Enhancing loyalty in Islamic hospitals: Exploring customer experience as mediating variables

Chamdan Purnama[1], Mirhamida Rahmah[2], Dinda Fatmah[3], Syaiful Hasani[4], Yusriyah Rahmah[5], Zakiyah Zulfa Rahmah[6], Sugeng Mulyono[7], Chairul Anam[8]

[1,2,3]Management Department, Faculty of Economics, School of Economics Al-Anwar, Mojokerto, Indonesia
[4]Management Science Doctoral Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, State Malang University, Malang, Indonesia
[5]Information Technology Department, Faculty of Computer Science, University of Brawijaya, Malang, Indonesia
[6]Shariah Economic Department, Faculty of Economics and Business, State Islamic Religious Institute, Kediri, Indonesia
[7]Management Department, Faculty of Economics, Universitas Gajayana, Malang, Indonesia
[8]Management Department, Faculty of Economics, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Mahardhika, Surabaya, Indonesia

Article Info

Abstract

Purpose – This study investigates the impact of service quality and corporate image on customer experience and loyalty within health institutions.

Methodology – Utilizing a correlation research design, data were collected from 80 hospital patients using a purposive sampling technique. Data were analyzed using regression analysis in SPSS version 25.

Findings – The findings reveal that Service quality and corporate image significantly enhance customer experience. Moreover, while service quality directly influences loyalty, the impact of corporate image on loyalty is mediated by customer experience.

Implications – The study suggests Hospitals should focus on improving service efficiency, communication, and patient satisfaction in order to strengthen patient loyalty. Additionally, cultivating a positive corporate image through patient interactions can further enhance the customer experience, leading to increased loyalty.

Originality – This study introduces a novel conceptual model that integrates customer experience as a mediating variable to explain loyalty dynamics in health institutions. This study's contributions are particularly relevant for hospital management, although the relatively small sample size may limit the broader applicability of the results.

Cite this article:
Purnama, C., Rahmah, M., Fatmah, D., Hasani, S., Rahmah, Y., Rahmah, Z. Z., Mulyono, S., & Anam, C. (2024). Enhancing loyalty in Islamic hospitals: Exploring customer experience as mediating variables. *Review of Islamic Social Finance and Entrepreneurship*, *3*(2), 121-136. https://doi.org/10.20885/RISFE.vol3.iss2.art2

Introduction

Contemporary hospitals are grappling with intensified competition among medical service providers owing to factors such as open market policies, population growth, and heightened health consciousness. This surge in the demand for healthcare services accentuates the critical role of health services in shaping public satisfaction and trust in hospitals. Efforts directed towards delivering high-quality services and ensuring patient security are crucial for mitigating negative perceptions and fostering loyalty. Hospitals are advised to embrace a customer-centric approach, emphasizing the cultivation of a positive community image and enhancement of service quality to ensure patient satisfaction and loyalty (Berry & Bendapudi, 2007).

Patient loyalty hinges on hospitals' ability to foster strong patient relationships, effectively discern, and meet patient needs. Extensive research has underscored the pivotal role of service quality in healthcare, particularly in hospital settings. Various studies (Lubis et al., 2021; Gede Sadiartha & Mirah Apsari, 2018; Dewi et al., 2021) have highlighted the significant influence of service quality on loyalty. Additionally, studies such as Suess and Mody (2017) underscore the importance of patient-preferred service attributes, such as room availability, in driving patient satisfaction and willingness to pay higher fees. Holistic enhancement of service quality across hospital functions is crucial for achieving service excellence.

Advocating for the introduction of a customer experience framework oriented towards service quality, efforts are aimed at promoting positive interactions between staff and patients (Hunter-Jones et al., 2020). Altinay et al. (2023) underscored the role of services, particularly during a pandemic, in enhancing health outcomes through quality medical services, financial savings, and comfort. In the hospital context, image plays a pivotal role in shaping loyalty dynamics. A positive image fosters loyalty, whereas a negative image may deter repeat engagements with hospital services or products. Consequently, hospital management must prioritize image management to bolster loyalty (Rahmah et al., 2022; Purnama, 2014; Purnama & others, 2010; Purnama, 2021; Bashor & Purnama, 2017).

