PRIVATE HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY: EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE TO ENHANCE PATIENT LOYALTY

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ABSTRACT

With a population exceeding 270 million, Indonesia faces significant healthcare challenges, particularly infectious diseases. Private hospitals play a crucial role, and patient loyalty is essential for their success. This study aims to contribute to hospital strategy development by understanding factors influencing patient loyalty to private hospitals in Indonesia. Specifically, it explores the relationships between hospital image, Word of Mouth (WoM), patient satisfaction, and loyalty. A quantitative, cross-sectional study was conducted in Jakarta from September to October 2023. Data was collected from 131 out of 156 respondents at a private hospital in Jakarta using a validated questionnaire. SmartPLS 4 was employed for analysis. Hospital image significantly influences patient lovalty directly and indirectly through patient satisfaction. Positive WoM has a significant impact on both patient satisfaction and loyalty. The study confirms the positive correlation between hospital image, patient satisfaction and loyalty. The study emphasizes the importance of building and maintaining a positive hospital image through effective marketing, active WoM management, and service quality improvement. Strategies focusing on these aspects are recommended to strengthen patient relationships, enhance reputation, and remain competitive in the challenging healthcare industry. Future research should delve into factors reinforcing patient loyalty, explore the impact of digital marketing strategies on hospital image, investigate variables moderating the relationship between positive WoM and patient satisfaction, and explore effective patient feedback management strategies focusing on information technology.

Keywords: Hospital image, word of mouth, patient satisfaction, patient loyalty, healthcare management.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia ranks 4th globally with a population exceeding 270 million as of December 2021. This substantial population places a significant burden on healthcare, particularly concerning infectious diseases. Therefore, healthcare services play a crucial role in maintaining public health, as stipulated in Law No. 36 of 2009 on Health (Sibuea et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, healthcare facilities consist of primary healthcare facilities (FKTP), advanced referral healthcare facilities (FKTRL), as well as pharmaceutical and medical equipment facilities. The number of hospitals, part of FKTRL, increased by 9.6% from 2017 to 2021, reaching 3,042 hospitals in 2021. Of these, 63.4% are privately managed due to limited government investment and high demand from the public (Mahendradhata, Trisnantoro, Listyadewi, Soewondo, Harimurti, et al., 2017; Sibuea et al., 2022).

Access to private hospitals is not restricted, allowing individuals to choose based on their ability and willingness to pay (Mahendradhata, Trisnantoro, Listyadewi, Soewondo, Marthias, et al., 2017). Consequently, competition between private and public hospitals makes patient loyalty crucial (Yıldırım et al., 2022). Healthcare institutions that can maintain patient loyalty are believed to enhance their revenue (Sumaedi et al., 2015). Patient loyalty can be influenced by various factors, with patient satisfaction being a significant factor according to Chang (Sumaedi et al., 2015). Ensuring satisfaction, patients are more likely to seek services from the same institution, ultimately fostering loyalty (Yıldırım et al., 2022). However, there is a study in Southeast Sulawesi indicating that patient satisfaction does not affect patient loyalty (Patawayati, 2013). Therefore, further studies are crucial to understanding factors influencing patient loyalty, especially in private hospitals, and their relationship with patient satisfaction.

Patient satisfaction, based on research by Dayan et al. (2022), is influenced by several factors, including service quality, Word of Mouth (WoM), doctor-patient relationships, and hospital image. However, these factors do not directly impact patient loyalty (Dayan et al., 2022). Two studies in Indonesia have examined the relationship between WoM and patient trust and loyalty (Rizan et al., 2020; Ruswanti & Pamungkas, 2021), but there is no study examining the relationship between WoM and patient satisfaction. Other studies have linked hospital image to patient loyalty (Listyorini et al., 2021; Ramli, 2019), but none have investigated its relationship with patient satisfaction. Therefore, there is a need for a study examining the relationship between WoM and hospital image on patient satisfaction and loyalty in Indonesia.

The authors can provide further knowledge about the results of research that has been conducted to hospital management and health service providers to become a source of knowledge to increase hospital patient loyalty. This research looks at the positive factors that influence patient loyalty to the hospital, so it is hoped that it can develop the efforts and efforts of health workers to improve hospital performance.

