

The Correlations Between Brand Image and Patient Loyalty at the Universitas Airlangga Hospital

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Abstract

The rapid progression of technology and information has revolutionized public awareness and decision-making in healthcare, leading people to become more discerning based on perceived competency and brand reputation rather than only on cost or proximity. This research examines the correlation between brand image and patient loyalty at Universitas Airlangga Hospital (RS UNAIR), a teaching hospital in Surabaya that has seen substantial development since its inception in 2018. Data were acquired using a cross-sectional observational approach using questionnaires provided to 80 outpatient visitors (general and BPJS patients) chosen via purposive selection. The independent variable, brand image, was evaluated by hospital choice, strength, and uniqueness, whilst the dependent variable, patient loyalty, was quantified by interest in repeat visits and the propensity to suggest the hospital. Statistical analysis included descriptive and correlation tests, with significance established at $p < 0.05$. The findings revealed that patients with over three years of visits reported a more robust brand image than fresher patients. The research revealed that, while a favorable brand image correlates with increased competitiveness, employee morale, and public trust, there is no statistically significant relationship between brand image and patient loyalty. The results indicate that while brand image affects the hospital's reputation, other variables may impact long-term patient loyalty.

Keywords: Brand Image; Patient Loyalty; Excellent Service.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology and information in recent decades has significantly influenced public awareness and behavior, particularly in the selection of healthcare services (Hardiker & Grant, 2011; Holden & Karsh, 2010; Mosadeghrad, 2014). With greater access to health-related information, people have become more critical and selective in choosing healthcare facilities (Zhang, 2014; Thiede, 2005; Shen & Tao, 2022; Haimi, 2023; Sundell et al., 2022). Their decisions are no longer based solely on location or pricing but increasingly on various intangible aspects, such as their perception of the hospital's competence, known as perceived competence. This refers to how patients evaluate the excellence, professionalism, and quality of care provided by a hospital

(Stavropoulou et al., 2022; Liang & Howard, 2023; Cao et al., 2023; Havana et al., 2023). In this context, a hospital's brand image plays a crucial role in shaping patients' trust and loyalty (Taneja, 2021; Phonthanukitithaworn et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2017; Hussain et al., 2025). Brand image not only encompasses the hospital's visual identity but also reflects its overall reputation and credibility in delivering reliable and high-quality healthcare services (Mandagi et al., 2024; Babu & Thomas, 2020; Zaid et al., 2025). Universitas Airlangga Hospital (RS UNAIR), as a teaching hospital that began operations in 2018, has shown remarkable growth in a relatively short time. Strategically located in an elite area of Surabaya, RS UNAIR has recorded a significant increase in patient visits as well as revenue. This progress is largely attributed to the hospital's efforts to build a strong brand image through service excellence, human resource development, and strategic momentum particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the hospital demonstrated its institutional capability by earning recognition for outstanding COVID-19 care in East Java, and by advancing national and international research collaborations and innovations. Given this context, it is important to examine the relationship between brand image and patient loyalty at RS UNAIR. Patient loyalty is not merely a reflection of short-term satisfaction, but a long-term indicator of a healthcare institution's success in maintaining and strengthening public trust. Therefore, understanding the factors that contribute to patient loyalty especially in relation to brand image and perceived competence becomes essential in supporting hospital management strategies aimed at achieving high-quality and sustainable healthcare services.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a cross-sectional observational design by distributing questionnaires to 80 outpatient visitors (general and BPJS patients) using purposive sampling.

Inclusion Criteria:

1. General and BPJS patients seeking treatment at Universitas Airlangga Hospital (RS UNAIR);
2. Patients in good health and capable of answering all questionnaire questions without the help of a translator.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Hospital staff or family members of staff who are patients;
2. Unwillingness to participate as a respondent.

The independent variable is brand image, assessed from three aspects: preference for the hospital, strength of the hospital, and uniqueness of the hospital. The dependent variable is customer loyalty, measured by the interest in repeat visits and the willingness to recommend.

