
Role of branding in Indian hospitals

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Abstract: Indian hospitals are using branding to create a positive outlook about their services to outpatient. This in turn enhances outpatient confidence on the hospital, increases loyalty and chances for revisiting hospital. Branding also helps the hospital to stand out from competition. The whole branding activities will lead to increase in revenue. Among the hospitals, private hospitals are seen to adopt branding more. Messages reflecting brand communication can be seen on print media, electronic media, display boards inside hospital premises and hoardings. Branding influences some factors. Awareness of these factors will help hospitals to plan their branding activities better. Hospitals can focus on factors having influence from branding and can drop or reduce focus on factors that do not have influence by branding. The purpose of this study is to identify factors that are influenced by branding. Data on the 13 factors is collected by an online questionnaire on 429 outpatients. Chi square test was performed to find the association of factor with hospital branding. 12 factors showed statistically significant association with branding indicating that branding does affect those 12 factors. The option having the highest frequency of respondents amongst 7 options was identified for all the 12 factors. This option is concluded as having the maximum influence by hospital branding. Only 1 factor did not show statistically significant association with hospital branding.

Keywords: Branding, hospital, outpatient

INTRODUCTION

Hospitals use branding to make their products and services stand out from the crowd⁵. It gives hospitals distinct identity. It leads to gain in customer confidence and enhances loyalty⁸. It influences on public awareness, trust and reputation²²

The process of hospital branding is important for it affects many factors. The market reacts to the brand on what the brand offers and communicates. Healthcare professionals can connect with their outpatients through branding of hospitals¹⁵. They communicate on various attributes of hospital service. It can be used to guide the outpatient purchasing decisions¹³, thereby resulting in increasing the revenue¹⁸.

The following are involved in hospital branding³

1. Branding dimensions

This includes brand equity, brand loyalty, brand image, brand awareness and brand trust.

2. Branding strategy and branding process

3. Branding outcomes and benefits

Includes outpatient awareness of hospital services, hospital referral, increasing patient satisfaction, suggesting the hospital to peer groups, and creating good image of the hospital.

Attempts of Indian hospital branding can be seen in messages on hoardings, hospital website and display boards inside the hospital, hospital software applications and internet. It can also happening through social media like Facebook¹⁷.

The branding outcomes and benefits can be seen on various factors. These factors can be the ones which are not obvious in hospital branding and ones that are obvious in hospital branding. The obvious factors can be 'increase in revenue' and 'expanding base of customers'. Not obvious factors can be the factors which are not directly related with branding. Like branding helps increasing the tendency of outpatients to revisiting the hospital¹¹, influencing outpatients rating of services and outpatients perceptions on hospital pricing. Thus hospital branding can be judged by knowing branding outcome and benefits. A positive effect on branding outcomes and benefits reflects the branding exercise by hospitals is in the right direction.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kumar PN, Jacob A and Thota S¹ in their research paper ‘Impact of healthcare marketing and branding on hospital services’ emphasized the role of corporate social responsibility in building hospital brand image. They conducted their study on data from Kasturbha hospital (KH) Manipal.

Yuliani in his research article² ‘Influences of brand on hospital performance and patient behavioral expectations’ present’s review of research articles from 2010 to 2019. From this study they could identify the practical consideration for the influence of brand on hospital performance and patient behavioral expectations.

Khosravizadeh O, Vatankhah and S, Maleki M³ in their research paper ‘a systematic review of medical service branding: Essential approach to hospital sector’ presents healthcare branding can be divided into 1. Branding dimensions 2. Branding process and strategies 3. Results and benefits of branding.

Vipin Jain and V K Sing⁴ in their research paper ‘Influence of Healthcare Advertising and Branding on Hospital services’ studied 12 hospitals in a span of two years on brand dimensions, branding process and strategies and results of branding. They identified hospitals whose marketing approach was for the entire country and whose marketing approach was for the state.

Chahal, H. and Bala, M. (2012) ⁶, ‘Significant components of service brand equity in healthcare sector’ presented significant relationship between perceived service quality and brand loyalty.

B. Sirisha and Dr M. Kishore babu in their research paper ‘Branding of hospitals – through tangible factors by selected hospitals’ suggests that trust is the most important element in branding of hospitals.

Elrod, J. K., & Fortenberry, J. L., Jr (2018) in their research paper ‘Driving brand equity in health services organizations: the need for an expanded view of branding’ presents that addressing the non traditional brand elements can enhance the brand equity.