This research aims to contribute to the development of hospital strategies in retaining and attracting new patients. The primary objective is to comprehend the factors influencing patient loyalty to private hospitals in Indonesia. Specifically, the study aims to, firstly, identify the correlation between hospital image and patient satisfaction and loyalty. Secondly, explore the relationship between Word of Mouth (WoM) and patient satisfaction and loyalty. Lastly, the research seeks to identify the connection between satisfaction and patient loyalty.

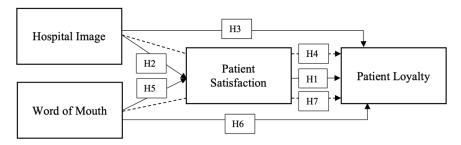


Figure 1. Research Model

H1. Patient satisfaction positively affects the loyalty of private hospital patients

H2. Hospital image positively affects the loyalty of private hospital patients

H3. Hospital image positively affects the satisfaction of private hospital patients

H4. Patient satisfaction positively mediates the relationship between hospital image and patient loyalty

H5. Word of mouth positively affects private hospital patient loyalty

H6. Word of mouth positively affects private hospital patient satisfaction

H7. Patient satisfaction positively mediates the relationship between word of mouth and patient loyalty

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional design to assess the correlation between hospital image, Word of Mouth (WoM), patient satisfaction, and patient loyalty. The research was conducted from September to October 2023 in Jakarta. Primary data was obtained through a questionnaire based on previous research validated and tested for reliability by Dayan et al. (2022). The operationalization of the variables can be seen at **Table 1**.

Variable	Definition	Indicator	Measurement Method	Measurement Scale
Hospital image (X1)	Beliefs, ideas, and impressions that patients hold towards a hospital (Crompton, 1979 in Dayan et al., 2022).	Adapted from Ciavolino and Dahlgaard (2007) in Dayan et al. (2022): (1) This health care facility is known for providing good health services. (2) This health care facility is known for providing efficient services. (3) This health care facility is known for providing satisfactory customer service.	Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).	Numeric
Word of Mouth (X2)	Informal person-to-person communication between the sender and receiver of a message, which is non- commercial in nature towards a product, business, service (Wangenheim and Bayon, 2007 in Dayan et al., 2022).	Adapted from Cham, et al. (2016) in Dayan et al., (2022): (1) My family/friends speak positively about this health care facility. (2) My family/friends positively influence my judgement of this health care facility. (3) My family/friends help me make the decision to choose this health care facility.	Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).	Numeric
Patient Satisfaction (M)	The level of patient pleasure with the health services they receive, both inside and outside the doctor's office (Dayan et al., 2022).	Adapted from Askariazad and Babakhani (2015) in Dayan et al. (2022): (1) I am overall satisfied with my experience with this healthcare facility. (2) My expectations were met. (3) I am satisfied with my decision to receive services from this healthcare facility.	Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).	Numeric
Patient Loyalty (Y)	Repeated use of a hospital's health services (Dayan et al., 2022).	Adapted from Askariazad and Babakhani (2015) in Dayan et al. (2022): (1) I encourage my friends/family to bring their loved ones to this health care facility. (2) I have said positive things about this health care facility to other patients. (3) I am willing to pay more to be treated at this health care facility. (4) I consider this health care facility as my "first choice" if I need treatment.	Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree).	Numeric

The target population comprised all patients of a private hospital in Jakarta, with the sample focusing on outpatient individuals meeting inclusion criteria. Purposive sampling was employed, and the minimum sample size used was 130, following the recommendations of Hair et al. (2019). Research variables included hospital image and WoM as independent variables, patient satisfaction as a mediating variable, and patient loyalty as the dependent variable. Hospital image (X1) was defined as the trust, ideas, and impressions of patients regarding the hospital. WoM (X2) was defined as informal interpersonal communication about the hospital. Patient satisfaction (M) was defined as the level of patient contentment with healthcare services. Patient loyalty (Y) was defined as the repeated use of hospital healthcare services.

Analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4, encompassing convergent validity, discriminant validity, reliability, structural model, and hypothesis testing. Convergent and discriminant validity were evaluated using factor loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), cross-loading, Fornell-Larcker, and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). Reliability was measured through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Structural model analysis involved R², Q², and effect size.

