

Healthcare Service Promotion and Hospital Brand Building: A Review of Patient-Centric Strategies with Reference to Corporate Hospitals

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ABSTRACT

The healthcare sector has undergone substantial transformation with the increasing expansion of corporate hospitals, growing patient expectations, technological advancement, and intensified competition among healthcare service providers. In this changing environment, effective promotion of healthcare services and systematic hospital brand building have become important for developing patient awareness, trust, satisfaction, and long-term relationships. Unlike conventional consumer markets, healthcare marketing operates within a context characterized by service intangibility, information asymmetry, professional responsibility, patient vulnerability, and ethical considerations. The present review examines the major strategies adopted by corporate hospitals for healthcare service promotion and brand building, with particular emphasis on patient-centred approaches. The review synthesizes key themes including traditional healthcare promotion, digital marketing, social media communication, patient education, community outreach, service quality, healthcare professional interactions, patient experience, online reviews, electronic word-of-mouth, trust, reputation, and ethical considerations. The literature indicates that promotional activities can create awareness and influence patient expectations, but sustainable hospital branding depends substantially on the consistency between promotional communication and the actual healthcare experience. Service quality dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles contribute to patient satisfaction and perceived hospital image, while professional competence, communication, transparency, and empathy strengthen trust. Digital platforms and patient-generated online content have further increased the visibility and influence of hospital reputation. At the same time, concerns related to misleading claims, patient privacy, data security, misinformation, commercialization, and responsible use of testimonials require careful consideration. The review proposes an integrated perspective in which healthcare promotion influences patient expectations, while service quality and patient experience shape satisfaction and trust, ultimately contributing to hospital brand image, reputation, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth. The review emphasizes that sustainable corporate hospital branding requires an integrated, ethical, evidence-based, and patient-centred approach that aligns promotional strategies with actual healthcare service delivery.

Keywords: Corporate hospitals; Healthcare service marketing; Hospital branding; Patient experience; Service quality; Digital marketing; Patient satisfaction

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1. Introduction

In the last few decades, healthcare has experienced significant change, as medical technology is progressing, consumers' expectations continue to rise, the private healthcare system is expanding, digitalisation has changed the landscape, and healthcare providers are competing with each other. Patients today aren't just assessing a healthcare organization based on clinical knowledge or medical facilities; they're taking into account the general quality of service, availability, communication, responsiveness, physical setting, reputation, and their engagement with healthcare professionals. This has led to the introduction of service management, patient engagement, communication and relationship principles into the delivery of healthcare. The recent

findings suggest that the dimensions of interaction quality, process quality, and environmental quality are strongly linked to patient experience, satisfaction, trust, and behavioural intentions (Saporito and Mrad Georgis, 2026; ElHennawi et al., 2025; Shah et al., 2025; Ansari et al., 2025; Senyapar, 2024).

Competition in the healthcare industry has also been furthered by the growth of corporate and private hospitals. The environment of a corporate hospital generally offers a wide array of specialized and multispecialty services and patients who can make their own choices based on their perception of the level of services offered, the competence and expertise of their doctors, facilities, accessibility, cost, reputation and experience from previous visits. In these contexts, communicating an organization's

unique skills becomes more important and increasingly challenging for healthcare organizations, as they strive to keep their unique services of high quality and credibility. Hospital differentiation is not just about the building, the clinical technological processes, but involves the entire patient journey and the reputation gained from interactions with patients and other stakeholders. (Saporito and Mrad Georgis, 2026; ElHennawi et al., 2025; Ansari et al., 2025; Shah et al., 2025; Senyapar, 2024).

