

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AS THE KEY: EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF POSITIVE WORD OF MOUTH SERVICE QUALITY AND PERCEIVED VALUE ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY

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Abstract

The goal of the study is to examine how Word of Mouth (WoM), Service Quality, and Perceived Value positively affect customer loyalty, with customer happiness serving as the mediating variable. This study used a quantitative research design and a survey methodology. It involved 200 respondents who were outpatient patients at a hospital in East Java, with the requirement being that they had used the facility at least twice in the previous year. Partial Least Square (Smart-PLS) version 3.0 was the statistical software utilized to test the research hypotheses. The results showed that good WoM, service quality, perceived value, and customer happiness all positively and significantly influenced customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction is positively and significantly influenced by both good WoM and good service quality. However, perceived value has little impact on customer satisfaction. Positive WoM, Service Quality, and Customer Loyalty are all mediated through customer satisfaction, which plays a positive and substantial part in this process. On the other hand, the relationship between perceived value and customer loyalty is not significantly mediation by customer satisfaction.

Keywords: positive WoM, service quality, perceived value, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

In compliance with the hospital's service requirements, the hospital must provide services for recuperation and healthcare treatment. Patient loyalty is one of the aspects that can influence the hospital's survival. When customers grow loyal, they can become an effective advertising medium by recommending the hospital to others. RSUD Bangil is one of the greatest hospitals in Pasuruan Regency because it is the only type B hospital in the area. The data on outpatient visits to RSUD Bangil are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Outpatient Visit Data at Bangil Hospital

| Year | Outpatient Visits |
|------|-------------------|
| 2018 | 166.880 |
| 2019 | 158.661 |
| 2020 | 95.255 |
| 2021 | 89.937 |
| 2022 | 108.032 |

According to hospital data, there were 166,880, 158,661, 95,255 and 89,935 outpatient visits from 2018 to 2021. From 2019 to 2022 there was a clear decrease in patient visits. patient visits

increased in 2022 by 108,032. Furthermore, the findings of the Community Satisfaction Survey (SKM) at Bangil Hospital from 2019 to 2022 are as follows.

Table 2: Community Satisfaction Survey Results (SKM)

| Period | Year | | | |
|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Quarter 1 | - | - | 88,28 | 87,21 |
| Quarter 2 | - | - | - | 88,89 |
| Quarter 3 | - | - | 86.67 | 87,87 |
| Quarter 4 | 91,52 | 85,19 | 85.54 | 86,96 |

Despite the fact that RSUD Bangil is a category B hospital with full accreditation, the data above shows that RSUD Bangil has not met its customers' expectations. The results of the community satisfaction survey decreased from 2019 to 2021, but the SKM results increased in 2022 with a score of 88.89 even though it had to fall again in the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2022

Customers have also submitted critiques and complaints to the facility. The most common complaints include the staff's lack of communication and friendliness, unclean bathroom facilities, several damaged amenities, non-functional room fans, a 4- to 5-hour wait for medication retrieval, and the time it takes medical personnel to attend to patients since their arrival, among other things.

To determine the primary characteristics impacting customer discontent and loyalty, the researchers performed a pre-survey with 30 respondents who had been customers and received services as a preliminary stage in the research. The highest score was acquired from 18 people who claimed that they were dissatisfied with the hospital's services. Furthermore, 16 people stated that the quality of the services did not entirely satisfy the established requirements. Furthermore, 17 people said they had not heard great things from others, which could be because customers rely on promotions or choose hospitals close to their homes. Finally, 17 people responded that the value of the services got was not totally satisfactory in their perspective.

The preliminary survey results are in line with the research conducted by Subhan, (2022), which found that there is an influence between word of mouth and customer loyalty. Additionally, Research (Dubey & Sahu, 2019) states that service quality has a positive and direct effect on customer loyalty in hospitals. Similarly, the study by Phonthanukitithaworn et al (2020) indicated that customer satisfaction is a significant factor affecting customer loyalty, and the research by (Lin & Yin, 2022) concluded that there is a positive and significant influence of perceived value on patient loyalty. Furthermore, a study by (Sai Vijay et al., 2019) stated that satisfaction has a positive impact on customer loyalty.

Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a study on the positive impact of WoM, service quality, and perceived value on customer loyalty, with customer satisfaction as a mediating variable.

THEORITICAL REVIEW

Customer Loyalty

Loyalty is the commitment to make recurring purchases or subscriptions to products or services that are continually liked and favoured by customers. This can result in repeat purchases of similar goods or services. Customers may transfer brands as a result of situational effects. Because the purpose of business is to generate profits, customer loyalty can be a company management approach. Profits can be realised through company techniques such as consistently building consumer loyalty.

Patient behavior loyalty is determined by service quality, while service quality is formed by internal service factors, namely service providers and service environment (Mardaleta et al., 2022). Providing excellent service can increased the level of patient satisfaction and achieved patient loyalty. Patients tend to switch to other healthcare if they are unhappy with the health services received (Yeo, 2021). To analyse the concept's power, the loyalty design should be measured. According to Gryphon (2010), there are four elements of consumer loyalty:

1. Make frequent repeat purchases: average repurchasing (purchase of the same product or service plus extra services or products).
2. Buying across product and service lines: purchasing products from the same service provider (purchasing products or services from the same firm).
3. Refers others: makes recommendations or promotes products to the general public (recommends service providers or products to others and shares positive information with others).
4. Shows immunity to the draw of the competition by exhibiting product strength in brand competition (demonstrating commitment to the product or attempting other service offers or products).

Positive WoM (Word of Mouth)

When the brand symbolically fits with the threat domain, word of mouth can help restore consumers' threatened self-perceptions. Positive word-of-mouth about symbolically compatible brands lessens psychological pain and increases self-perceptions of the threatened traits. Consumers with poor self-esteem benefit the most from the restorative impact (Saenger et al., 2020). According to Sernovitz's thesis, there are five aspects and basic indications of Word of Mouth, which are as follow:

1. Talkers: In this situation, the speakers have used the product or service, therefore buyers may believe speakers who have used the product or service. Speakers are believed to be well-informed and knowledgeable about the product or service.
2. Topics: The development of a message that encourages customers to discuss the product or service, such as the service or product quality given. In this example, the message might be translated as information delivery and pleasure with the product or service.

3. Tools: Once the information that makes customers talk about the product or service has been identified, a tool is required to help communicate the message clearly and accurately so that it can be easily discussed and transmitted to other consumers. Brochures, banners, ads, and other similar materials are examples.
4. Taking Part : It entails the company's involvement in responding to consumer inquiries, explaining clearly and in depth, and as a result, satisfied customers are prepared to invite and persuade other consumers to use the product or service.
5. Tracking: Companies must monitor their customers after they make a purchase. By reviewing the comments and ideas made by customers.

Based on the review of the literature, the researcher formulated the following research hypotheses:

H1: It is hypothesized that customer loyalty is influenced by positive WoM.

H4: It is hypothesized that the positive WoM has an impact on customer satisfaction.

H8: It is hypothesized that positive WoM influences customer loyalty through the medium of customer satisfaction

Quality of Service

Quality perception and customer expectations about service quality are linked (Marimon et al., 2019). Furthermore, via improved quality management, healthcare organisations can increase service quality and sustain customer satisfaction (Nguyen & Nagase, 2021). Healthcare service managers must ensure physical facility visual appeal and comfort, optimal availability of human and physical resources, caring and helpful staff attitudes, streamlined administrative processes, and lower wait times when providing services (Swain & Singh, 2021). Customer loyalty is created from the existence of good service quality and optimal service scape (Shiratina et al., 2021). Public hospital managers and healthcare providers should initiate continuous quality improvement programs and monitor healthcare quality to earn patient satisfaction and patient loyalty in return (Aladwan et al., 2021).