Research indicates that a hospital's image is shaped by various factors, including service quality, equipment adequacy, and competence of medical personnel. These elements collectively contribute to patients' perceptions and overall satisfaction, which are critical for forming a positive hospital image. Efforts to enhance hospital image are crucial, as image exerts both direct and indirect influences on patient loyalty (Cui & Wu, 2016). A strong hospital image not only attracts new patients but also fosters trust and long-term commitment from existing patients. Moreover, a positive image can enhance a hospital's reputation within the community, leading to increased patient referrals and a competitive advantage in the healthcare industry. Therefore, hospitals should continuously invest in improving service quality, updating medical equipment, and ensuring that their medical staff remains highly skilled and professional. By doing so, hospitals can build a resilient and positive image that contributes significantly to patient loyalty and overall success. Against this backdrop, this study aims to explore the role of customer experience as a mediator between service quality and loyalty at Islamic Hospital Sakinah. Focusing on issues related to unsatisfactory services, particularly regarding the registration process, waiting times, and waiting room comfort, this study seeks to provide deeper insights into the influence of service quality, image, and customer experience on loyalty. Despite existing limitations in the literature, this research endeavors to bridge these gaps, offering valuable insights for healthcare practitioners and researchers alike.

Literature Review

The concept of service quality in the healthcare industry is central to the understanding of patient satisfaction and loyalty. Service quality is defined as an effort to meet or exceed customer expectations, needs, and desires. In the healthcare context, it encompasses various indicators, such as assurance (the ability to inspire trust and confidence), reliability (consistency in performance), tangibility (physical facilities and equipment), responsiveness (willingness to help patients), and empathy (providing caring and individualized attention) (Akdere et al., 2020). These factors are

critical for creating a positive patient experience, which is essential for building trust and encouraging repeat visits.

Company image in the healthcare industry is another crucial factor influencing patient loyalty. Company image refers to the overall perception and belief that consumers hold in their minds, which affects their decision-making processes regarding the use of a particular service (Wati, 2022). This image is built on several components, including the hospital's personality, reputation, espoused values, and overall identity, as perceived by patients (Hazimah & Azis, 2022). A positive company image helps reinforce patient trust as it conveys reliability, professionalism, and commitment to quality care. When a hospital is viewed favorably, patients are more likely to return and recommend it to others, thereby enhancing loyalty.

Customer experience is defined as the knowledge and perceptions gained from interactions with service providers, which significantly influences how patients view and evaluate healthcare services (Chen & Lin, 2015). Key indicators of customer experience include the quality of the product or service, efficiency of service procedures, environment of the hospital, and demeanor of the staff (Calzari et al., 2024). A positive customer experience, characterized by smooth service processes, a comfortable environment, and attentive staff, can lead to higher levels of patient satisfaction. This in turn strengthens patient loyalty, as satisfied patients are more likely to continue using the hospital's services and recommend them to others.

Loyalty in the healthcare sector is characterized by a patient's commitment to consistently return to the same hospital for future healthcare needs despite the availability of alternative options or the influence of competitors' marketing efforts (Yap et al., 2012). Loyalty involves not only the repeated use of services, but also psychological commitment, positive word-of-mouth publicity, and favorable treatment decisions (Purnama, 2015). Previous research indicates that high service quality, strong company image, and positive customer experiences are all significant predictors of loyalty in the healthcare sector. By meeting and exceeding patient expectations through these variables, hospitals can cultivate a loyal patient base that is likely to choose their services over those of competitors.

