

Branding: An Effective Tool to Achieve Competitive Advantage**(A Study of Fortis Hospital, Jaipur)**

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Abstract

One of the most commonly overlooked sources of competitive advantage is brand. Branding is not just advertising, neither it is simply a name for a company. The most important value in a brand is the value that it holds for customers. This value is very expensive and difficult to build - and fragile and easy to destroy.

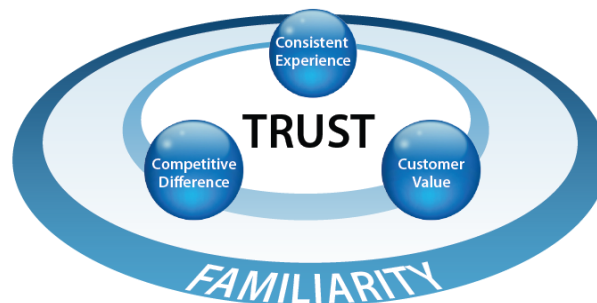
According to Walter Landor, One of the leading experts of the advertising industry, "A brand is a promise. By identifying and authenticating a product or services it delivers a pledge of quality and satisfaction". A brand is a collection of perceptions in customer's mind. Hence a brand is something that is intangible and lies in the mind of the customer.

This paper attempts to answer why branding is important for hospital sector and help them to attract new patients and retain the regular ones by satisfying them with the branded services provided and also suggest some concepts with the help of which healthcare industry can understand their potential to increase name recognition and achieve improved patient clarity which can be achieved when all elements of the health care industry are consistently branded. This further helps the hospital industry to achieve competitive advantage.

Keywords: - Branding, Competitive Advantage, Perception, Quality

Introduction

In the competitive world of healthcare sector, success depends on providing a great quality service to patients. The facilities that are available in the hospital play a decisive role in improving the quality of services. In the developing countries, the hospital services need both qualitative and quantitative improvements (**Dr.R.Kavitha 2012**). In India increasing number of hospitals, face extremely competitive environments and that created an importance to banding. Hospital brand image increases patient loyalty directly and improves patient satisfaction through enhancing service quality, which in turn increases the re-visit intention of patients. Hospital brand image indeed serves as a lead factor in enhancing service quality, patient loyalty and satisfaction (**Chao-Chan Wu, June, 2011**) Hospitals should create good will for themselves by providing better service to patients, and the hospital staff also has to understand, communicate and trust the brand values of hospitals because their attitude and behaviour with patients will influence the success of the hospital brand over a period of time. Hospitals have valuable tangible and intangible assets that need to be maintaining with care as they offer benefits to patients, employees and owners. The key importance of branding hospital is that, consumers (patients) perceive differences between services provided by different hospitals. The brand is not just for the customers; good branding can take a small company or a hospital to the next level (**GREEN communications 2006, 2**). Once a hospital achieves a superlative position it should be consistent in delivering healthcare to patients as consistency in delivering service or care to patients will lead to consistency in image of hospital which the patient carries in his/her mind.

Figure 1:

Source: Gelb's brand trust model (Gelb consulting 2011).

We can observe that in olden days people use to go to the same doctor for years, may be their entire life and doctors were trusted without any criticism. Now-a-days situation has changed as the internet is offering plenty of information about diseases and treatments, the competition is getting more intense as more and more hospitals that are private were entering in to the market, and people were travelling far away to get the best treatment they want. Therefore, successful healthcare organizations are looking beyond the tradition; they are establishing a different way of thinking about the organization as a whole and increasing the role of marketing. (**DeVries & McKeever 2008, 15-16.**)

History of hospitals

Historical records show that efficient hospitals were constructed in India by 600BC. During the splendid region of King Asoka (273-232 BC), Indian hospitals started to look like modern hospitals. They followed principals of sanitation and cesarean sections were performed with close attention to technique in order to save both mother and child. Physicians were appointed one for every ten villages to serve the health care needs of the populations and regional hospitals for the infirm and destitute were built by Buddha.