Service quality is concerned with how to meet the wants and desires of customers, as well as the precision with which services are delivered to meet consumer expectations. As a result, the services expected and understood by consumers are critical factors impacting service quality. The following are the five main elements of service quality that consumers use to assess and judge the quality of a service:

1. Reliability: Someone's capacity to provide the promised service swiftly, accurately, and satisfactorily.
2. Responsiveness: The willingness of employees to assist customers and deliver timely service.
3. Assurance: Consists of staff knowledge, abilities, politeness, and trustworthiness, as well as the absence of danger, risk, or doubt.

4. Empathy: The ease with which intimacy, good communication, individual attention, and understanding of the personal needs of customers can be developed.
5. Tangibles: Physical facilities, essential equipment, staff, and communication facilities.

Based on the review of the literature, the researcher formulated the following research hypotheses:

H2: It is hypothesized that customer loyalty is influenced by service quality.

H5: It is hypothesized that the quality of service has an impact on customer satisfaction.

H9: It is hypothesized that service quality influences customer loyalty through the medium of customer satisfaction.

Perceived Value

In healthcare services, customer perceived value refers to the patient's appraisal of service quality prior to selecting to use the healthcare service. Patients can use service quality criteria to evaluate hospital services. Customer Perceived Value occurs when patients use external information to gauge service quality, such as friend recommendations or perceived costs and benefits. Following service utilisation, patients evaluate if the service quality fulfils their opinion of service quality (Nguyen et al., 2021). Companies that have a high customer-perceived value have a competitive advantage and are more likely to retain consumers (Nguyen et al., 2021). The following are the dimensions of perceived value:

1. Emotional value: The benefit derived from favourable feelings or emotions associated with the product's use.
2. Social value: The utility obtained from the ability of the product to improve the consumer's social self-concept.
3. Quality/performance value: The usefulness gained from the product as a result of short- and long-term cost savings.
4. Price/value for money: The utility derived from the perception of the product or service's predicted performance.

Based on the review of the literature, the researcher formulated the following research hypotheses:

H3: It is hypothesized that customer loyalty is influenced by perceived value.

H6: It is proposed that perceived value influences customer satisfaction.

H10: It is hypothesized that perceived value influences customer loyalty through the medium of customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction

Satisfaction is defined as a comparison of service perceptions and expectations, which has a direct impact on customer loyalty. In terms of loyalty or the intention to return to a healthcare centre, contentment is crucial because when users have a positive relationship with the organisation, their loyalty and willingness to refer the organisation to other potential users increases (Caballero et al., 2022). Because customer satisfaction influences purchasing decisions, businesses can improve quality, services, and facilities to boost customer happiness (Nawang Sari et al., 2020). Satisfied customers tend to remain loyal to products that can satisfy their needs and wants (Khoo, 2022).

Customer satisfaction with the service quality has a significant effect on customer loyalty. The strongest relationship was found between reliability and customer satisfaction. The weak relationship was found between system availability and customer satisfaction (Ayinaddis et al., 2023). Relationship marketing is crucial for fostering patient satisfaction and hospital loyalty. It is advised that healthcare institutions employ relationship marketing strategies for this reason. Relational marketing will assure patient happiness and hospital loyalty. This will make it possible for these healthcare facilities to stay open and compete well with other institutions (Yıldırım et al., 2022).

Customers utilise products in a variety of ways, and each consumer may have distinct attitudes, behaviours, or modes of communication. According to Tjiptono in, customer happiness is often measured by numerous factors, including :

1. Expectation match: The degree of congruence between what customers expect from service performance and what they actually receive.
2. Intention to return: Customers' willingness to return or reuse the services they have received.
3. Willingness to suggest: The willingness of the customer to recommend the experienced service to others.

Customer satisfaction will automatically help the organisation. Customers will be satisfied and want to return if a company gives good customer service. Another advantage is that customers can continuously distribute positive information about the service to those in their immediate vicinity.

Based on the review literature, the researcher formulated the following research hypothesis:

H7: Consumer satisfaction influences customer loyalty

RESEARCH METHODS

This study's research design is based on causal analysis, which explores the causal linkages between research variables based on hypotheses. The purpose of this study is to investigate hypotheses about the influence of good Word of Mouth (WoM), service quality, and perceived value as independent variables on customer loyalty as the dependent variable. Furthermore, the

study investigates if customer happiness, as a mediating variable, might mitigate the impact of positive WoM, service quality, and perceived value on customer loyalty. The study takes a quantitative approach and employs a survey method.