Statistical tests used:

1. Descriptive analysis to generate frequency distributions and percentages for each variable;
2. Correlation analysis to examine brand image among patient groups with treatment durations of <3 years and >3 years, and to analyze the correlation between brand image and loyalty, as well as the influence of brand image on

willingness to recommend RS UNAIR's services to others. A p-value of <0.05 indicates statistical significance, while the strength of correlation is interpreted from the r-value.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Respondent Description

Characteristic Subject	Medical Treatment at RSUA <3 year		Medical Treatment at RSUA >3 Year	
	Total	%	Total	%
Sex				
Male	8	32%	5	25%
Female	17	68%	15	75%
Age				
Adult (22-44 years old)	16	75%	6	28.5%
Middle age (45-54 years old)	2	6%	6	28.5%
Old (55-65 years old)	7	19%	8	43%
Education				
Not School	0	0%	0	0%
Primary School	1	4%	1	5%
Junior High	1	4%	3	15%
Senior High	10	40%	11	55%
Higher Education	13	52%	5	25%
Job				
Civil Servant	5	20%	2	10%
Privat Servant	8	32%	4	20%
Entrepreneur	5	20%	6	30%
Farmer	0	0%	0	0%
Housewives	6	24%	7	35%
Student	1	4%	0	0%
Unemployment	0	0%	1	5%
Funding				
Self	6	24%	4	20%
Insurance (BPJS)	19	76%	16	80%

Sources: Author, 2024 (edited)

Patients who have been receiving treatment at RSUA for less than 3 years and those for more than 3 years are predominantly female. There are differences in the highest age ranges, which are 22–44 years and 55–65 years. The highest level of education among respondents is either a university degree or high school graduate. There are also differences in the most common occupations, namely private employees and

housewives. Additionally, both groups share the same primary source of healthcare financing, with the majority of respondents using BPJS.

Table 2. Correlation to Brand Image

	Brand Image
	p-Value
Revisiting	0,167
Recommendation	0,264

Sources: Author, 2024 (edited)

The P-value for repeat visits is 0.167, which is greater than 0.05, meaning that H0 is accepted. Therefore, brand image has no effect on the interest in revisiting healthcare services at RSUA. Similarly, the P-value for willingness to recommend is 0.264, which is greater than 0.05, meaning that H0 is accepted. Thus, brand image has no effect on the willingness to recommend healthcare services at RSUA.

Variable		Brand Image	Education	Job	Duration	Fund	Age
Brand Image	Correlation	1.000	-.202	-.108	.119	-.220	.168
	Coefficient						
	Sig (2-tailed)	.	.891	.424	.427	.141	.238
	N	45	45	45	45	45	45
Education	Correlation	-.020	1.000	-.575*	-.271	.442*	-.135
	Coefficient						
	Sig (2-tailed)	.891	.	.000	.059	.002	.324
	N	45	45	45	45	45	45
Job	Correlation	-.108	-.575**	1.000	.100	.202	.019
	Coefficient						
	Sig (2-tailed)	.424	.000	.	.465	.139	.886
	N	45	45	5	45	45	45
Treatment Duration	Correlation	.119	-.271	100	1.000	.048	.257
	Coefficient						
	Sig (2-tailed)	.427	.059	.465	.	.751	.073
	N	45	45	45	45	45	45

Fund	Correlation	-.220	-.442**	.202	.048	1.000	.088
	Coefficient						
	Sig (2-tailed)	.141	.002	.139	.751	.	.542
	N	45	45	45	45	45	45
Age	Correlation	.168	-.135	.019	.257	.088	1.000
	Coefficient						
	Sig (2-tailed)	.238	.324	.886	.073	.542	.
	N	45	45	45	45	45	45

Sources: Author, 2024 (edited)

Forty-five respondents showed a significance value of <0.05 between the education and occupation variables, with a value of 0.00, indicating a significant relationship between education and occupation. In addition, the significance value of <0.05 between education and financing was 0.02, indicating a significant relationship between education and financing variables.

CONCLUSION

The brand image among the group with visits of more than 3 years is better compared to the group with visits of less than 3 years, indicating that RSUA continues to maintain a positive image among the public., a hospital with a good image or reputation encourages consumers to purchase the offered services, enhances competitiveness, boosts employee morale, and increases customer loyalty. A hospital as a brand consists of all the thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and everything related to the memory of a brand. Brand loyalty means the consistent preference of consumers for the services of the same healthcare provider, influenced by a positive experience. Customers do not switch to other brands and recommend the hospital's services to others. However, the value of brand image is not significantly related to brand loyalty.

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CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION

All authors affirm that any individual data (including images, videos, and other personal details) included in this manuscript are published with the explicit consent of the individual(s) involved. Written informed consent for publication was obtained from all participants, and copies of the consent forms are available for review by the journal's editorial office upon request.

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All authors declared that this work is original and has never been published in any form and in any media, nor is it under consideration for publication in any journal, and all sources cited in this work refer to the basic standards of scientific citation.

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