Hypotheses

The interplay between these variables suggests that customer experience is influenced by superior service quality and company image, both of which impact loyalty (Tasci & Semrad, 2016; Ningsih et al., 2021). Positive perceptions of service quality contribute to loyalty, similar to company image (Yazid, 2020; Yuniasih & Watini, 2022). Customer experience also plays a significant role in shaping loyalty (Roy et al., 2024). Therefore, investigating the mediating role of customer experience on service quality, image, and loyalty is warranted, as proposed in the conceptual framework. This study aims to empirically test hypotheses exploring these complex dynamics in the healthcare industry (see Figure 1).
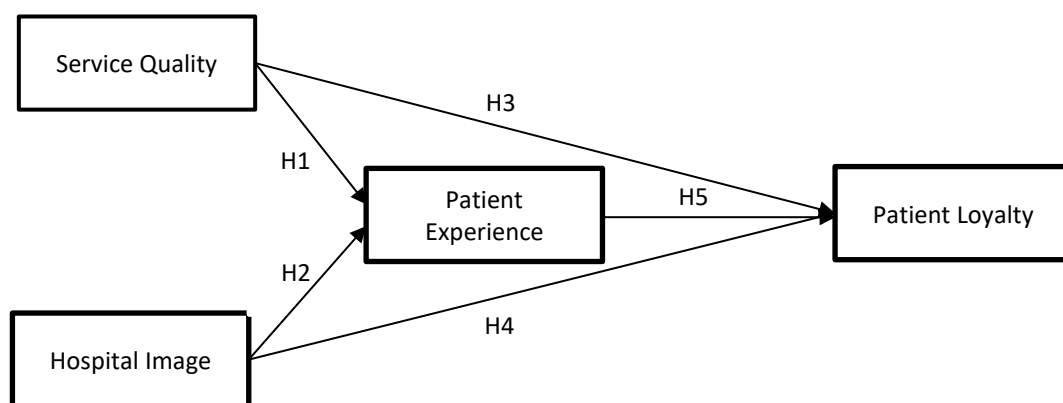

Figure 1. Research Model and Proposed Hypothesis
Source: Authors' own work

Research Methods

This study adopts an explanatory research design that is particularly suited to exploring and clarifying the intricate relationships among service quality, image, customer experience, and loyalty. This design was chosen because it enables the investigation of causal links between variables, which is essential for understanding the underlying factors influencing loyalty in hospital settings (Saunders et al., 2009). The hypothesis testing framework within this design is critical for empirically validating the proposed relationships, thereby providing insights into how service quality, image, and customer experience contribute to loyalty (Akintayo et al., 2024).

The study population consisted of patients who were hospitalized for at least one night at Mojokerto Islamic Hospital, East Java. Purposive sampling is intentional as it allows for the deliberate selection of participants based on predefined criteria, ensuring that the sample is representative of the population under study (Etikan, 2016). By focusing on patients aged 18 years and above who have experienced hospitalization, this study ensures that respondents have sufficient experience and cognitive ability to provide meaningful insights into their perceptions of service quality, image, customer experience, and loyalty (Nathanael et al., 2022).

Data collection was conducted over three weeks using a structured questionnaire. The choice of a questionnaire-based survey method is justified by its efficiency in gathering large amounts of data within a limited timeframe, as well as its ability to capture standardized responses, which are crucial for subsequent statistical analysis. A five-point Likert scale with five categories was selected for its simplicity and reliability in measuring respondents' perceptions. This scale enabled respondents to express the intensity of their agreement or disagreement with the statements provided, offering nuanced insights into their experiences and opinions.

The questionnaire underwent rigorous validity and reliability testing to ensure precision and consistency of the measurements. SPSS version 25 was employed for these assessments as it is a widely recognized software tool for conducting robust statistical analyses. Validity testing, including convergent and divergent tests, was performed to confirm that the survey items accurately measured intended constructs. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the reliability of the questionnaire, with a high value indicating strong internal consistency among the survey items.

The study sample comprised of 80 patients, a number selected in alignment with the minimum sample size guidelines suggested by Cohen and Whitten, (2020) for statistical analyses. This sample size was considered adequate for conducting planned regression analyses and ensuring the statistical power needed to detect significant effects.

The structural model evaluation involved classical assumption tests such as normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. These tests are critical for verifying that the data meet the necessary assumptions for reliable regression analysis. For instance, a normality test ensures that the data distribution approximates a normal curve, which is a key requirement for parametric statistical tests. The multicollinearity test checks for high correlations between independent variables, which could distort the results, while the heteroscedasticity test ensures that the variance of errors is consistent across all levels of the independent variables.

Regression analysis was used to determine the significance and directionality of the relationships between independent and dependent variables. The significance of the regression coefficients, presented in Tables 7 and 8, was analyzed to validate the proposed hypotheses. Hypothesis testing based on these coefficients is a crucial step in determining whether empirical data support the theoretical model. Additionally, the R-squared values, depicted in Tables 10 and 11, were utilized to assess the model's explanatory power, which indicates how well the independent variables explain the variation in the dependent variable, loyalty.

