helps to cultivate a positive perception of the firm and its brand. For private healthcare facilities, especially those concerned about the fierce economic competition, knowing their internal and external surroundings has always been a top priority. Learning about the procedures used by competitors in the same field may be beneficial to the growth of any firm. *HowardiViszaAdha and Wiry Utami (2021)9]*. The USP (sometimes called the competitive advantage) is the thing that makes one business superior to another. Increased earnings and market share are common outcomes for businesses that have this competitive edge and understand how to put it to use. However, in order to maximize earnings, private hospitals place a higher emphasis on expanding their brand value and perception in the eyes of clients than they do on attracting and maintaining well-known physicians and experts. Equity in service brands is just as crucial as it was in the past for product brands. *Datta, (2003[2])*. "Multiple studies have shown that many of the same metrics used to evaluate brand equity in the goods sector can also be used to businesses providing services. The study's findings, due to the many differences between services and goods, consumers assign a different weight to the growth of service brands compared to that of non-service brands, making it clear that a novel conception is required to ensure service brand equity. In addition, the word "company" is used to describe a brand's home in the service industry, whereas the word "factory" is used to describe its home in the manufacturing industry."

Brand awareness

The term "brand awareness" refers to the degree to which a consumer is familiar with a certain brand within a given product category. Awareness may impact people's thoughts and feelings, leading to the selection of a brand and serving as a powerful tool in the cultivation of brand loyalty. A customer's perception of a brand's quality improves as that brand's visibility

risers. The value and reliability of the services offered are also crucial components in this equation. One of the most crucial aspects that defined a company's short-term and long-term success is the quality of service it delivers. This is because contented consumers are more likely to recommend your business to others, remain loyal to you, and make repeat purchases due of the positive experiences they've had with you. However, the reputation of a company's brand is also crucial in this process. Success in branding may be attributed to a number of different aspects, one of which is the brand's popularity among consumers. On reality, people who go to hospitals should be well-versed in the concept of healthcare branding and the features associated with it. This will ensure that they get care that is tailored to their specific condition. *Fatema Azad and Masum (2015)[5]*, Numerous studies have shown a strong connection between name recognition and consumer loyalty. Consumers' opinions of a company's social responsibility, commercial service, and perceived quality of service may all have an impact on the company's brand recognition..

Brand Trust

Kvasova, et al.(2013),[13] revealed that hospitals are fighting to maintain their market share in light of the present competitive environment. Within the context of a cross-sectional research design, this study sought to identify elements affecting hospitals' brand equity. Brand equity-affecting elements were first recognized. Subsequently, the effective elements were considered by convening the panel of specialists. After the survey was standardized, it was administered to 450 inpatients at hospitals in Qazvin. Finally, using the Structural Equation Model (SEM) in AMOS22, the significant threshold was set at 0.05, and the link between the variables was assessed. The results of the analysis showed that all fit indices were within the range of acceptability. With a t-value greater than 1.96, we find that there is a positive relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty and brand equity. If hospitals care about their continued relevance in society and the quality of their services, they need to pay close attention to the study's findings about the dimensions and elements determining brand equity. Based on their investigation of a high-tech company's service brand equity, *Kotler and Keller (2012)[12]*. identified two primary characteristics that affect service brand equity. Consistent with prior research, they find that service quality (overall service quality) is crucial. In this article, the author defined post-service customer attitudes and expectations. In contrast to earlier research, they argue that the perceived value of a service is an additional component that determines the equity of that brand. To put it simply, this element is the difference between the client's actual and anticipated advantages. This research aimed to better understand the relationships between many facets of service quality and the customer's overall impression of those qualities, their valuation of those qualities, and the service brand's reputation. The conclusions were drawn by the author based on a study of people who regularly use mobile telecommunications services in

Taiwan. The first major take away from the research is that intangibles and timeliness have no bearing on how people evaluate the quality of a service or its worth, whereas empathy, network quality, dependability, and assurance do. Additionally, the perception of value acts as a mediator between the quality of service as a whole and its impact on brand value. Third, the linkages between the various characteristics of service quality and the sense of value customers get from them are moderated in different ways by the quality of the service as a whole. Finally, brand equity is directly influenced by both empathy and network quality. As the survey concluded, high-tech service providers should prioritize research on key service drivers in order to establish a solid service brand.