Healthcare marketing is different from standard marketing because the service being marketed is health, illness, uncertainty and many times some emotional and financial impact to the patient and family. Healthcare services are intangible, not easily assessable before being used, and highly reliant on professional skills and human interaction. Hence, traditional marketing methods are not applicable without the service quality, professional ethics, transparency, and the welfare of the patient. Healthcare promotion includes health education, community outreach, physician communications, digital communication, patient engagement, public relations and dissemination of credible information, in addition to advertising. These activities will only be effective if the promotional message is aligned with the quality of care received by patients (Senyapar, 2024; Shah et al., 2025; Ansari et al., 2025; ElHennawi et al., 2025; Saporito and Mrad Georgis, 2026).

In this regard, the building of a hospital brand is becoming an important aspect of healthcare management. The hospital brand is much more than just a name, logo or promotional identity; it is the sum total of the patients' perceptions of the quality of clinical competences, reliability, service quality and quality of communication, the conditions of the hospital, the professional conduct of the employees, the accessibility to the hospital, and the credibility of the organization. Studies that studied the hospital's brand image have suggested that there are relationships between brand image, perceived service quality, patient satisfaction, and patient loyalty; thus, healthcare branding is not just a communication activity, but is closely related to patients' evaluations of their service experiences. Therefore, the consistency of the image of an organization and the experience it provides to its patients is a crucial prerequisite for sustainable hospital branding (Saporito and Mrad Georgis, 2026; ElHennawi et al., 2025; Shah et al., 2025; Ansari et al., 2025; Senyapar, 2024).

Patient perception has then become a crucial factor in hospital reputation and the long-term relationships that they build with health care providers. Patients get impressions from several points, such as the

interactions with doctors and nurses, waiting times, administrative processes, hospital facilities, communication, treatment experiences, billing procedures, digital platforms and information received before and after treatment. Patient satisfaction can then impact trust, loyalty and word of mouth communication. A conceptual review of healthcare research revealed that service quality is significant antecedent of patient satisfaction and satisfaction is related to trust, loyalty and word of mouth behaviour. Research in multispecialty hospitals in Karnataka among patients also revealed relationships between perceived service quality, patient satisfaction, hospital trust and behavioural intention in the Indian context (Senyapar, 2024; Shah et al., 2025; Ansari et al., 2025; ElHennawi et al., 2025; and Saporito and Mrad Georgis, 2026).

In the healthcare sector, trust is especially vital because patients are unable to assess technically speaking the competence of the diagnosis or the treatment offered. Trust can be built based on perceptions of competence, communication, confidentiality, empathy, organizational accountability, reliability, and honesty. An integrative review of healthcare trust measurement revealed that there are several dimensions of trust and that it has been linked to many health-related behaviours, including access to care, use of services, continuity of care and more. Earlier studies in India also show that the quality of the healthcare service is linked to trust and loyalty of the patients, thus reinforcing the need for trustworthy service deliveries in addition to promotions. Hence, promoting and making people aware of a hospital without the required service improvement will not ensure the sustainability of the hospital brand (Saporito and Mrad Georgis, 2026; ElHennawi et al., 2025; Ansari et al., 2025; Shah et al., 2025; Senyapar, 2024).

Digital communication has revolutionized hospital promotion and brand building even more. Hospital websites, search engines, social media, online appointment booking, patient reviews, health-education resources, telemedicine providers and digital-communication are just some of the touchpoints where patients are exposed and assessing healthcare organizations. These can be used to communicate and engage patients, but they can also give a hospital negative or positive signals at lightning speed. Due to this, reputation management has become ever more closely integrated into service delivery, patient feedback, online communication, and organizational responsiveness (Saporito and Mrad Georgis, 2026; Shah et al., 2025; ElHennawi et al., 2025; Ansari et al., 2025; Senyapar, 2024).

Although a lot of literature exists on quality of healthcare services, patient satisfaction, trust, hospital

image and patient loyalty, it is dispersed in various research fields. Studies either highlight service quality and patient satisfaction, or branding, trust, digital communications, patient experience, or behavioural intentions. Past studies have also highlighted the importance of considering trust not just in the context of the doctor–patient relationship, but also from an organizational and health-system perspective. This division highlights the need to consider an integrated study of the various approaches in which corporate hospitals can market health services and build sustainable patient relations (Senyapar, 2024; Shah et al., 2025; Ansari et al., 2025; ElHennawi et al., 2025; Saporito and Mrad Georgis, 2026).