Results and Discussion

The validity test conducted on all statement items pertaining to the variables of service quality, image, customer experience, and loyalty indicated their validity, as evidenced by Pearson correlation values exceeding 0.361 and significance values (Sig) less than 0.05, as presented in Table 2. This signifies a significant relationship between each statement in the instrument and the construct it

intends to measure, aligned with predetermined criteria. Consequently, it can be inferred that the measuring instrument is valid for use in research.

Furthermore, the reliability test demonstrated robust internal consistency among all statement items across variables, with Cronbach's alpha values surpassing 0.70, as depicted in Table 3. This elevated alpha value signifies a commendable level of internal reliability among items within each variable (Ghozali, 2018). Thus, the statements employed in the instrument are reliable, rendering them dependable for measuring the intended constructs.

Consequently, the outcomes of both the validity and reliability tests affirmed the adequacy and integrity of the measuring instruments used in this research. Hence, they can be deemed trustworthy for facilitating the collection of the requisite data in the research context.

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents

Description	N	%	Description	N	%	Description	N	%
Gender			Previous visit			Education		
Man	41	51.3	Never	10	12.5	High school graduate or earlier	57	71.2
Woman	39	48.7	Very	13	16.2	Bachelor	14	17.5
Amount	80	100	Twice	11	13.8	Masters	7	8.8
Age			Three Times/More	46	57.5	Doctor	2	2.5
17-34	23	28.8	Amount	80	100	Amount	80	
35-52	27	33.7						
53>	30	37.5						
Amount	80							

Source: Data processed

Table 2. Validity test results

Indicator	Pearson correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Indicator	Pearson correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
SQu1_Assurance	0.643	0.000	PEx1_Product	0.406	0.000
SQu2_Reliability	0.633	0.000	PEx2_Procedure	0.719	0.000
SQu3_Tangible	0.707	0.000	PEx3_Environment	0.590	0.000
SQu4_Responsiveness	0.650	0.000	PEx4_Service	0.594	0.000
SQu5_Empathy	0.683	0.000	PLo1_Commitment	0.618	0.000
HIm1_Personality	0.747	0.000	PLo2_Publicity	0.814	0.000
HIm2_Reputation	0.809	0.000	PLo3_Treatment	0.834	0.000
HIm3_Value	0.773	0.000			
HIm 4_Identity	0.436	0.000			

Source: Data processed

Table 1 details the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, previous visits, and educational background. The data reveals a fairly balanced gender distribution, with 51.3% male and 48.7% female respondents. The age group distribution shows that the majority are over 35 years old. Most respondents (57.5%) had visited the hospital three times or more, indicating a significant portion of repeat visitors. In terms of education, 71.2% had completed high school or less, followed by 17.5% with a bachelor's degree, suggesting that the majority of respondents had a lower educational background.

The validity and reliability of the instruments were tested rigorously. The Pearson correlation values in Table 2 exceeded 0.361, with significance levels below 0.05, confirming the validity of the instruments. Table 3 presents the reliability test results, with Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70, indicating a high internal consistency. These results confirm that the instruments used were both valid and reliable.

Table 4 displays the normality test results, indicating that the residuals were normally distributed (Sig = 0.200). The multicollinearity test results in Table 5 show acceptable Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, suggesting no multicollinearity issues among the predictors. However, the heteroscedasticity test results in Table 6 indicate that service quality, image, and

customer experience do not significantly affect the variance of the residuals, implying the absence of heteroscedasticity.