Once the companies had isolated the most consequential service drivers, they were in a position to make well-informed investment choices in the service sector. This research proved that services companies need to put a human face on technology. The authors of this research provide new information by tracing the chain of events that starts with the unique attributes of the service and ends with customer loyalty to the brand. *Kotler and Keller (1987)[11]*, stated that a brand is "a name or phrase as well as a sign, symbol, design, or combination of these components that is used to identify the goods or services of a single seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from the offerings of competitors." A brand is a "distinguishing term and/or symbol" (like a logo or trademark) used to identify the products or services of a single seller or a consortium of sellers and to set them apart from those of rivals. Therefore, a brand reveals the origin of the product to the consumer and safeguards both the consumer and the manufacturer from competitors who may try to sell imitations. Consumers and users' evaluations of equivalent goods and services vary by brand. The experiences of past buyers may be mined for information about brands. Consumers researched many companies to choose the best options that would best satisfy their needs and preferences. Businesses, in their view, may help customers by streamlining the decision-making process.

Statement of the Problem

Branding is essential for service providers because it builds trust with customers and helps them picture more alternatives available to them. By providing unique value to customers, it stands out from the competition. This is because competition may really endanger the viability of firms when more choices appear from delivering similar services to the same target clients. Due to increased exposure and access to information, consumers are increasingly aware of the presence of other suppliers in the market and are willing to switch if their needs are met by a different vendor. The healthcare system is not immune to these facts. As a result of the country's rapidly increasing population, rapid urbanization, rapidly ageing population, and strain on the public sector's healthcare infrastructure, healthcare industry is one of its most promising and

rapidly rising sectors. *Fouzia Ali, Salma Muqadas (2015[5])*. Due to their position as patients' initial point of contact, private healthcare service providers often have an edge over those in other healthcare categories in meeting the rising demand. If they want to survive in the growing market, private general hospitals can't only rely on hiring famous doctors and buying fancy equipment. Patients may quickly switch to other strategic competitors if there are no defined standards for behavior, responsiveness, and communication, increasing the burden on private hospitals to spend more time and money seeking to counteract this impact. Healthcare providers have challenges in establishing a brand identity and sustaining patients' perceptions of the hospital's services, quality, and results.

Research Objectives

The research focuses on the brand equity of private hospitals in Tamil Nadu. It also contains the following aims that are connected to the primary goal of the research. They are as follows:

1. To understand the interdependence of the brand equity aspects of the chosen private hospitals .
2. To assess the influence of brand equity factors on private hospital brand trust and satisfaction.

Sampling technique

Customers of multi-specialty hospitals are used to gauge brand equity and its dimensions, as well as brand trust and satisfaction. Tamil Nadu is well-known for its medical tourism, with a large number of regular and long-term patients from all over the globe. Customers of multi-specialty hospitals are target responders, and the number of their population is unknown. A convenient sampling procedure is used to obtain 100 sample responders. During the data collection and interview schedule, the inpatients are immediately met. Multi-specialty hospitals are only recognized seriously since they offer services for the majority of patients who need treatment for many diseases. For this reason, multi-specialty hospitals with more than 100 beds are examined.

Analysis, Inference and Results

Nature of the Respondents

Patients' perceptions and attitudes will be influenced by their demographics. In social science research, the social and economic background of the subjects is seen as a significant aspect in analyzing their behaviour. The type of the services given by hospitals will impact patients' opinions about them. Hence, at the outset, the socio-economic nature of the sample respondents is presented to understand their characteristics. The following table shows the result.