Each hypothesis will be tested using the path coefficient and specific indirect effect through the SmartPLS programme. The finding of a significant difference is the result of the p value <0.05 in the test, so it can be concluded that there is an influence between the independent variable and the dependent variable being tested.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Out of 156 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 131 samples met the inclusion criteria. The majority were female (66.4%), primarily aged 18-25 years (40.5%). About 74% had a college education, 60% were employed, and the majority (74.8%) hailed from North Jakarta. Respondent characteristics are detailed in **Table 2**.

Respondents Characteristics	Category	Number (n = 131)	Percentage
Gender	Male	87	66.4
_	Female	44	33.6
Age	18-25 years	53	40.5
_	26-35 years	19	14.5
_	36-45 years	13	9.9
_	46-55 years	20	15.3
_	56-65 years	22	16.8
_	> 65 years	4	3.1
Education	No formal education/ Elementary school/ Junior high school	0	0
_	High school/ Equivalent	18	13.7
_	Bachelor's degree	97	74.0
_	Master's/ PhD	16	12.2
Occupation	Student	29	22.1
_	Employed	79	60.3
_	Retired	13	9.9
_	Unemployed	10	7.6
Residence	North Jakarta	98	6.7
_	East Jakarta	10	18.9
_	West Jakarta	7	74.4
_	Central Jakarta	9	6.9
_	South Jakarta	4	3.1
_	Outside Jakarta	1	2.3

Table 2 Characteristics of Respondents

The analysis conducted using SmartPLS 4 involved testing the convergence validity with factor loading values and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All indicator variables showed factor loading values > 0.6, and AVE values > 0.5, meeting the convergence validity test criteria. Discriminant validity tests using cross-loading, Fornell-Larcker, and HTMT also met the requirements.

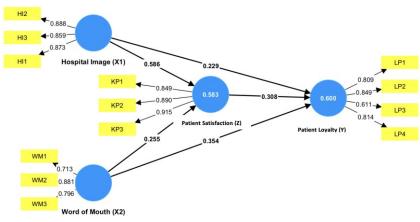


Figure 1. Factor Loading Analysis

Reliability tests with Cronbach's alpha showed values above 0.6, and composite reliability showed values above 0.7, meeting the criteria. Furthermore, the inner model test results indicated an R2 value of 58.3% for patient satisfaction and 60% for patient loyalty, indicating a moderate relationship. Q2 values exceeding 0 indicate the model's ability to predict effectively. The Goodness of Fit results, calculated by taking the square root of the product of mean AVE and R2, yielded a value of 0.642, indicating a good fit.

Effect size analysis (Table 3) revealed that hospital image strongly influences patient satisfaction and weakly influences patient loyalty. Meanwhile, word of mouth has a weak effect on patient satisfaction and a moderate effect on patient loyalty. Patient satisfaction has a weak effect on patient loyalty.

Table 3. Effect Size Analysis					
	Hospital	Patient	Patient	Word of	
	Image (X1)	Satisfaction (Z)	Loyalty (Y)	Mouth (X2)	
Hospital Image (X1)	NA	0,544	0,056	NA	
Patient Satisfaction (Z)	NA	NA	0,099	NA	
Patient Loyalty (Y)	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Word of Mouth (X2)	NA	0,103	0,188	NA	

The hypothesis testing results, conducted through direct hypothesis testing using path coefficient analysis and specific indirect effects (Table 4), showed positive significance of hospital image and word of mouth on patient satisfaction and loyalty, both directly and indirectly.

••	Original sample (O)	T statistics	P value
Hospital Image (X1) → Patient Satisfaction (Z)	0,586	8,199	0,000
Hospital Image (X1) → Patient Loyalty (Y)	0,229	3,176	0,002
Patient Satisfaction (Z) \rightarrow Patient Loyalty (Y)	0,308	3,703	0,000
Word of Mouth (X2) \rightarrow Patient Satisfaction (Z)	0,255	3,690	0,000
Word of Mouth (X2) → Patient Loyalty (Y)	0,354	5,001	0,000
Hospital Image (X1) \rightarrow Patient Satisfaction (Z) \rightarrow Patient Loyalty (Y)	0,181	3,508	0,000
Word of Mouth (X2) \rightarrow Patient Satisfaction (Z) \rightarrow Patient Loyalty (Y)	0,079	2,416	0,016