Table 3. Reliability test results

Indicator	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted	Indicator	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
SQu1_Assurance	0.818	PEx1_Product	0.831
SQu2_Reliability	0.829	PEx2_Procedure	0.824
SQu3_Tangible	0.827	PEx3_Environment	0.826
SQu4_Responsiveness	0.826	PEx4_Service	0.808
SQu5_Empathy	0.822	PLo1_Commitment	0.813
HIm1_Personality	0.819	PLo2_Publicity	0.820
HIm2_Reputation	0.815	PLo3_Treatment	0.820
HIm3_Value	0.823		
HIm 4_Identity	0.825		

Source: Data processed

Table 4. Normality test results

		Unstandardized residuals
N		80
Normal Parameters, b	Mean	0.0000000
	Std. Deviation	1.13418759
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	0.083
	Positive	0.083
	Negative	-0.059
Statistical Tests		0.083
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		0.200c,d

a. Test distribution is normal.
b. Calculated from data.
c. Lilliefors significance correction.
d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.
Source: Data processed

Table 5. Multicollinearity test results

	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.483	0.490		3.026	0.003		
	Service Quality	0.296	0.112	0.271	2.634	0.010	0.993	1.007
	Image	-0.097	0.158	-0.090	-0.613	0.542	0.489	2.046
	Customer experience	0.389	0.142	0.401	2.739	0.008	0.489	2.044

a. Dependent variable: Loyalty
Source: Data processed

Table 6. Heteroscedasticity test results

	Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.697	0.260		6.531	0.000
	Service Quality	-0.136	0.059	-0.247	-2.286	0.065
	Image	-0.011	0.084	-0.021	-0.136	0.892
	Customer experience	-0.105	0.075	-0.214	-1.390	0.690

a. Dependent variable: Abs_Res
Source: Data processed

Table 7. Regression test results for the relationship between image, service quality and customer experience

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.899	0.306		2.933	0.004
	Service Quality	0.541	0.077	0.591	7.058	0.000
	Image	0.226	0.073	0.258	3.083	0.003

a. Dependent variable: Customer experience
Source: Data processed

Table 8. Regression test results of the relationship between image, service quality, customer experience and loyalty

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1,483	0.490		3,026	0.003
	Service Quality	0.296	0.112	0.271	2,634	0.010
	Image	-0.097	0.158	-0.090	-0.613	0.542
	Customer experience	0.389	0.142	0.401	2,739	0.008

a. Dependent variable: Loyalty
Source: Data processed

The outcomes of the path analysis are detailed in Tables 7 and 8, which also facilitate translation into structural model equations (1) and (2). Table 7 shows the significant positive impact of service quality on customer experience ($\beta = 0.541$, Sig = 0.000), thus corroborating H1. Moreover, the table demonstrates that image significantly positively influences customer experience ($\beta = 0.226$, Sig = 0.003), supporting H2. These findings imply that enhancing employee-provided services can augment positive customer experiences, whereas a favorable image can positively affect such experiences.

In Table 8, the results illustrate a significant positive relationship between service quality and loyalty ($\beta = 0.296$, Sig = 0.010), thus endorsing H3. Conversely, image does not exhibit a significant effect on loyalty ($\beta = -0.296$, Sig = 0.542), which contradicts H4. However, customer experience significantly positively influences loyalty ($\beta = 0.389$, Sig = 0.008), lending support to H5. This suggests that enhancing service quality can foster loyalty, whereas image may not directly impact loyalty, as anticipated. Conversely, the customer experience has the potential to fortify loyalty.

The path analysis delineates that while service quality and image significantly contribute to customer experience, which subsequently positively influences loyalty, the direct impact of image on loyalty remains negligible. However, the positive role of customer experience in mediating the relationship between service quality, image, and loyalty was evident, as shown in Table 8. Following the criteria set forth by Kraus et al. (2023), it is apparent that customer experience operates as a partial mediator between service quality and loyalty and as a perfect mediator between image and loyalty, lending support to H6 and H7.

These insights underscore the pivotal role of customer experience in bridging the connection between service quality, image, and loyalty. Consequently, healthcare organizations can strategize to enhance service quality and image with a keen focus on fostering positive customer experiences to bolster loyalty. Drawing from the regression equations formulated based on Tables 7 and 8, the following relationships emerge.

Customer experience = 0.591 Service Quality + 0.258 Image   (1)
Loyalty = 0.271 Service Quality - 0.090 Image + 0.401 Customer experience   (2)

The path analysis results, shown in Tables 7 and 8, confirm the significant positive relationships between service quality and customer experience ($\beta = 0.541$, Sig = 0.000) and between image and

customer experience (β = 0.226, Sig = 0.003). This supports Hypotheses H1 and H2 (see Table 9). Additionally, service quality significantly influenced loyalty (β = 0.296, Sig = 0.010), validating H3. However, image did not significantly impact loyalty (β = -0.090, Sig = 0.542), thus rejecting H4. The significant positive effect of customer experience on loyalty (β = 0.389, Sig = 0.008) supported H5.