E. Mitchell Church & Subhajit Chakraborty (2018) in their research paper ‘investigating healthcare brand communities: The impact of online hospital reviews’ studied 364 hospitals involving 22000 reviews and suggests that brand influences the patient decision making.

Objective of study

The objective is identifying factors influenced by hospital branding. The scope is limited to outpatient.

RESERCH METHODOLOGY

The study involves collecting responses from outpatients through an online questionnaire.

Research Model

The thirteen factors considered in this study are ‘outpatient knowing the hospitals’, ‘outpatient read on hospitals’, ‘outpatient read on hospital certificates’, ‘outpatient read on the doctor’, ‘outpatient heard the doctor name’, ‘outpatient was suggested a doctor’, ‘outpatient knows patient who got treated in Hospital’, ‘outpatient opinion in hospital services’, ‘outpatient opinion in his hospital visit’, ‘hospital staff cooperation’, ‘outpatient was given information of hospital’, ‘outpatient opinion in hospital pricing’ and ‘outpatient tendency to revisiting hospital’. Hospital branding influences these factors. This is shown in research model in Fig 1. The hypothesis for the model can be

H₀ = No association between the factor and hospital branding

H₁ = Association between the factors and hospital branding

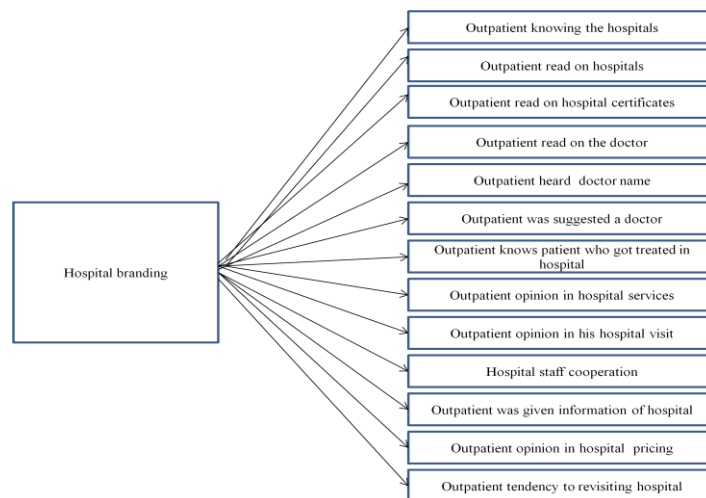


Fig.1:Research model on study to identify factors which get influenced by hospital branding

Questionnaire Design and Data Collection

Data is collected through an online questionnaire to 429 outpatients. The questionnaire consists of 13 questions in 7 point likert scale. The factors captured in the questionnaire are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Factors in the study

S,No	Factor name	Factor description
1	Know	Outpatient knowing the hospitals
2	Read	Outpatient read on hospitals
3	Rcertificates	Outpatient read on hospital certificates
4	Rdoctor	Outpatient read on the doctor
5	HeardD	Outpatient heard doctor name
6	Docsuggest	Outpatient was suggested a doctor
7	Patientknow	Outpatient knows patient treated in hospital
8	Rateservices	Outpatient opinion on hospital services
9	Raterevisit	Outpatient opinion on his hospital visit
10	Staffcoop	Hospital staff cooperation
11	Informhosp	Outpatient was given information on hospital
12	Pricingopinion	Outpatient opinion in hospital pricing
13	Revisit	Outpatient tendency to revisiting hospital
14	Branding	Mode of hospital branding

Statistical tools and methods

Association between factors with hospital branding is used to conclude on the influence of hospital branding on that factor. Chi square test is utilized to find the association between a factor and hospital branding. Descriptive statistics using frequency was used to determine the option in every factor which had the highest percentage of respondents. This option is the influenced by hospital branding the most. The software tool used is IBM SPSS.

Results and Discussion

The chi square assumption that 20 % cells expected value <5 is violated for all the factors with hospital branding. Hence likelihood ratio is read for all. Table 3 shows the chi square test results. The factors with their likert scale and percentages of frequency got by descriptive statistics are shown in table 2.

1. Know * Branding

Hypothesis:

H_0 = No association between 'outpatient knowing the hospitals' and hospital branding

H_1 = There is association between 'outpatient knowing the hospitals' and hospital branding

Chi square $p < 0.05$. H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted (chi square = 75.191, $df=36$, $p=0.000$) There is an association between 'outpatient knowing the hospitals' and branding. Thus hospital branding influences 'outpatient knowing the hospitals'.

