

**EFFECT OF SERVICE QUALITY AND HOSPITAL IMAGE ON  
SATISFACTION, TRUST, AND WORD OF MOUTH**

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**Abstract**

This research aimed to analyze and test the effect of service quality on satisfaction, trust, and word of mouth of patient families in a hospital. The research population were families of mental disorder patients who were treated at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province. The model of this research used 23 indicators; therefore, the minimum sample size included 125 respondents. Then, this research found that service quality affected satisfaction, trust, and word of mouth. While, hospital images influenced either trust and word of mouth. This research also indicated that the effect of hospital image on satisfaction was insignificant. Furthermore, both satisfaction and trust affected word of mouth.

**Keywords:** service quality, satisfaction, trust, and word of mouth

**Research Background**

The quality of services that is provided by hospitals will establish and maintain satisfaction of patients as well as families who visit the patients. The quality of hospital services can be improved by upgrading quality of facilities and physical environment. Obviously, problems may arise as an impact of decreasing satisfaction, trust and patient visits in a hospital due to its lack of service quality and hospital image. Therefore, this research intended to analyze and test the effect of service quality and hospital image on patient families' satisfaction, trust, word of mouth at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province.

**Literature Review**

**Service Quality**

Quality has various definitions. Quality is the feature totality and product or service characteristics that enable satisfying people needs. It is also a dynamic condition in relation to products, services, people, processes, and environments that can meet and exceed one's expectations. Moreover, quality is the degree of achievement that is characterized on approaching the specific requirements. Based on the three definitions, quality is closely related to the achievement for an expected standard. Furthermore, quality of service is drawn as the gap

between the real services and the perceived services. Tjiptono (2008: 85) defines the quality of service as the measurement of how well the level of service provided is able to match the expectations of customers. Similarly, Parasuraman et al. (1998) view service quality as the divergence between the real services that customers receive with the services that customers expect.

In daily practices, there are various kinds of health services; however, the services are generally distinguished into two kinds. First is called as a medical service. This is characterized and organized as a solo practice. Its main purpose is to provide services for individuals. Second is a public health service that focus on societies. This aims to nurture and improve a society's health instead of preventing a society's diseases

### **Hospital Image**

Hospital image may relate to specific entity from societies. According to Davis (2004), definitions of image, identity and reputation are interconnected between one and another. Image is generally viewed by customers towards a company. Identity is frequently generated from employees to judge their own company. Otherwise, identity is a thought on how people judge and measure themselves within their community. While reputation involves stakeholders' perspectives on justifying a company's or a hospital's prominence, appearance, and existence. Overall, hospital image is closely in relation to its reputation and identity within a surrounding society.

### **Patient Satisfaction**

Patient satisfaction is essential for health service providers. Satisfaction is one's degree of enjoyment after comparing performance or perceived results with expectations (Kotler, 2012). It can be measured quantitatively and qualitatively. Recently, there are various ways in measuring satisfaction of patients as well as patient families. To improve the quality of health services, measuring patient satisfaction is greatly necessary. If the performance of health services that is obtained by patients at a health care meet their expectations, then the patients will always pursue for further health services (Pohan, 2006). In other words, when the patients are not disappointed with a hospital service, they will keep visiting the hospital. In brief, patient satisfaction may relate to the hospital services.

### **Trust**

Trust is generally convinced as one's belief on Colquitt *et al.* (2009: 219) defines trust as a desire to rely on an authority based on positive expectations of action and attention of authority. McShane and Von Glinow (2008: 120), trust refers to a person's positive expectations of others in a situation involving risk. Trust also means surrendering fate to another person or group. Muchinsky (2006) says that trust is a belief that arises even though a person can not control the actions of others against him, the person will still act or behave in a favorable way towards him. Kotler (2012) reveals that belief is a cognitive component of psychological factors. Thus, trust relates to the belief that something is right or wrong based on evidence, suggestion, authority, experience, or intuition.

### **Word of Mouth**

Word of mouth is considered having greater influence rather than advertisement and formal marketing. According to Sernovitz (2006:5), word of mouth is simply a conversation that naturally occurs between people. Solomon (2011: 424) argues that word of mouth is information of a product from individual to other individuals. Then, Mowen and Minor (2002: 180) describe that such communication assigns exchange of comments, thoughts, or ideas between two or more consumers who have no source of marketing. In particular, the information through word of mouth is directly derived from people who personally intended to share their own experience. Such information is more understandable than advertisement. Hence, Griffin (2002: 30) argues that word of mouth has the most powerful impact for businesses to get new customers.