Table 9. Hypothesis test results

Hypothesis	Variable	β	t	Sig.	Decision
H1	Service Quality → Customer experience	0.591	7,058	0,000	Significant
H2	Image → Customer experience	0.258	3,083	0.003	Significant
H3	Service Quality → Loyalty	0.271	2,634	0.010	Significant
H4	Image → Loyalty	-0.090	-0.613	0.542	Not significant
H5	Customer experience → Loyalty	0.401	2,739	0.008	Significant

Source: Data processed

The results of the coefficient of determination test show that the developed model can explain some of the variations in the dependent variables, namely customer experience and loyalty. The coefficient of Determination for Customer experience in Table 10: Adjusted R Square value of 0.486 indicates that the model can explain approximately 48.6% of the variation in customer experience. However, other factors that were not included in the model may have influenced the remainder (51.4 %). The Determination Coefficient for Loyalty in Table 11: Adjusted R Square value of 0.171 indicates that the model is only able to explain approximately 17.1% of the variation in loyalty. This shows that most of the variations in loyalty cannot be explained by the variables examined in this study. Therefore, further research is needed to understand the additional factors that influence customer experience and loyalty in a broader context.

Tables 10 and 11 present the results of the coefficient of determination. The adjusted R Square value for customer experience was 0.486, indicating that 48.6% of the variation in customer experience was explained by the model. However, the model explains only 17.1% of the variation in loyalty, suggesting that other factors that were not examined in this study may significantly influence loyalty.

Table 10. Results test of the determination coefficient of the relationship between service quality and image and customer experience

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the estimate
1	0.706a	0.499	0.486	0.92659

a. Predictors: (Constant), Image, Service quality
Source: Data processed

Table 11. Results test of the termination coefficient of the relationship between service quality, image, customer experience and loyalty

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the estimate
1	0.450a	0.203	0.171	1.15636

a. Predictors: (Constant), Customer experience, Service Quality, Image
Source: Data processed

This study explored the impact of service quality and hospital image on patient experience and loyalty. Service quality and hospital image play crucial roles in shaping patient perceptions, which can ultimately influence their satisfaction and loyalty levels. This study discusses various findings that highlight the relationships between these variables and the theoretical, practical, and strategic implications associated with them.

Research shows that quality of care in hospitals has a significant impact on patient experience, with broad theoretical, practical, and strategic implications. This finding is in line with theories confirming that customer or patient perceptions are influenced by the quality of the service

they receive. According to Khan et al. (2022), patient service and experience are important indicators of health service quality, indicating that improving quality is very important for increasing patient satisfaction. The significant contribution of Jiang et al. (2024) towards understanding the influence of doctor-patient interactions on patient satisfaction, especially in the context of medical quality. Altinay et al. (2023) highlighted the positive impact of medical and financial aspects on patient experience, confirming that hospitality has a major influence on overall patient experience. Shahin et al. (2024) found that patient satisfaction is considered an important measure of health services, confirming that service quality has a significant impact on patient satisfaction in hospitals. Darzi et al. (2023) confirmed a significant positive relationship between service quality and patient satisfaction. Liu et al. (2024) showed that there are significant differences in perceptions between patients' evaluations of service quality. According to Alolayyan and Al Faraj (2024), procedures and quality of health services have a positive effect on patient satisfaction, with a statistically significant relationship. Scott et al. (2024) indicate that strategies to increase revenue include improving patient experience and quality of service. Almuayad and Chen (2024) confirmed that information quality significantly impacts patient satisfaction and ongoing consultation intentions. Khan et al. (2024) find a significant relationship between banking service quality and service and technology satisfaction.

