

Comprehensive Assessment of the Patient Journey and Service Quality: A Multi-Dimensional Study of Hospital Experiences in Tier Two City

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ABSTRACT

Understanding what influences patients' decisions is crucial for healthcare management to enhance the overall patient experience and satisfaction. Patients consider several factors when choosing a healthcare organization, including ambiance, accessibility, affordability, and quality. This research analyzes various factors such as waiting times, reputation, affordability, accessibility, sanitation, quality, and the services provided.

A cross-sectional study was conducted with 277 participants to evaluate hospital service quality. The findings indicate that to meet patient expectations, healthcare organization must prioritize accessibility, affordability, and sanitation. Additionally, they should maintain a strong reputation and minimize wait times. Healthcare organizations should take into account the preferences of the patients they aim to serve, which requires a thorough analysis of the data provided in the study.

Keywords: Patient Satisfaction, Healthcare Quality, Hospital Services, Patient Preferences, Service Accessibility

INTRODUCTION

Understanding patients' preferences is crucial for delivering high-quality healthcare in today's vibrant environment. Patient satisfaction and service excellence are necessary components of success. Hospitals, both private and public, must excel in health care while also meeting the sophisticated expectations of their patients. [1]

When patients choose a healthcare provider, several critical factors come into play. Among these are pricing transparency, the accessibility of services, the competency and expertise of medical professionals, the compassion and empathy exhibited by staff, and the smoothness of administrative processes. These elements significantly shape the decisions patients make regarding their healthcare. This research is propelled by a pressing need to narrow the gap between what patients expect and the services they actually receive. It recognizes that healthcare is no longer limited to the act of treatment but encompasses the entire patient experience, from the moment they enter a hospital to their post-treatment follow-up.

Hospital management has the conviction that the participative role of healthcare professionals in hospitals will increase patient satisfaction. In this perspective, the pressing priority of healthcare providers for hospitals will always be patients. [2&3] The study intends to delve into the various factors influencing consumer satisfaction, shining a light on the unique aspects of patient care. By examining these dimensions, the research aims to provide actionable insights that will empower healthcare professionals to refine their strategies, thereby enhancing service delivery, increasing patient satisfaction, and fostering enduring loyalty. [4]

Hospitals that actively tailor their services to meet the specific needs of their patients stand to gain a distinct advantage in a highly competitive landscape. This proactive approach can build trust and reliability, leading to long-lasting patient relationships and loyalty. The study's findings will form a robust foundation for the development of patient-centered healthcare services, enabling hospitals to elevate their quality standards and adapt to their clients' ever-evolving demands. [5] Healthcare organisations can be very useful for continuous and sustainable improvement in quality of services, improved performance of the organisation, patient satisfaction, and building self-confidence of the providers. [6]

The overarching goal of this study is to identify and evaluate the key drivers of patient preferences, such as cost-effectiveness, quality of care, convenience, and the overall ambience of the hospital environment. Additionally, it aims to identify potential areas for improvement that can promote more patient-centered care. This effort contributes to the broader goal of optimizing healthcare delivery systems to ensure they are not only effective but also responsive to the unique needs and expectations of the communities they serve.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a cross-sectional observational approach to assess customer preferences and satisfaction with hospital services, aiming to identify quality factors that influence satisfaction. A convenience sampling method was employed to recruit 277 participants who were available and willing to participate.

Data Collection Tools

A questionnaire was created to gather data on client preferences and satisfaction, consisting of:

- **Hospital Service Quality Indicators:** This section evaluated customer satisfaction and preferences related to key attributes of hospital services [7].

Participants received a detailed questionnaire designed with straightforward instructions to ensure clarity. All responses were gathered in a single session, allowing for a smooth process that minimized any disruption to participants' activities.

In terms of ethical considerations, participants were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the study, emphasizing their right to withdraw at any point without any consequence. To safeguard their privacy, it was assured that all responses would be anonymized. Furthermore, the collected data was securely stored solely by the researcher, ensuring confidentiality and protection of participants' information.