'Friends / relatives' has highest frequency amongst the options (refer Table 2). That is majority of respondents knew about the hospital from friends / relatives. It can be assumed that friends / relatives got influenced by hospital branding and in turn passed the hospital knowledge to the outpatient.

2. Read * Branding

Hypothesis :

H_0 = No association between 'outpatient read on hospitals' and hospital branding

H_1 = There is association between 'outpatient read on hospitals' and hospital branding

Chi square $p < 0.05$. H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted (chi square = 182.201, $df=36$, $p=0.000$). There is an association between 'outpatient read on hospitals' and branding. Thus hospital branding influences 'outpatient read on hospitals'.

'Hospital website' has highest frequency amongst the options (refer Table 2). That is majority of respondents read about the hospital in hospital website.

3. Rcertificates * Branding

Hypothesis:

H_0 = No association between 'outpatient read on hospital certificates' and hospital branding

H_1 = There is association between 'outpatient read on hospital certificates' and hospital branding

Chi square $p < 0.05$. H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted (chi square = 191.585, $df=36$, $p=0.000$). There is an association between 'outpatient read on hospital certificates' and branding. Thus hospital branding influences 'outpatient read on hospital certificates'.

Hospital website' has highest frequency amongst the options (refer Table 2). That is majority of respondents read about the hospital certificates in hospital website

4. Rdoctor * Branding

Hypothesis:

H_0 = No association between 'outpatient read on the doctor' and hospital branding

H_1 = There is association between 'outpatient read on the doctor' and hospital branding

Chi square $p < 0.05$. H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted (chi square = 190.581, $df=36$, $p=0.000$). There is an association between 'outpatient read on the doctor' and branding. Thus hospital branding influences 'outpatient read on the doctor'.

Hospital website' has highest frequency amongst the options (refer Table 2). That is majority of respondents read on the doctor in hospital website

5. HeardD * Branding

Hypothesis:

H_0 = No association between 'outpatient heard doctor name' and hospital branding

H_1 = There is association between 'outpatient heard doctor name' and hospital branding

Chi square $p < 0.05$. H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted (chi square = 120.214, $df=36$, $p=0.000$). There is an association between 'outpatient heard doctor name' and branding. Thus hospital branding influences 'outpatient heard doctor name'

'Friends' has highest frequency amongst the options (refer Table 2). That is majority of respondents heard doctors name from friends. It can be assumed that friends got influenced by hospital branding and in turn passed the hospital knowledge to the outpatient.

6. Docsuggest * Branding

Hypothesis:

H_0 = No association between 'outpatient was suggested a doctor' and hospital branding

H_1 = There is association between 'outpatient was suggested a doctor' and hospital branding

Chi square $p < 0.05$. H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted (chi square = 81.868, $df=36$, $p=0.000$). There is an association between 'outpatient was suggested a doctor' and branding. Thus hospital branding influences 'outpatient was suggested a doctor'

'Hospital staff' has highest frequency amongst the options (refer Table 2). That is majority of respondents was suggested a doctor by hospital staff.

7. Patientknow * Branding

Hypothesis:

H_0 = No association between 'outpatient knows patient treated in hospital' and hospital branding

H_1 = There is association between 'outpatient knows patient treated in hospital' and hospital branding

Chi square $p > 0.05$. H_0 is accepted and H_1 is rejected (chi square = 37.635, $df=36$, $p=0.394$). There is no association between 'outpatient knows patient treated in hospital' and branding. Thus hospital branding has no influence on 'outpatient knows patient treated in hospital'.

8. Rateservices * Branding

Hypothesis:

H_0 = No association between 'outpatient opinion in hospital services' and hospital branding

H_1 = There is association between 'outpatient opinion in hospital services' and hospital branding

Chi square $p < 0.05$. H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted (chi square = 119.88, $df=36$, $p=0.000$). There is an association between 'outpatient opinion in hospital services' and branding. Thus hospital branding influences on 'outpatient opinion in hospital services'.

'Good' has highest frequency amongst the options (refer Table 2). That is majority of respondents rated the hospital services as good.