The finding that perceptions of the hospital have a significant impact on patient experience carries substantial implications from various perspectives, both theoretical, practical, and strategic. This conclusion is in line with the theoretical foundation regarding consumer perceptions and attitudes, which highlights that positive perceptions can shape positive attitudes in patients, which, in turn, will influence their experience during care. According to Pollard et al. (2024), efforts such as improving the image through the use of imaging technology, such as CT scans, can increase the value of the patient experience in the healthcare system. Calzari et al. (2024) noted that hospitals continue to strive to innovate by, for example, creating informative videos about the patient imaging process by doctors to improve patient communication. Moreira et al. (2024) confirmed that patient experiences during hospital care, including in the context of imaging, have a significant effect. Calzari et al. (2024) confirmed that images have a major influence on patient experience. Harrop et al., 2024) emphasized that patient experience is of great importance, and qualitative research has been conducted to evaluate patient experience from their perspective.

The finding that service quality is positively correlated with patient loyalty has significant implications from various perspectives including theory, practice, and strategy. This is in line with theories of customer satisfaction, which assert that positive experiences with services can increase customer satisfaction and the likelihood of remaining loyal to the service provider. According to Chao et al. (2024), service quality affects e-loyalty, which significantly influences e-satisfaction. The findings of Pang and Zhang (2024) show that the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty is statistically significant, with overall service quality providing a significant positive influence. Almuayad and Chen (2024) highlight the importance of information quality in the context of a website in converting new patients into loyal customers. Adiba and Rosita (2023) find that logistics service quality has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. Gül et al. (2023) emphasized that patient satisfaction has a strong influence on loyalty. In a hospital context, superior service quality increases patient satisfaction and the likelihood of returning to the same hospital for treatment in the future.

The finding that hospital image had no significant effect on patient loyalty has interesting implications from various perspectives, including theory, practice, and strategy. These results highlight the complexity of the factors influencing patient loyalty and challenge theories that assume a direct relationship between brand image and customer loyalty behavior. According to Kodja et al. (2024), patient expectations, satisfaction, and attractiveness do not significantly influence patient loyalty. Kini et al. (2024) state that strengthening consumers' ideal self-image with brands can increase customer loyalty. Canfell et al. (2024) pointed out that although hospital image influences patient satisfaction, other factors, such as direct experience, quality of medical care, and comfort of facilities, have a greater impact on patients' decisions to remain loyal. Gazi et al., 2024) emphasized the importance of satisfaction and brand image and suggested a comprehensive

approach to interacting with patients. Abdullahi et al. (2023) found that increased patient retention and loyalty could be achieved by focusing on their experience in the hospital, especially in younger patients.

The finding that patient experience has a significant positive impact on patient loyalty has important implications from various points of view. From a theoretical perspective, these results are consistent with the basic principles of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Semyonov-Tal (2024) showed that providing urgent health services can reduce patient satisfaction, while empathetic and positive interactions can foster patient trust and loyalty. Bai et al. (2024) found that patient expectations, satisfaction, and loyalty expectations do not have a significant effect on patient choice. Theories in this area assert that positive experiences with a service or brand tend to increase customer satisfaction and the likelihood of loyalty. In the context of healthcare, this suggests that a good patient experience in a hospital can be the key to maintaining patient loyalty in the future.

The finding that patient experience acts as a partial mediator of the relationship between service quality and patient loyalty has important implications from various perspectives. From a theoretical perspective, these findings emphasize the importance of understanding the role of patient experience in explaining how service quality influences loyalty. The mediation concept revealed that patient experience is a bridge between the services provided by the hospital and patient loyalty. This confirms that patient experience is a key factor in shaping patient perceptions and behaviors towards hospitals. In line with this, Al Omari & Hamid, 2022) showed that hospital image acts as a mediator between health service quality and patient satisfaction, which in turn influences customer loyalty. Furthermore, Abdel Fattah et al. (2021) found that satisfaction plays a partial mediating role that positively and significantly influences the relationship between service quality and patient loyalty. The implications of the findings of Liu et al. (2024) shows that satisfaction acts as a mediator in the relationship between functional value, social value, and customer implications to improve user experience and foster customer loyalty. Kim et al. (2024) highlighted that the mediating effect of trust in the relationships between these institutions can improve the quality and efficiency of services. Furthermore, Liu et al. (2024) found that the relationships between perceived and patient service quality, treatment effectiveness, patient satisfaction, and patient loyalty were mediated by patient attitudes.