RESULTS

This study examines the main factors influencing hospital preferences among citizens of Jaipur. The findings reveal that the most critical factor for participants is patient safety and trust. Additionally, respondents emphasized the significance of cost and the financial barriers many people face when seeking medical care. Hospital reputation and waiting times were ranked second and third, respectively. Based on the survey results, the study highlights several important considerations for hospital selection

Accessibility				
Age Group	Very Important	Maybe Important	Not Important	Total
Below 18	1.4 %	7.22 %	3.61 %	12.27 %
18-30	18.42 %	23.83 %	15.88 %	58.13 %
31-45	9.74 %	9.38 %	10.48 %	29.60 %

Total	29.60 %	40.43 %	29.97 %	100 %
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Table 1. Hospital Management- Accessibility of services**Table 2.** Hospital Management – Services Offered

Services Offered				
Age Group	Very Important	Maybe Important	Not Important	Total
Below 18	4.70 %	5.05 %	2.52 %	12.27 %
18-30	30.68 %	18.41 %	9.04 %	58.13 %
31-45	14.80 %	8.30 %	6.50 %	29.60 %
Total	50.18 %	31.76 %	18.06 %	100 %

Table 3. Hospital Management Affordability of Services

Affordability				
Age Group	Very Important	Maybe Important	Not Important	Total
Below 18	5.41 %	3.61 %	3.25 %	12.27 %
18-30	31.42 %	18.77 %	7.94 %	58.13 %
31-45	15.52 %	6.86 %	7.22 %	29.60 %
Total	52.35 %	29.24 %	18.41 %	100 %

Table 4. Hospital Management Waiting Time

Waiting times				
Age Group	Very Important	Maybe Important	Not Important	Total
Below 18	5.05 %	4.33 %	2.89 %	12.27 %
18-30	32.50 %	16.24 %	9.39 %	58.13 %
31-45	14.81 %	7.94 %	6.85 %	29.60 %
Total	52.36 %	28.51 %	19.13 %	100 %

Table 5. Hospital Management – Housekeeping services

Housekeeping/ sanitation				
Age Group	Very Important	Maybe Important	Not Important	Total
Below 18	5.41 %	5.05 %	1.80 %	12.27 %
18-30	31.77 %	18.05 %	8.32 %	58.13 %
31-45	15.17 %	8.30 %	6.13 %	29.60 %
Total	52.35 %	31.40 %	16.25 %	100 %

Table 6. Hospital Management - Reputation of Hospital Services

Reputation				
Age Group	Very Important	Maybe Important	Not Important	Total
Below 18	1.80 %	6.49 %	3.98 %	12.27 %
18-30	23.12 %	26.72 %	8.30 %	58.13 %
31-45	10.10 %	10.47 %	9.02 %	29.60 %
Total	35.02 %	43.68 %	21.30 %	100 %

Table 7. Hospital Management – Quality of services

Quality				
Age Group	Very Important	Maybe Important	Not Important	Total
Below 18	1.45 %	8.30 %	2.52 %	12.27 %
18-30	28.16 %	22.75 %	7.23 %	58.13 %
31-45	14.07 %	10.83 %	4.69 %	29.60 %
Total	43.68 %	41.88 %	14.44 %	100 %

A p-value below 0.05 indicates a statistically significant relationship. Based on this, Reputation and Quality have significant associations with age group. While reputation is vital to approximately 35 % participants, a larger group (approximately 44 %) deemed it "maybe important."

Gap: Building a strong hospital brand with consistent positive feedback might be an area to focus on. Hospitals should work on improving and communicating their reputation through reviews, word of mouth, and marketing.

Quality is identified as one of the important factors by approximately 43% respondents, which is significant. However, a fair proportion of respondents, approximately 42% feel it is "maybe important" or 14% don't prioritize it.

Gap: Quality in healthcare seems to be a recurring concern. A deeper investigation into operational efficiencies is mandatory.

The younger population (18-30 years) showed the highest response to "very important" in accessibility (30% responses), but there are still 40 % of participants who feel accessibility is only "maybe important."

Gap: Hospitals might not be optimally located or well-served by public transportation in areas where younger people are the primary demographic. There could be room to improve accessibility for this group.

The "very important" category has a significant 50 % votes, but only 32% participants feel that services are "maybe important," and 18% believe it's "not important."