Middle age: During the middle age, Religion continued to be the dominant influence in the establishment of hospitals. Religious community took responsibility to care for poor. Characterized Greek medicine was lost and separation of patients was eliminated, sanitation was ignored and three to five patients were allotted same bed. Surgeries are avoided in order not to “disturb the body” and to avoid the shedding of blood. First, Pope Innocent III in 1198 urged wealthy Christians to build hospitals in every town. The oldest hospital still in existence are the “Hotel –Dieu” in Lyons and Paris, France. The term “Hotel-Dieu” indicates that it is a public hospital. During the crusades (i.e.at the end of the 11th century) The growth of hospitals accelerated,. Military hospitals came into being along the traveled routes: the knights Hospitalist of the Order of St John in 1099 established in the Holy Land, a hospital take care for 20008 patients.

Renaissance Age: The renaissance period is from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. This period has seen the beginning of support for hospitals by secular authorities and by end of fifteenth century, many cities and towns supported institutional health care. The gradual transfer of responsibility for institutional healthcare from the church to civil authorities continued in Europe after the dissolution of the monasteries in 15409 by Henry VIII. This period was well known as the period of the great school of medicine. In Germany, in central and in Eastern Europe Schools of medicine were flourishing. The scientific study of human anatomy as a science was facilitated by dissections of animals. In 1506, in 1528 the Royal College of Surgeons followed by organization of the Royal College of Physicians was established in England. In Italy and in France Clinical surgery took great strides during this period, especially under Ambrose Pare. By the mid fifteenth century, all major courts and cities of Europe sent physicians to Italy for advanced training.

Literature Review

- **Zahra Khamda, Nazanin Pilevari (2013)**, in this paper titled “**Presenting a Model to Rank Hospital Wards on the Base of Service Quality Case Study: An Iranian Hospital**” states that to measure service providers’ perceptions and preferences towards quality of healthcare services and to present a model for ranking service quality among four Iranian hospital wards by using a 20-item scale questionnaire based on a modified SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988). The studied wards orderly ranked as Dialysis Unit, Emergency Unit, Coronary Care Unit, and Intensive Care Unit, based on different levels of the service quality, by using the algorithm of Preference Ranking Organization Method for Enrichment Evaluations.

- **Fethi Calisir, Cigdem Altin Gumussoy, Ayse Elvan Bayraktaroglu and Burcu Kaya (2012)**, in this paper titled **“Effects of Service Quality Dimensions on Customer Satisfaction and Return Intention in Different Hospital Types”** states A modified SERVQUAL approach including usability as the six dimensions of service quality which has been used to evaluate the effect of service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction and return intention for four different hospital types operating in Turkey: public, private, university, and military hospitals.
- **Arun kumar G, Dr.S.J Manjunath, Chethan K.C (2012)**, in this paper titled **“Service Quality at Hospital – A Study of Apollo Hospital in Mysore”** mentioned that the quality of service is considered as a very important factor in differentiation of services. It is a basis of competitive. In this article they mentioned the service is a global judgment and high standards of their service leads to the customer loyalty and satisfaction.
- **Johan de Jager and Therese du Plooy (2011)**, in this paper titled **“Tangible Service-Related Needs of Patients in Public Hospitals in South Africa”** mentioned the in -patients and out-patients’ expectations, perceptions and satisfaction related to services’ tangibility provided by public healthcare in South-Africa are measured by using SERVQUAL. The major findings were that all patients demand excellent levels of response, but none of these are currently being met, resulting in dissatisfaction.

Research Methodology

The study has been conducted in Jaipur, Rajasthan, and the samples for the study are the Patients using the services of Hospital. The empirical data from different sources had been collected to understand the Brand image of the hospital and its positive and negative impact on the society. The secondary data was collected from different sources.