The sample was identified by the researcher as customers who had received services at the hospital at least twice in the previous year. The total number of respondents for this survey is set at 200 based on sample estimates. The study will be carried out at the Regional General Hospital Bangil in March 2023. A questionnaire with numerous items provided to respondents will be used to collect data.

The Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach is used in this study's data analysis, which is done in two steps. The first stage involves assessing the measurement model (outer model), which evaluates the validity and reliability of each indicator's constructs. The second stage involves applying the t-test from PLS to evaluate the structural model (inner model) for the existence of links or correlations between variables.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researcher provides the results of the data analysis stage using SmartPLS software version 3.0 to address the hypotheses or research questions.

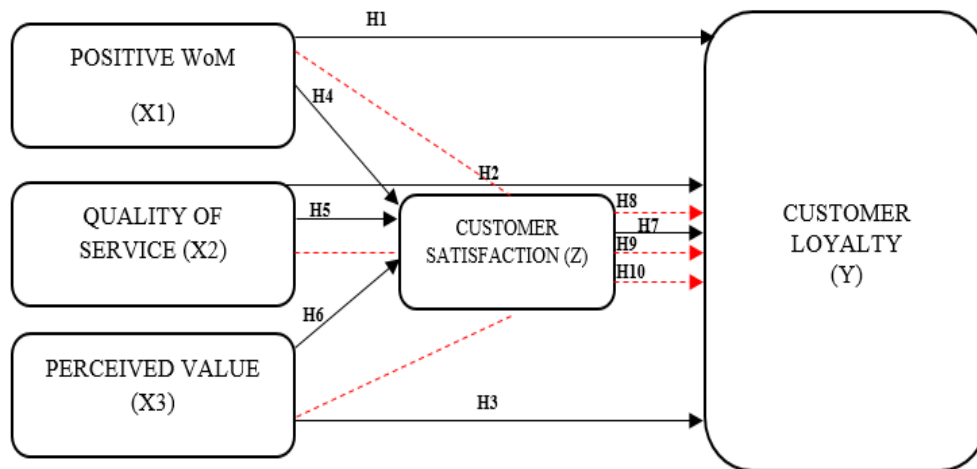


Figure 1: Research Concept Framework

Convergent Validity and Reability

Convergent validity may be seen in the loading factor values for each construct, where values of 0.7 or higher are preferred. Loading factor levels in confirmatory research should be between 0.5 and 0.7, but exploratory research is still appropriate. In the study, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value should be more than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017). The following are the findings of this study's convergent validity testing:

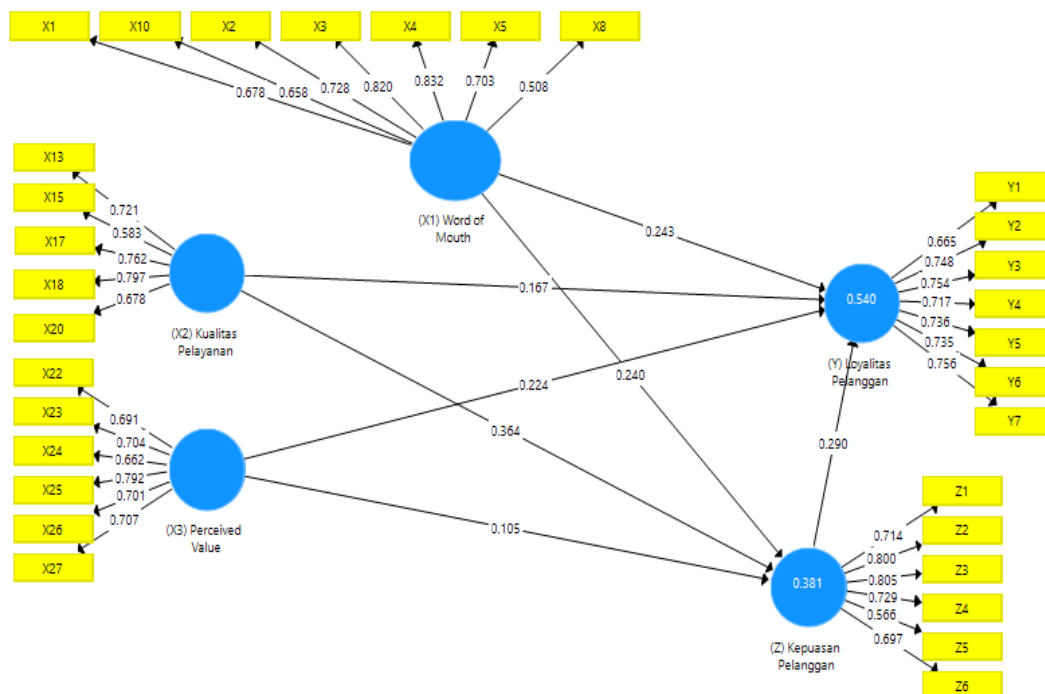


Figure 2: Modification Test Results for Convergent Validity

Table 3: Test Results of discriminant validity Fornell & Larcker

| | Word of Mouth | Quality Of Service | Perceived Value | Customer Loyalty | Customer Satisfaction |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Word of Mouth | 0,711 | | | | |
| Quality Of Service | 0,710 | 0,712 | | | |
| Perceived Value | 0,453 | 0,423 | 0,711 | | |
| Customer Loyalty | 0,622 | 0,603 | 0,511 | 0,731 | |
| Customer Satisfaction | 0,548 | 0,580 | 0,368 | 0,602 | 0,723 |

According to Table 3, the square root of AVE (Average Variance Extracted) for each construct is greater than the correlations between each construct. As a result, the constructs in the model have met the criteria for discriminant validity.

Table 4: Test Results of Construk Reability and Validity

| | Cronbach's Alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability | AVE |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------|-----------------------|-------|
| Word of Mouth | 0,831 | 0,844 | 0,875 | 0,506 |
| Quality Of Service | 0,755 | 0,764 | 0,836 | 0,507 |
| Perceived Value | 0,804 | 0,811 | 0,859 | 0,505 |
| Customer Loyalty | 0,855 | 0,859 | 0,889 | 0,534 |
| Customer Satisfaction | 0,813 | 0,817 | 0,867 | 0,523 |

Based on Table 4, the AVE value in accordance with the recommendation is greater than 0.5.

Table 5: Test Results of Cronbach Alpha Dan Composite Reliability

| | Cronbach's Alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| Word of Mouth | 0,831 | 0,844 | 0,875 |
| Quality Of Service | 0,755 | 0,764 | 0,836 |
| Perceived Value | 0,804 | 0,811 | 0,859 |
| Customer Loyalty | 0,855 | 0,859 | 0,889 |
| Customer Satisfaction | 0,813 | 0,817 | 0,867 |

According to Table 5, each indicator has Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values more than 0.7. All variables or constructs in this study are deemed reliable, and the questionnaire utilised has been consistent.

Summary Test The Hypothesis

The bootstrapping method was used to test the hypotheses in this study. The T-statistic and probability values provide evidence of hypothesis testing. The critical number for alpha 5% in hypothesis testing using the T-statistic value is 1.96. As a result, if the T-statistic is greater than 1.96, the hypothesis is accepted. To accept a hypothesis using probability, the p-value must be less than 0.05. The following are the findings of this study's hypothesis testing:

Table 6. Direct Effect Test Results

| | Original Sample | Sample Mean | Std Deviation | T Statistics | P Values |
|---|-----------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|----------|
| Word of Mouth -> Customer Loyalty | 0,243 | 0,243 | 0,076 | 3,204 | 0,001 |
| Quality Of Service -> Customer Loyalty | 0,167 | 0,171 | 0,085 | 1,962 | 0,050 |
| Perceived Value -> Customer Loyalty | 0,224 | 0,226 | 0,058 | 3,865 | 0,000 |
| Word of Mouth -> Customer Satisfaction | 0,240 | 0,244 | 0,089 | 2,692 | 0,007 |
| Quality Of Service -> Customer Satisfaction | 0,364 | 0,366 | 0,094 | 3,868 | 0,000 |
| Perceived Value -> Customer Satisfaction | 0,105 | 0,106 | 0,076 | 1,380 | 0,168 |
| Customer Satisfaction -> Customer Loyalty | 0,290 | 0,283 | 0,073 | 3,984 | 0,000 |

According to Table 6, the results of the direct influence test in this study are as follows:

1. Positive Word of Mouth (WoM), service quality, perceived value, and customer happiness all have a positive and significant impact on customer loyalty. The biggest influence is that hospital customers state that they get positive information about the hospital from other people. This information can be obtained from friends and relatives. That is, positive information about the hospital from other people can be a big factor in creating loyal customers. Hospital customers stated that the hospital has a comfortable waiting room as the highest value. That is, the comfort of the waiting room in the registration area, doctor's consultation, or family waiting room can be a big factor in service and can create loyal customers.

Customers state that they are satisfied with the overall service provided by the hospital and the effort to get to this hospital is indeed worthy of the service received. In addition, customers stated that they were satisfied with the positive impact after receiving services from the hospital. In addition, customers are also satisfied with the facilities provided by the

hospital to them. Customers also stated that the service they received was in accordance with customer expectations. These factors make customer satisfaction affect customer loyalty.

The results of this study are in line with previous research by (Subhan, 2022) which stated that word of mouth had a positive influence on customer loyalty at health clinics. Research (Dubey & Sahu, 2019) states that service quality has a positive and direct effect on customer loyalty in hospitals. Abekah-Nkrumah et al., (2020) states that service quality has a significant effect on patient loyalty in the health care sector. research by (Lin & Yin, 2022) states that perceived value has a positive and direct influence on patient loyalty. Research by yeo states that the four dimensions of patient value namely economic value, health value, fair value, and added value have a significant influence on patient loyalty (Miao et al., 2020). Research by Phonthanukitithaworn et al. (2020) states that patient satisfaction is a significant factor affecting customer loyalty. Research by Hossain et al. (2020) also found a significant positive relationship between patient satisfaction and loyalty at $p < 0.01$.

2. Positive WoM and service quality have a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction. Customers stated that they received recommendations regarding hospital services from other people who also shared their satisfaction after receiving services at the hospital. Apart from having a comfortable waiting room, customers also state that hospital staff are reliable in providing services. This is an important factor to increase customer satisfaction. With good service, customer satisfaction will also increase. The results of this study are in line with research Subhan (2022) which states that there is a positive and significant influence between WoM and customer satisfaction. Research by Swain & Singh (2021) that service quality has a positive relationship with patient satisfaction. Research by (Sun et al., 2021) also states that customer perceived quality has a significant positive effect on patient satisfaction
3. However, perceived value has little effect and not significant on consumer satisfaction. This can be influenced by the hospital which is the largest hospital and is a referral hospital. In addition, this hospital has also received the predicate of plenary accreditation. The community has judged that this hospital is the best hospital. However, the community's evaluation does not fully guarantee the satisfaction of the community itself because this is not necessarily in line with the services they receive. Customers stated that this hospital's services were not superior compared to other hospitals.

Based on the respondent's description, the majority of customers are district residents, where the closest location is Bangil Hospital. This can be a consideration by customers in choosing a hospital. A close location will facilitate access to their transportation and reduce costs incurred. When in an emergency or emergency, customers can choose the nearest hospital so they can get treatment quickly. So even though there are hospitals that have better services but are far away, this can be considered by customers. This is not in line with research by (Alharbi et al., 2018) that perceived value has a direct influence on customer satisfaction. However, the results

of this study are in line with research by (Muntasin et al., 2021) which states that the effects of perceived value and customer satisfaction are not significant.