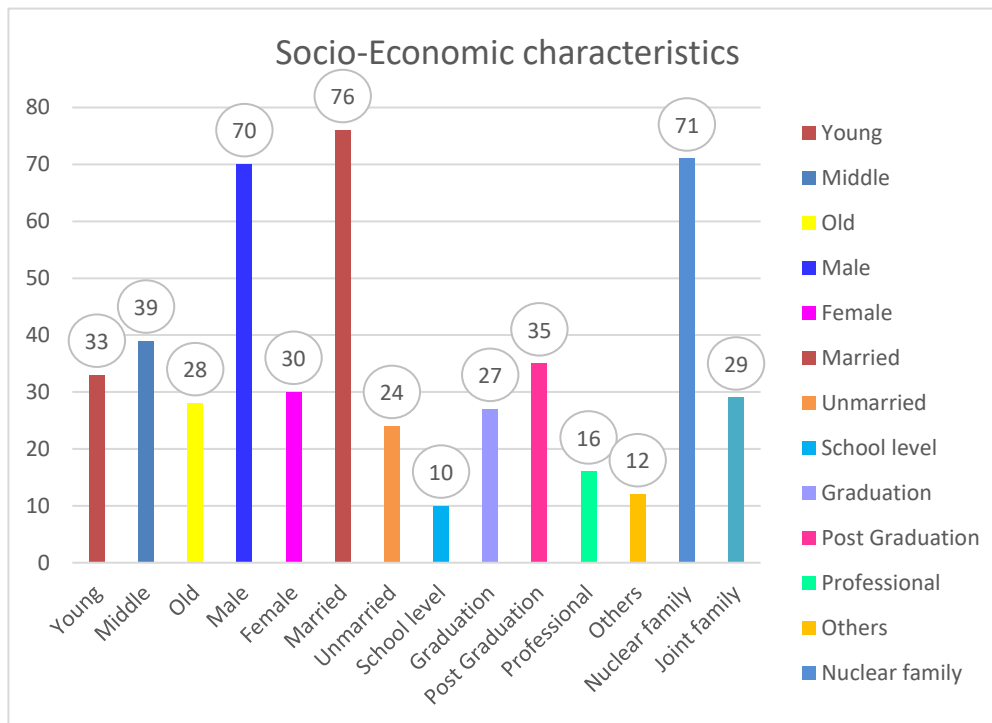
Table: 1

Nature of the Respondents

Socio-Economic characteristics		Number of respondents
Age group	Young	33
	Middle	39
	Old	28
Gender	Male	70
	Female	30
MS	Married	76
	Unmarried	24
Educational qualification	School level	10
	Graduation	27
	Post Graduation	35
	Professional	16
	Others	12
Nature of family	Nuclear family	71
	Joint family	29

The respondents are divided into three groups depending on their age, with 33 being young, 39 being middle-aged, and 28 being elderly. There are 70 male responses and 30 female respondents. According to the marital status of the respondents, 76 are married and 24 are single. 10 respondents have completed secondary school, 27 are graduates, 35 are postgraduates, 16 are professionals, and 12 are from other categories. There are two types of families: nuclear families and joint families. There are 71 responders from nuclear families and 29 from combined families.

Chart.No.1



Various Dimensions of Brand Equity

The dimensions of the brand equity, i.e., perceived service quality, Brand awareness, brand loyalty and brand association are studied. Each dimension is elaborately observed from the respondents using 5 point Likert scale with different statements. Perceived service quality is measured with five statements, brand awareness. The results are given below.

1. Perceived service quality

The perceived service quality is measured with the five aspects of SERVQUAL, i.e., tangibility, realization, recognition, assurance and empathy. The result of the descriptive statistics is given below in Table 2.

Table 2

Perceived Service Quality

Perceived service quality	Mean	Std. Deviation
Tangibility	3.47	0.935
Realization	3.17	1.002
Recognition	3.19	1.014
Assurance	3.02	1.016

Empathy	3.39	1.142
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The perceived service quality shows that the tangibility (physical existences, human resources like doctors and supporting staff) is perceived most (3.47) among the various aspects. The empathy is other quality perceived most (3.39) by the respondents. Empathy is ranked third with 3.32 mean.

2. Brand awareness

The brand awareness of the respondents is measure with 7 statements like how do they recall the brand, recognition of the brand, reaching the symbol and logos of the brands, etc. The result is given below.

Table 3

Brand Awareness

Sl.No.	Brand awareness	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Recall the brand immediately	3.84	3.33
2	The Brand stands out among competitors	3.32	2.07
3	I know the message behind the logo and emblem	3.54	2.31
4	I am familiar with the emblem associated with this brand	3.14	1.89
5	Brand name of hospital is well known	3.18	1.85
6	Take serious steps to maintain quality service	3.51	2.45
7	The hospital's effort to promote the brand	3.59	2.20

The brand awareness is found more with the familiarity with the Recall the brand immediately (3.84), I know the message behind the logo and emblem (3.54) and Take serious steps to maintain quality service (3.51). It shows that the brand awareness of patients is measured with the emblem or logo identification, role of best services of the hospitals in brand equity and the familiarity of the brand among the general public.

CONCLUSION

High brand equity indicated a strong association with a product's strong attractiveness to consumers. Patients' attitudes and behavior toward hospitals have become a critical concern in the highly competitive health care business due to the influence that a hospital's brand image has on such attitudes and behavior. Brands are now an integral component of contemporary marketing strategy, generally acknowledged as valuable assets and critical points of difference, particularly for service organizations. This is very important information for firms that provide a service to their customers. A range of diverse theoretical frameworks have been suggested in an

effort to get a better understanding of how consumers receive brand images and the reactions they have to such images. *Javalgi et al (1992)[10]*. The goal of this study is to offer an overview of the role of brand image in hospitals, as well as its impact on brand equity. If a hospital concentrates on developing its brand image, it is likely that the hospital's service quality, brand image, and brand equity will all increase significantly. As a result of these results, the study concluded that hospital managers should aim to establish and maintain a favourable hospital brand image in order to improve the overall quality of services provided and to promote patient pleasure and loyalty. In its results and recommendations, the research also gives a number of ideas for the construction and maintenance of a good brand image for hospitals. *HowardiViszaAdha and Wiry Utami (2021)[9]*.

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