Table 4 Hypothesis Testing Results

The Influence of Satisfaction on Patient Loyalty in Private Hospitals (H1)

This research indicates a significant influence between patient satisfaction and patient loyalty (p < 0.001; [CI 0.142 - 0.468]), with moderate influence (path coefficient = 0.308, T statistics = 3.703). Patient satisfaction, influenced by the performance of products or services, reflects the patient's assessment of healthcare services. This relationship serves as a guide to monitor and enhance hospital performance (Prakoeswa et al., 2022). Patient satisfaction has a positive correlation with loyalty, indicating the patient's willingness to return and recommend to others (Fatima et al., 2018).

Factors influencing patient satisfaction in private hospitals include a friendly medical environment, effective communication, privacy protection, and patient safety. Improved satisfaction impacts patient loyalty, supporting clinical values and hospital service sustainability. Increased loyalty also enhances patient compliance and health outcomes (Liu et al., 2021). Therefore, it is recommended for hospitals to maintain good communication and service to enhance satisfaction and, in turn, patient loyalty.

The Influence of Hospital Image on Patient Satisfaction in Private Hospitals (H2)

In this study, a significant and strong influence was found between hospital image and patient satisfaction (p < 0.001; [CI 0.440 – 0.723], path coefficient = 0.586, T statistics = 8.199). These results are consistent with the research by Trisno et al. (2023) and Asnawi et al. (2019), which also show a positive correlation between hospital image and patient satisfaction (p < 0.001). The hospital's corporate image, as a primary marketing strategy, has been proven to have a significant impact on patient satisfaction (p = 0.001) (Asnawi et al., 2019; Trisno & Berlianto, 2023). Understanding the positive relationship between a good hospital image and patient satisfaction is crucial for hospitals to improve service quality according to patient needs. In this context, the hospital's ability to continuously develop services for patients will enhance their image, help patients make better health-related decisions, and address existing service limitations (Bancsik et al., 2023).

The Influence of Hospital Image on Patient Loyalty in Private Hospitals (H3)

The impact of hospital image on patient loyalty is significant (p = 0.002; [CI 0.082 – 0.364]) with a weak moderate influence (path coefficient = 0.229, T statistics = 3.176). Hospital image, as a valuable and difficult-to-imitate intangible asset, plays a crucial role in achieving the sustained performance of hospitals (Y. Kim et al., 2008). Previous studies by Trisno et al. (2023) and Dayan et al. (2022) support these findings, indicating a positive relationship between hospital image and patient loyalty (Dayan et al., 2022; Trisno & Berlianto, 2023). This suggests that a positive image can enhance patient loyalty to the hospital. This concept aligns with earlier research, affirming that the hospital image among private hospitals can be a key factor in strengthening patient loyalty (Trimanah, 2023).

Hospital image directly influences patient loyalty, affecting patient evaluations and perceptions of quality. Components of the hospital image involve trust, ideology, and patient impressions of the hospital, relative to other hospitals. Therefore, building a positive hospital image requires improved communication with patients, healthcare staff training, effective advertising strategies, and public relations to create a competitive advantage for hospitals in the market (Vimla & Taneja, 2021).

The Indirect Influence of Hospital Image on Patient Loyalty (H4)

This study reveals a significant relationship between hospital image and patient loyalty through patient satisfaction (p < 0.001; CI = 0.081 - 0.288]) showing partial mediation between hospital image and patient loyalty. The findings assert that the hospital's image has a substantial impact on patient satisfaction, and indirectly, patient satisfaction influences patient loyalty to return to the hospital, aligning with the study by Asnawi et al. (2019) and Ramli (2019).

This correlation provides a deeper understanding of the indirect influence between hospital image, patient satisfaction, and patient loyalty. Recognizing that a positive hospital image can shape brand awareness, strengthen trust among patients, and support organizational development, it carries important managerial The importance of building and maintaining a positive hospital image becomes evident in this research. A positive image not only impacts patient satisfaction but also contributes to the formation of patient loyalty, a critical element in efforts to sustain and improve service quality in private hospitals (Yunida & Wijaya, 2016). Therefore, hospital management needs to focus on the development and maintenance of a positive hospital image to ensure high levels of patient satisfaction and loyalty.