Table 7: Indirect Effect Test Results

| | Original Sample | Sample Mean | Standard Deviation | T Statistics | P Values |
|---|-----------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|----------|
| Word of Mouth -> Customer Satisfaction -> Customer Loyalty | 0,069 | 0,068 | 0,030 | 2,321 | 0,021 |
| Quality Of Service -> Customer Satisfaction -> Customer Loyalty | 0,106 | 0,103 | 0,038 | 2,807 | 0,005 |
| Perceived Value -> Customer Satisfaction -> Customer Loyalty | 0,030 | 0,031 | 0,024 | 1,253 | 0,211 |

Table 7 above demonstrates that the relationship between word-of-mouth and customer loyalty has a positive and significant mediation influence on customer satisfaction.

1. The relationship between service quality and customer loyalty is also positively and significantly mediating by customer satisfaction. Factors that can influence are hospitals that continuously make changes for the sake of customers. Currently the hospital is in the process of repairing and constructing a building and several service rooms to increase customer comfort so as to improve service quality. The goal is also to increase customer satisfaction in order to create loyal customer. The results of this study are in line with previous research by Nguyen & Nagase (2021) that there is an effect of perceived service quality on loyalty mediated through customer satisfaction. Research by Lie et al. (2019) also states that satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and consumer confidence in consumer loyalty.
2. Customer satisfaction, however, does not significantly mediate the relationship between customer loyalty and perceived value. This means that customer satisfaction cannot affect perceived value with customer loyalty. Based on the previous test which stated that perceived value had a significant positive effect on customer loyalty while perceived value had a positive but not significant effect on customer satisfaction, it can be seen that perceived value is able to create customer loyalty without the help of customer satisfaction. The perceived value of the customer is able to bring the customer to be loyal to the hospital. This research is in line with (Giovanni, 2020) which states that perceived value has a positive but not significant effect on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions of this study are as follows based on the introduction, literature review, research findings, and discussions presented in the preceding chapters to understand and analyse the impact of Word of Mouth, service quality, and perceived value on customer loyalty with customer satisfaction as a mediating variable.

1. Positive and substantial influences on customer loyalty include word of mouth, service quality, perceived value, and customer happiness. This implies that when customer contentment, service quality, perceived value, and word-of-mouth all rise, so will customer loyalty.
2. Customer satisfaction is positively and significantly impacted by positive word-of-mouth and high-quality services. On the other hand, consumer satisfaction is not much impacted by perceived value. This implies that as word-of-mouth and service quality rise, so will consumer satisfaction.
3. Customer loyalty is positively and significantly impacted by customer satisfaction. This implies that as customer happiness rises, so will customer loyalty.
4. Customer satisfaction effectively mediates the impact of service quality and word-of-mouth on customer loyalty. Customer loyalty and Word of Mouth have a relationship that can be somewhat mediated by customer happiness.
5. The relationship between perceived value and customer loyalty is not effectively mediated by customer satisfaction. The direct influence test results showed that perceived value does not significantly affect customer satisfaction, which is one of the influencing elements. However, customer loyalty is directly impacted by perceived value.

Hospitals can convey information about services and public health programmes to the public by placing billboards or banners in front of the hospital and on major thoroughfares. They can also deliver service information and public health promotions on televisions in patient waiting rooms or family spaces. To ensure customer pleasure and trust in the hospital, hospitals are recommended to upgrade their facilities and service processes. This involves offering clean and comfortable waiting areas, breastfeeding rooms, children's play facilities, and comfortable examination rooms. Hospitals are also urged to improve service innovations, particularly those not yet offered in competing hospitals, in order to raise the hospital's value and, as a result, customer loyalty and satisfaction. To improve consumer value and pleasure, these innovations could include replacing plastic medication packets with environmentally friendly ones, adopting online consultations between patients and doctors, and more.

Further testing on the variables in this study, particularly those that did not have an effect, or on additional variables that may influence customer loyalty than the variables explored here, is anticipated for in future research. This will aid in the identification of additional aspects that may influence consumer loyalty, such as promotional variables, administration, pricing, image, trust, and other variables. Future research could further expand the area of the study, increase the sample size, or compare two or more related objects of study.

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