The finding that patient experience acts as a perfect mediator in the relationship between hospital image and patient loyalty has various significant implications. From a theoretical perspective, these findings emphasize the importance of understanding how patient experience influences the relationship between hospital image and patient loyalty. The concept of perfect mediation indicates that patient experience fully explains the relationship between hospital image and loyalty. This confirms that a positive hospital image directly influences patient experience, which in turn impacts patient loyalty. In line with these findings, Kim et al. (2024) highlighted the imaging settings of medical institutions and their impact on patient satisfaction, whereas Roy et al. (2024) found that mediating relationships between all customers can lead to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. Meanwhile, Fook et al. (2024) showed that the brand image and reputation of medical institutions influence user satisfaction and customer loyalty, while Alolayyan et al., 2023) found that hospital image influences patient loyalty and trust. Yen (2023) also showed that patient experience has a positive impact on brand image and loyalty, strengthening the relationship between brand and self-image.

Conclusion

The findings effectively address the research objectives, particularly in elucidating the role of service quality and customer experience in fostering consumer loyalty. Data analysis confirms a positive relationship between service quality and customer experience, thereby validating the study's hypotheses. This study significantly contributes to the existing body of knowledge by emphasizing the importance of amiable service practices in shaping positive customer experiences. The observed correlation between service quality and customer experience underscores the direct impact of service interactions on customer perceptions, thus aligning with the research objective of exploring these dynamics. However, the study also revealed a lack of empirical support for a

direct link between image and loyalty, suggesting that while image remains a factor, its direct influence on loyalty might be less significant than previously assumed, thus answering the research objectives with nuanced insights.

These findings have several practical applications for companies that aim to enhance customer loyalty. Companies should prioritize efforts to continually improve service quality, focusing on training staff to deliver consistent, friendly, and responsive services. Regular assessments of service processes are crucial for ensuring that they meet evolving customer expectations. Although maintaining or improving a company's image remains important, the findings suggest that strategies directly targeting the enhancement of customer experience might yield more immediate benefits in terms of loyalty. Additionally, integrating customer feedback mechanisms can help companies refine their service offerings, ensuring that they remain aligned with their customer needs and preferences.

This study had several limitations that should be acknowledged. The reliance on a specific sample from the Mojokerto Islamic Hospital may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or regions. Additionally, the use of closed-ended survey questions, which are useful for quantitative analysis, may have constrained the depth of insight into customer perceptions and experiences. These factors may have influenced the results and interpretations, suggesting a need for caution when applying these findings to broader populations or settings.

Future research could expand these findings by exploring additional variables that influence loyalty, such as online experience, customer retention strategies, cultural nuances, customer ethnocentrism, and customer participation. A mixed-method approach incorporating open-ended questions, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions would provide richer and more nuanced insights into consumer behavior, particularly in the context of healthcare services. Further exploration of the role of brand image in different cultural contexts and its indirect impact on loyalty could yield valuable insights, enhancing the broader applicability of the study's results.

Acknowledgements

Author contributions

Conceptualization: Chamdan Purnama, Mirhamida Rahmah, Dinda Fatmah, Syaiful Hasani, Yusriyah Rahmah, Zakiyah Zulfa Rahmah, Sugeng Mulyono, and Chairul Anam.
Data curation: Mirhamida Rahmah, Dinda Fatmah, Syaiful Hasani, Yusriyah Rahmah, Zakiyah Zulfa Rahmah
Formal analysis: Chamdan Purnama, Mirhamida Rahmah, Yusriyah Rahmah
Investigation: Chamdan Purnama, Mirhamida Rahmah, Dinda Fatmah, Syaiful Hasani,
Methodology: Chamdan Purnama, Mirhamida Rahmah
Project administration: Dinda Fatmah, Syaiful Hasani, Yusriyah Rahmah, Zakiyah Zulfa Rahmah
Supervision: Chamdan Purnama, Mirhamida Rahmah
Validation: Sugeng Mulyono, and Chairul Anam
Visualization: Sugeng Mulyono, and Chairul Anam
Writing – original draft: Dinda Fatmah, Syaiful Hasani, Yusriyah Rahmah, Zakiyah Zulfa Rahmah
Writing – review & editing: Mirhamida Rahmah, Dinda Fatmah, Yusriyah Rahmah, Zakiyah Zulfa Rahmah Anam

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