Gap: While services are important, there may be a need to tailor specific services to meet the needs of the population.

Affordability is identified as very important by 52% respondents, which is significant. However, a fair proportion of respondents (29%) feel it is "maybe important" or 18% don't prioritize it.

Gap: Financial barriers to healthcare could be a critical concern. Hospitals may need to evaluate pricing strategies, flexible payment options, and health insurance partnerships to make care more accessible.

The overwhelming response of 52% participants choosing "very important" suggests that hospitals may not be addressing this issue effectively.

Gap: Long waiting times seem to be a recurring concern. A deeper investigation into operational efficiencies and patient flow management might be necessary.

Housekeeping and sanitation received high importance from 53% respondents, highlighting the need for top-notch cleanliness and hygiene.

Gap: There could be a significant gap if hospitals have inconsistent sanitation standards. Continuous monitoring and improvement of hygiene protocols should be prioritized.

Overall Quality and cleanliness are the top priorities for those selecting hospitals, with many rating them as "very important." This emphasizes the need for high hygiene standards to ensure patient safety and comfort. Affordability is crucial in healthcare choices, requiring accessible services at competitive prices. Accessibility is especially important for younger individuals, highlighting the need for conveniently located hospitals. Long waiting times also remain a significant concern that needs improvement.

DISCUSSION

This research illustrates that an array of factors plays a pivotal part in guiding the entire patient experience and has a lasting impression on patients' priorities while choosing an healthcare organization. [8] The key contributor was housekeeping/ sanitation, rated by approximately 53% people as "Very Important." This weighs on how important cleanliness is to sustain patient safety, which ultimately affects how well they comprehend the quality of the treatment received. Another factor that was highly pointed out by approximately 52% people was affordability. This sheds light upon how economic limitations play a crucial role. Providing affordable, easily accessible options in order to provide care to a larger patient volume. [9]

Hospital accessibility, which was assessed as "Very Important" by 30% participants, highlights the importance of hospitals being easily accessible and in a convenient location to ensure prompt medical care, especially during crises. In a similar vein, 52% respondents recognised the importance of waiting times. [10] Prolonged wait periods can cause discontent, underscoring the need for hospitals to optimise procedures and reduce hold-ups.

The significance of trust and the perception of a hospital's quality are reflected in reputation, which was rated as "Very Important" by 35% respondents and influences patient preference. Furthermore, 44% participants said that the quality of the care and services provided was crucial, making it a top priority. Patients are more inclined to select medical facilities that offer complete, superior care for a range of services, including inpatient and emergency care.

This research lays down the importance of cost, accessibility, and sanitation in influencing patient satisfaction and commitment to a healthcare facility. Putting emphasis on these preferences, it aids the hospitals in building a sense of faith in addition to meeting patients' needs and their priorities. By proactively addressing these concerns, healthcare providers can ensure a more fulfilling, reassuring, and durable healthcare experience while also strengthening their relationships with patients.

The outcomes align with existing research on hospital choice considerations, emphasizing cleanliness, cost, accessibility, and quality of care. Healthcare Organizations must prioritize these aspects to meet patient expectations and build lasting relationships. By concentrating on sanitation, affordability, and efficiency, healthcare providers can build trust and satisfaction, resulting in higher patient retention rates. Furthermore, minimizing waiting times and upholding a strong reputation are crucial for success in a competitive healthcare landscape.

CONCLUSION

This research shed light upon crucial factors that impact patients' preferences when selecting a hospital. Key contributors recognized include sanitation, affordability, and accessibility. Additionally, the hospital's reputation, waiting times, and overall quality of service remarkably impact patient decision. [11] Through a well-designed data collection process involving a diverse respondent pool from a varied demographics, this study provides valuable insights into the principal factors of patient decision-making.

The unveiling highlight that hospitals must weigh on high sanitation standards, offer affordable services, and ensure easy access to attract patients and retain them effectively. Furthermore,

improving waiting times efficiently and delivering superior care across all services are essential for improving patient satisfaction. [12]

By looking into these factors, healthcare providers can align their services with patient expectations, thereby reinforcing their competitive position in the market. This study offers actionable insights to help hospitals improve service delivery and build long-term patient trust.

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