### **Effect of Service Quality on Satisfaction, Trust, and Word of Mouth**

Quality of service generates efforts to meet customers' needs and desires. The accuracy in conveying a hospital service quality is also supposed to satisfy customer expectations. Quality should start from the customer's needs and think on the customer's perception. In other words, a good quality image is not based on a provider's perspective or perception, but on customers' perspectives or perceptions towards a quality. Indeed, quality has been widely recognized to have a direct effect on satisfaction as stated by Kitapci et al. (2014). They argued that service quality dimension to a hospital had a positive relationship on satisfaction. In contrast, the research result of Kitapci et al. (2014) stated that service quality dimensions (tangible, reliability, and responsiveness) of a hospital were unrelated to patient satisfaction. The gaps, therefore, lead to develop research hypothesis as follow:

- H1 : Service quality affects word of mouth at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province.
- H2 : Satisfaction affects word of mouth at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province.
- H3 : Trust affects word of mouth at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province.

### **Effect of Hospital Brand Image on Satisfaction, Trust, and Word of Mouth**

Hospital brand image can be necessary to establish satisfaction, trust, and word of mouth within a society. Sener (2014) indicates that image can be formed by presenting and combining some elements of marketing mix. The marketing mix is a set of marketing elements that companies apply to achieve the objectives of target market. Being strengthened with a positive brand image, the companies will be able to create satisfaction after consumers feel the experience of using company services. This argument is supported by the Chao-Chan Wu (2011). His study indicates that hospital brand image has a direct and indirect effect on patient loyalty, through customer satisfaction. So forth, the positive brand image of a hospital can elevate patients' direct loyalty as well as patient satisfaction through the development of service quality. Therefore, this research adds further hypothesis as follow:

- H4 : Hospital brand image affects the satisfaction of patient families at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province.
- H5 : Hospital brand image affects the trust of patient families at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province.

H6 : Hospital brand image affects the word of mouth from patient families at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province.

### **Effects of Satisfaction and Trust on Word of Mouth**

People's satisfaction and trust can generate their positive word of mouth. Word of mouth can reduce a company's cost to attract new customers. In other words, marketing costs to draw attention for new customers can be decreased with customers' higher satisfaction. A research by Kitapci et al. (2014) supports the argument that satisfaction affects the word of mouth. Moreover, Naidu (2008) proves that patients and families of patients who are satisfied will affect positive word of mouth communication; otherwise, those who are dissatisfied will generate negative word of mouth. Accordingly, this research also establish additional hypothesis as follow:

H7 : Satisfaction affects word of mouth at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province.

H8 : Trust affects word of mouth at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province.

### **Research Method**

This research intended to analyze and test the effect of service quality on satisfaction, trust, and word of mouth for patient families a hospital. Therefore, this applied quantitative research with causality approach. The population of this research were families of mental disorder patients treated at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province. This study used 23 indicators so that the minimum sample sizes were 125 respondents.

### **Research Results**

Families of mental disorder patients at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province were considered as the respondents of this research. About 39.2% or 49 respondents were mostly between 41-50 years old. The least frequency of respondents (10.4% or 13 people) were between 20-30 years old. Moreover, the 65 respondents (52%) graduated from high school educational degree; and the least about 1.6% of respondents have Master degree

The result of structural model estimation analysis is presented on the following figure:

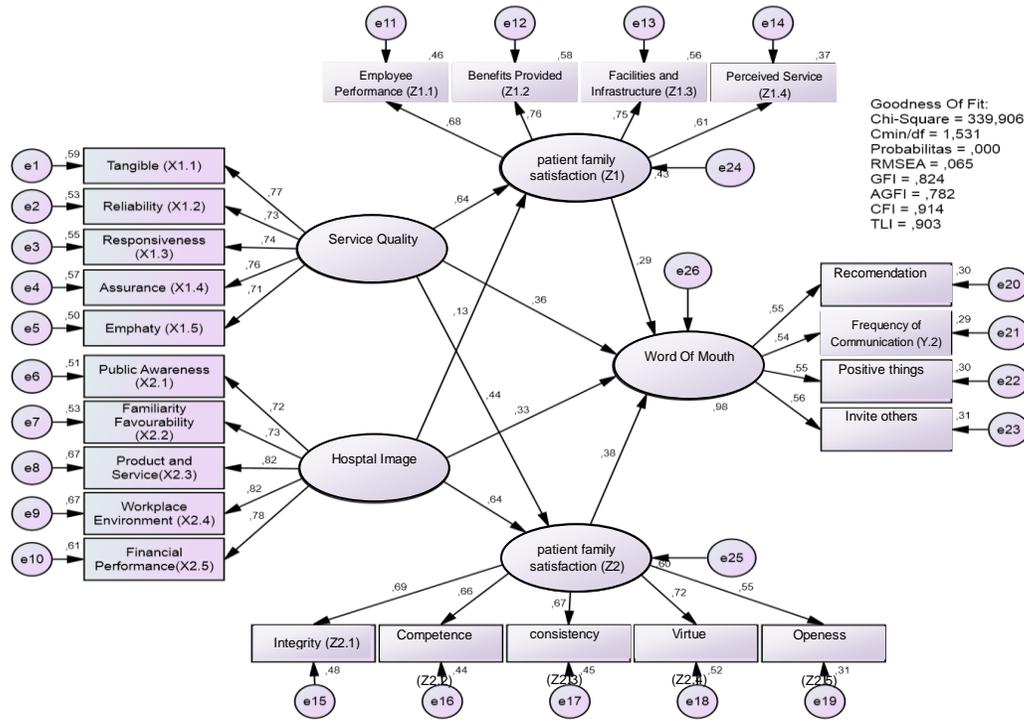


Figure 5.6. Full Structural Model

Then, the following is the calculation results of coefficient SEM value or standardized values on each variable:

Table 1

Coefficient Value of SEM on Variable Effects

Causality Relations	Direct Effect	IndirectEffect		Total Effect
		Through Z <sub>1</sub>	Through Z <sub>2</sub>	
Service quality (X <sub>1</sub> ) → Satisfaction (Z <sub>1</sub> )	0,640	-	-	0,640
Service quality (X <sub>1</sub> ) → Satisfaction (Z <sub>2</sub> )	0,442	-	-	0,442
Hospital Image (X <sub>2</sub> ) → Satisfaction (Z <sub>1</sub> )	0,133	-	-	0,133
Hospital Image (X <sub>2</sub> ) → Trust (Z <sub>2</sub> )	0,636	-	-	0,636

Service quality (X <sub>1</sub> )	→ Word Of Mouth (Y)	0,360	0,244	0,128	0,732
Hospital Image (X <sub>2</sub> )	→ Word Of Mouth (Y)	0,327	0,051	0,184	0,561
Satisfaction (Z <sub>1</sub> )	→ Word Of Mouth (Y)	0,381	-	-	0,381
Trust (Z <sub>2</sub> )	→ Word Of Mouth (Y)	0,289	-	-	0,289

**Discussion**

**Effect of Service Quality on Satisfaction**

This research investigated the effect of service quality on satisfaction, trust, and word of mouth of patient families at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province. The results of causality testing indicated that better service quality would increase patients' family satisfaction. This is consistent with a research by Brady and Robertson (2001), they find that service quality is able to create emotional assessment as well as to elevate satisfaction. In this research, the investigated hospital have to provide satisfactory service to their customers or patients so that it will be able to create a strong relationship and profitable organization. Parasuraman et al. (1988) once states when the services are able to meet or exceed the expectations of customers, then the customers can be satisfied. Kitapci et al. (2014) also state that the broader service quality has been recognized as having a direct influence on satisfaction. Moreover, other researches conducted by Naidu (2008); Hazilah and Phang (2009); Zineldin (2010); Frimpong et al. (2010); Wu (2011); Chang et al. (2013); Sener (2014); Widadi (2014); Juhana et al. (2015); Huei et al. (2015); Hanaysha and Hilman (2015); Prayogo and Firdiansjah (2016) have all proved that service quality can affect customer satisfaction. In brief, this study confirmed the previous researchers that the quality of hospital service could increase the patient family's satisfaction.

**Effect of Service Quality on Trust**

This research found that service quality gave positive impact on the trust of patient families at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province. The result was consistent Alrubaiee and Feras (2011); Chang et al. (2013); and Khan and Khan (2014). They showed that the quality of service affected trust. Similarly, the results of Chou's (2014) indicated a positive relationship between service quality and consumer trust. In addition, the indicator on the service quality variable that was prioritized for improvement was empathy since it was essential for mutual trust relationships. The empathy could be established to ease patients, to understand patient problems, and to accelerate the patients' healing process. Thus, this study argued that nurses's empathy could help patients to identify and explore feelings that had been concealed. Then, the patients were able to realize that they were indeed understood and accepted by others. The patients were also able to develop their self-esteem, especially patients with mental disorders.