The Influence of Word of Mouth on Patient Satisfaction in Private Hospitals (H5)

This research reveals a significant influence between Word of Mouth (WoM) and patient satisfaction in private hospitals (p < 0.001; [CI 0.119 - 0.391), with a moderate correlation (Path coefficient = 0.255, T statistics = 3.690). WoM is a factor that can shape patient behavior and actions toward the services provided in hospitals, correlating not only between patients but also with the communication skills of hospital staff (Soare et al., 2022). WoM also has a significant impact on the level of patient loyalty to hospital services. Patients tend to be more satisfied when they hear positive testimonials from fellow patients with similar conditions, indicating trust in the quality of hospital services. This creates positive implications of WoM, directly enhancing the level of patient satisfaction (Ranaweera & Jayawardhena, 2014). These findings align with previous research, such as Ferguson et al.'s (2006) study.

The Influence of Word of Mouth on Patient Loyalty in Private Hospitals (H6)

This research reveals a significant influence of Word of Mouth (WoM) on the level of patient loyalty (p < 0.001; [CI 0.217 – 0.490]), with a moderate size effect (Path coefficient = 0.354, T statistics = 5.001). WoM, as a form of informal conversation and recommendations from current and potential patients, has a significant impact on patient loyalty in private hospitals (Taylor, 2003). WoM can be categorized into positive and negative, with negative WoM, although less frequent, tending to spread faster and exerting a stronger influence on patient decisions. This study confirms that WoM plays a crucial role in influencing patient satisfaction and loyalty to the hospital (Casidy & Wymer, 2016). These findings align with the study by Ferguson et al. (2006), stating that positive WoM correlates with the level of patient loyalty. Thus, hospitals and healthcare services need to actively promote positive WoM to reinforce patient loyalty (Ferguson et al., 2006).

The Indirect Influence of Word of Mouth on Patient Loyalty (H7)

The indirect influence of WoM on patient loyalty through patient satisfaction is significant (p = 0.016; [CI 0.024 – 0.151]) showing partial mediation between word of mouth and patient loyalty.

This finding is consistent with previous research emphasizing the relationship between WoM, patient trust, and patient loyalty (Rizan et al., 2019).

Previous studies have shown that WoM can influence the level of patient trust, which, in turn, is related to patient loyalty (Rizan et al., 2019). This finding aligns with the general view that patient satisfaction increases when patients have higher levels of trust in healthcare professionals and hospitals (Birkhäuer et al., 2017). Therefore, this research enriches our understanding by demonstrating that positive WoM can indirectly affect patient satisfaction, ultimately impacting patient loyalty to the hospital.

The practical implication is that enhancing positive WoM can be an effective strategy to improve patient satisfaction and, ultimately, strengthen patient loyalty. Therefore, hospital management may consider strategies that support the increase of positive WoM as part of their efforts to enhance the patient experience and build long-term relationships with patients (Birkhäuer et al., 2017; Rizan et al., 2019).

In this study, some limitations need to be considered. The sampling was limited to a single hospital center, which may restrict the generalization of findings to broader conditions. The correlations between variables, especially on specific aspects, indicate weak to moderate effects, possibly related to the sample size and limited diversity of hospital centers. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct further research involving more samples and hospital centers to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of the variables studied on a larger scale.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of the study, the main conclusion is that all hypotheses in this study are accepted. Patient satisfaction shows partial mediation to patient loyalty. Hospital image plays a crucial role in shaping patient loyalty by enhancing patient satisfaction as it is shown that hospital image has the largest influence on patient satisfaction. WoM, particularly of a positive nature, strengthens loyalty through the improvement of image and satisfaction. Thus, enhancing hospital image, proactive hospital image management, and improving patient satisfaction are key strategies to strengthen loyalty and maintain competitiveness in the competitive healthcare industry.

To enhance patient loyalty satisfaction in private hospitals, the emphasis is recommended on the improvement of hospital image. The three factors that influence hospital image: good health service, efficient health service, and satisfactory customer service can be the main aspects that needed to be improved. Management strategies regarding these three factors are the key to further boost patient satisfaction and later loyalty. These measures are expected to strengthen patient relationships, enhance reputation, and sustain competitiveness in the challenging healthcare industry.

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