Importance of Branding in Hospitals

Now a day due to increase in competition Healthcare delivery system is getting much more complicated and hospitals appears to be identical in terms of their healthcare standard offered, this has created the pre requisite of creating a BRAND for hospitals. In healthcare industry, branding of hospitals mainly aims in converting every patient into a brand ambassador for that hospital. Deciding a Brand for a hospital is very important to promote the services provided by the hospital in the market. Branding of services provided by hospitals helps to set a key position over the competitors in the market and among the customers. By establishing strong brand image, the frequency of the patients to the hospital will be increased. Marketing alone does not overcome the competition, creating a Brand is a vital part for setting up strong place in the competitive market. Customers engage with hospitals with the medium of hospitals brand and the brand creates a relationship between the hospital and the customers. The name of the brand clicks their mind once they hear the service that the hospital offers. Efficient Branding improves the flow of patients and also improves the financial status of the hospital. Technology adaptation, clinical breakthroughs, national accreditations and quality ranking are examples of hospital

branding strategies. We can observe that healthcare and hospital industry is moving towards corporatization, branding leads to this corporatization culture.

Brand Building through Tangible Factors

Brand building can be done in various ways. However, it is different when we observe in health care sector. Experts say that without building, a strong brand of a product or a service cannot be promoted. Health care sector revolves around trust and familiarity. The purpose of building a brand is to differentiating them from the competitors by showing what they have (equipment, facilities, services etc). Developing brand-building strategies helps to identify tangible features that can be added to service delivery process. For example insurance coverage, one day free health check up for pregnant women and senior citizen, government health schemes etc. Tangible elements influences perceived quality of service, promotes brand image. Example delay in providing service and lack of equipment in case of emergency may spoil brand image of hospital.

Benefits from hospitals:

There are three types of benefits that the patient seeks from the hospital.

1. Core benefits.
2. Intangible benefits.
3. Tangible benefits.

Core benefit is the outcome of a quality service (i.e.) quick recovery, which the patient experience from the physicians. Intangible benefits are received from quality relation that had taken place between patients, physicians and the staff. Tangible benefits are the appearance of physical facilities, which were provided to patients and visitors (cafeteria, Atm, medical store, communication material etc.).

Fortis Escort Heart Institution:

In India Fortis Escort Heart Institute and Research Center is the pioneer in the field of cardiac care facility. From the past 25 years, it had set standards in providing cardiac care, today it is recognized as centre of excellence for providing advanced technology in Pediatric surgery, Cardiac Bypass surgery etc.

Fortis Escorts Hospital, Jaipur, is the first super specialty hospital in Rajasthan. Equipped with high end diagnostic equipment like 64 slice CT Scan machine, 1.5 Tesla MRI, Electro-Physiology Laboratories, RFA, 2 hi-end Cath Labs, Touch Screen Monitors, and world-class Dialysis facilities, Fortis Escorts Hospital, Jaipur, brings world class treatment to the people of Rajasthan.

In Jaipur the hospital has the most advanced laboratories, which were performing complete range of investigative tests in the field of Nuclear Medicine, Radiology, Biochemistry, and Hematology¹⁸. These hospitals have experienced and talented team of doctors, supported by well trained, and experienced staff. Currently, there are more than 200 cardiac doctors and 1600 employees working together to

manage over 14,500 admissions and 7, 20019 emergency cases in a year. Until date, the hospital has an infrastructure comprising of 285 beds, 5 Cath Labs besides a host of other excellent facilities. These hospitals differentiate themselves by exposing what they have.

Suggestions

- Fortis Hospital Jaipur must focus on other departments also other than cardiac Department, Radiology and Research.
- The cost of Treatment in Fortis should be affordable to the patients of all classes.
- MRI machine must be equipped in the hospital premises.

Conclusion

In the healthcare industry, patients choose brands consulting their friends, colleagues and family before going to a doctor. The word TRUST rules the health care industry. Branding of service sector especially Healthcare & Hospitals is different as it is mainly dependent on word of mouth and patient satisfaction. Investment in Branding gains consumer confidence, leads to an increase in the market share, enhanced loyalty, and accelerated revenue growth in short it helps gaining competitive advantage. By establishing strong brand image, the frequency of the patients to the hospital will be increased. Branding of the Hospitals is to recall the service provided and service provider through core benefits, tangible benefits and intangible benefits.

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