### **Effect of Quality Service on Word of Mouth**

This research found that better service quality would increase patient families' word-of-mouth at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province. Zeithaml et al. (2009) explains that the quality of service is a level in which the existing services meet or exceed consumer expectations; while word of mouth is a willingness of consumers to recommend products or services of a company to friends and colleagues. Besides, Kumar et al. (2009) conveys that the quality of good service will result in higher customer satisfaction that can improve the word of mouth. Moreover, the result of this research is also consistent with Harrison-Walker (2001) and Chao-Chan Wu (2011). They argue that service quality is one of the variables that can influence word-of-mouth.

### **Effect of Hospital Brand Image on Satisfaction**

In this research, the result of causality test indicated that the higher level of hospital brand image could not greatly escalate the satisfaction of family patients at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province. This finding was not consistent with the research result of Chao-Chan Wu (2011) that a hospital brand image had an impact on patient satisfaction.

### **Effect of Hospital Brand Image on Trust**

The result of causality test proved that the hospital image had positive impact on the trust of families of mental disorder patients at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province. Similarly, Doney and Cannon (1997) stated that brand image has a positive and significant effect on trust. Moreover, the descriptive results showed that hospital image and trust are equally high. The descriptive result also showed that strengthening hospital image was preferred in the workplace environment. This meant that hospital image can be strengthened significantly, especially by establishing environment aspect that includes waiting rooms, lobby for patient families, and parks.

### **Effect of Hospital Brand Image on Word of Mouth**

In this research, the test results demonstrated that the stronger image of a hospital would increase word of mouth of patient families. This finding was consistent with research results by Chao-Chan Wu (2011), Widadi (2014) and Juhana et al. (2015). They assumed that brand image have a significant and positive effect on word of mouth. In particular, the selection of a hospital is based on the attitudes of consumers, patients, and patient families. If a hospital has a good image perception, then it will advance the trust of consumers to visit the hospital over and over again. Such attitude will affect the word of mouth on the hospital brand. Obviously, specific brand characteristics and differences that differ with other brands will be embedded in the minds of consumers. In turn, the good image generates loyalty in the form of word of mouth for reusing the brand.

### **Effect of Satisfaction on Word of Mouth**

This research recognized the importance of satisfaction in encouraging word of mouth. The result of this research was consistent with Oliver (2007) describing satisfaction as an emotional notion that might affect assessment of the services provided. The higher degree of satisfaction being felt by a patient's family would establish behavioral tendencies for the hospital beneficiary.

In contrast, the lower degree of satisfaction being felt by the patient's family would lead to the tendentious consumer behavior that would impair the hospital image. Furthermore, Thurau et al. (2003) describe that customer satisfaction can be received by users for long period. Thus, such feeling will produce a positive value of word of mouth longer.

### **Effect of Trust on Word of Mouth**

In this research, the result of causality test proved that trust also had positive effect on word-of-mouth on patient's family. Referring to Weichrich and Koontz (2003), trust is identified as a critical element for important relationships. In this case, the patient families build trust through friendship and family relations. Moreover, having high trust from family of patients can be mainly obtained from the openness of a hospital. Thus, the hospital should teach every doctor and nurse the importance of openness, so that good communication can be developed between the officers and the patient and the patient's family. In brief, a health care provider is not only oriented to treatment techniques, but also to communication aspect. Hospital service that is oriented with communication is very helpful for patients during healing and recovery process, instead of confidence development.

### **Conclusion**

This research found that service quality affected each variables, i.e. satisfaction, trust, and word of mouth. In particular, the finest hospital service quality would advance satisfaction and trust of patient families at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province. Therefore, the families were willing to share good information on their satisfactory hospital service quality to other people. Moreover, a hospital brand image brought an impact for trust and word of mouth. This meant that the patients' stronger image of hospital brand was able to increase the confidence of the patient's family at the Special Hospital in South Sulawesi Province. In turn, the stronger image would affect their word of mouth. On the other hand, this research found that the influence of hospital image on satisfaction was not significant. Thus, a strong hospital image disabled to satisfy patient families since they had to know and experience in advance the service given by the hospital. Last, this research argued that the patient families' satisfaction and trust equally affected word of mouth. If the hospital is able to provide satisfaction and to maintain trust to the patient's family, then the word of mouth will be increased.

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