9. Raterevisit * Branding

Hypothesis:

H_0 = No association between 'outpatient opinion on his hospital visit' and hospital branding

H_1 = There is association between 'outpatient opinion on his hospital visit' and hospital branding

Chi square $p < 0.05$. H_0 is rejected (chi square = 134.742, $df=36$, $p=0.000$) There is an association between 'outpatient opinion on his hospital visit' and branding. Thus hospital branding influences on 'outpatient opinion on his hospital visit'.

'Good' has highest frequency amongst the options (refer Table 2). That is majority of respondents rated the hospital visit as good.

10. Staffcoop * Branding

Hypothesis:

H₀ = No association between ‘hospital staff cooperation’ and hospital branding

H₁ = There is association between ‘hospital staff cooperation’ and hospital branding

Chi square $p < 0.05$. H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted (chi square = 122.713, df=36, p=0.000). There is an association between ‘hospital staff cooperation’ and branding. Thus hospital branding influences on ‘hospital staff cooperation’.

‘Mostly agree’ has highest frequency amongst the options (refer Table 2). That is majority of respondents agree that staff cooperation was there in the hospital.

11. Informhosp * Branding

Hypothesis:

H₀ = No association between ‘outpatient was given information on hospital’ and hospital branding

H₁ = There is association between ‘outpatient was given information on hospital’ and hospital branding

Chi square $p < 0.05$. H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted (chi square = 81.502, df=36, p=0.000). There is an association between ‘outpatient was given information on hospital’ and branding. Thus hospital branding influences on ‘outpatient was given information on hospital’.

‘Friends / relatives’ has highest frequency amongst the options (refer Table 2). That is majority of respondents got the hospital information from friends / relatives. It can be assumed that friends / relatives got influenced by hospital branding and in turn passed the hospital information to the outpatient

12. Pricingopinion * Branding

Hypothesis:

H₀ = No association between ‘outpatient opinion in hospital pricing’ and hospital branding

H₁ = There is association between ‘outpatient opinion in hospital pricing’ and hospital branding

Chi square $p < 0.05$. H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted (chi square = 122.111, df=36, p=0.000). There is an association between ‘outpatient opinion in hospital pricing’ and branding. ‘More than competitor & affordable’ has highest frequency amongst the options (refer Table 2). That is majority of respondents feel the hospital pricing is more than the competitor and affordable.

13. Revisit * Branding

Hypothesis:

H₀ = No association between ‘outpatient tendency to revisiting hospital’ and hospital branding

H₁ = There is association between ‘outpatient tendency to revisiting hospital’ and hospital branding

Chi square $p < 0.05$. H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted (chi square = 59.823, df=36, p=0.008). There is an association between ‘outpatient tendency to revisiting hospital’ and branding. Thus hospital branding influences on ‘outpatient tendency to revisiting hospital’.

‘Always’ has highest frequency amongst the options (refer Table 2). That is majority of respondents have a tendency always to revisiting hospital.

Table 2 Seven point likert scale and percentage of frequency options in the questionnaire

Factor name	7 point likert scale used to capture the factor						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Know	Referral doctor (19.6 %)	Friends / Relative (50.8 %)	Print media (3.7 %)	Electronic media (3.5 %)	Internet (11.2 %)	Hoarding (5.6 %)	Hospital website (5.6 %)
Read	News paper (15.2 %)	Magazines (4.7 %)	Hospital website (36.8 %)	Internet (2.6 %)	Hoarding (14.9%)	Brochure (15.2 %)	Did not read (10.7 %)
Rcertificates	News paper (11.0 %)	Magazines (6.3 %)	Hospital website (39.6 %)	Internet (5.6 %)	Hoarding (22.6 %)	Software (1.6 %)	Did not read (13.3 %)
Rdoctor	News paper (7.9 %)	Magazines (3.7 %)	Hospital website (43.4 %)	Internet (4.0 %)	Hoarding (22.8 %)	Software (2.8 %)	Did not read (15.4 %)
HeardD	Conference (4.7 %)	Other doctors (11.7 %)	Patients (14.9 %)	Family (17.0 %)	Friends (21.4 %)	Staff (9.6 %)	Did not hear (20.7 %)
Docsuggest	Staff (32.6 %)	Patients (25.6 %)	Software (4.9%)	Referral doctor (18.9%)	Internet (2.8 %)	Mobile app (5.1 %)	Did not hear (10 %)
Patientknow	Past 15 days	Past month 1	Past 6 months	Past months 9	Past 1 year	More than 1 year	No one

Rateservices	Outstanding (3.3 %)	Excellent (9.6 %)	Very good (16.6 %)	Good (28.2 %)	Fair (17.7 %)	Below average (20.5 %)	Poor (4.2 %)
Raterevisit	Outstanding (3 %)	Excellent (10 %)	Very good (17.2 %)	Good (26.3)	Fair (14.5 %)	Below average (21 %)	Poor (7.9 %)
Raterevisit	Outstanding (3 %)	Excellent (10 %)	Very good (17.2 %)	Good (26.3)	Fair (14.5 %)	Below average (21 %)	Poor (7.9 %)
Staffcoop	Entirely disagree (0.7 %)	Mostly disagree (2.8 %)	Somewhat disagree (8.9 %)	Neither agree nor disagree (0.7 %)	Somewhat agree (32.9 %)	Mostly agree (42 %)	Entirely agree (12.1 %)
Informhosp	Hospital website (15.6 %)	Software (3 %)	Phone enquiry (19.6 %)	Reception (25.6 %)	Hoarding (7.7 %)	Friends / Relative (27.3 %)	Not done (1.2 %)
Pricingopinion	More than competitor & affordable (35.4 %)	Less than competitor & affordable (33.6 %)	Equal to competitor & affordable (20.3 %)	More than competitor & not affordable (5.4 %)	Less than competitor & not affordable (2.3 %)	Equal to competitor & not affordable (2.6 %)	Undecided (0.5 %)
Revisit	Never (0.7)	Rarely (0.9 %)	Infrequently (4 %)	Neutral (0.2 %)	Sometime (14.9 %)	Usually (30.3 %)	Always (49 %)
Hospital branding	News paper	Magazines	Hospital website	Internet	Hoarding	Software	Did not read

Table 3 Chi square test output from SPSS

S.No	Chi Square test	Likelihood ratio		
		Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
1	Know * Branding	75.191	36	.000
2	Read * Branding	182.201	36	.000
3	Rcertificates * Branding	191.585	36	.000
4	Rdoctor * Branding	190.581	36	.000
5	HeardD * Branding	120.214	36	.000
6	Docsuggest * Branding	81.868	36	.000
7	Patientknow * Branding	37.635	36	.394
8	Rateservices * Branding	119.88	36	.000
9	Raterevisit * Branding	134.742	36	.000
10	Staffcoop * Branding	122.713	36	.000
11	Informhosp * Branding	81.502	36	.000
12	Pricingopinion * Branding	122.111	36	.000
13	Revisit * Branding	59.823	36	.008
Chi square assumption: 20 % cells expected value <5 is violated in all. Hence likelihood ratio values is read				

CONCLUSIONS

Chi square test was performed on the 13 factors with hospital branding. 12 factors showed an association with hospital branding. These 12 factors are 'outpatient knowing the hospitals', 'outpatient read on hospitals', 'outpatient read on hospital certificates', 'outpatient read on the doctor', 'outpatient heard doctor name', 'outpatient was suggested a doctor', 'outpatient opinion in hospital services', 'outpatient opinion in his hospital visit', 'hospital staff cooperation', 'outpatient was given information of hospital', 'outpatient opinion in hospital pricing' and 'outpatient tendency to revisiting hospital'. Thus these 12 factors are influenced by hospital

branding activities. The option having the highest percentage of frequency of respondents was identified for each factor. These options are 'know': 'Friends / relatives', 'read': 'Hospital website', 'rcertificates': 'hospital website', 'rdoctor': 'hospital website', 'heardD': 'friends', 'docsuggest': 'hospital staff', 'rateservices': 'good', 'raterevisit': 'good', 'staffcoop': 'mostly agree', 'Informhosp': 'friends / relatives', 'pricingopinion': 'more than competitor & affordable' and 'revisit': 'always'. The factor 'outpatient knows patient treated in hospital' has no association with hospital branding.

Future scope of study

Study can be done on more factors.

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List of Tables

Table 1 Factors in the study

Table 2 Seven point likert scale and percentage of frequency options in the questionnaire

Table 3 Chi square test output from SPSS

List of Figures

Fig 1 Research model on study to identify factors which get influenced by hospital branding

21. based on the case method, Health Marketing Quarterly, 34:1, 35-47, DOI: 10.1080/07359683.2016.1275211
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