Accordingly, this review examines the strategies adopted by corporate hospitals for healthcare service promotion and brand building, with particular emphasis on patient-centric approaches. The review considers traditional and digital promotional practices, service quality, patient experience, hospital image, trust, satisfaction, loyalty, word-of-mouth communication, professional reputation, and ethical considerations. By integrating these dimensions, the review seeks to clarify how healthcare promotion can move beyond short-term communication and contribute to long-term hospital reputation and patient relationships. The review also identifies important research gaps and provides directions for developing more patient-centred, evidence-based, ethical, and sustainable strategies for hospital brand building (Senyapar, 2024; Shah et al., 2025; Ansari et al., 2025; ElHennawi et al., 2025; Saporito and Mrad Georgis, 2026).

2. Concept of Healthcare Service Marketing

There has been a significant shift in the approach to healthcare service marketing from the traditional provider to a more comprehensive patient-centered approach that takes into account patient needs, expectations, experiences, satisfaction, and long-term relationships with healthcare organizations. Healthcare marketing literature has grown significantly and includes topics like the strategy of services, advertising, brand, consumer behaviour, and healthcare relationship management. The extent and growing maturity of the research field was shown by a bibliometric review of almost 2,000 healthcare marketing publications. In today's health care delivery systems, marketing is no longer just about attracting patients to the organization; it is about communicating health care value, building patient relationships, managing the delivery of service experiences, and creating a health care organizations reputation (Corbin, 2001; Thomas, 2024).

On the Service Marketing in The Health Care Sector Definition and Characteristics

Healthcare service marketing is an organized approach to the planning, development, deployment, maintenance, and enhancement of a healthcare organization's service and product mix to meet the evolving needs of patients, their families, and other stakeholders, while establishing a reputation that will result in long-term success. Healthcare marketing is not like product marketing; it is a multifaceted process that includes the movement of professional knowledge, the provision of services, patient engagement, organizational procedures, and health outcomes. Healthcare services have a number of attributes that make them different from goods. The traditional services-marketing literature has outlined four key characteristics of services: intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity/variability, and perishability. In the healthcare sector, these qualities are important as patients typically do not have the ability to fully assess the technical aspects of a healthcare service before utilizing it. Intangibility is the fact that healthcare services do not have a physical appearance which can be inspected before being consumed. Despite all of the information hospitals can provide about their infrastructure, their equipment, their specialists, their accreditation and their treatment facilities, diagnosis, treatment, communication and experience are subject to a limited extent of assessment after the service encounter. Inseparability refers to the intimate connection between the production and use of services. Patients normally interact directly with doctors, nurses, technicians, administration and other healthcare workers. As such, employees are not only responsible for the service product they provide but also for the way they interact with it. The behaviour and the communication of employees are part of the service (Corbin, 2001; Thomas, 2024).

Variability or heterogeneity occurs because of differences between patients, healthcare workers, clinical circumstances, and/or organizational procedures and processes, as well as service encounters. Despite having protocols in place, each patient's needs and interactions can result in a different experience. Variability in healthcare services is an important focus of research because managing variation in service encounters is vital, but opportunities for patients to participate and co-create are also highlighted. Perishability is the fact that unused service capacity cannot be stored for later use. For instance, an empty appointment slot, an unused operating room, a diagnostic appointment, or an unused inpatient bed cannot be merely stored and sold on later, as a manufactured item. Healthcare organizations need to carefully oversee and coordinate capacity, demand, staffing and patient flow. The aforementioned characteristics have

significant implications for the healthcare marketing. Market positioning is not solely possible through promotion. Patients' assessment of the healthcare service is based on the real experiences they had while in contact with the healthcare product, so the marketing communication should be backed with credibility in service delivery. An analysis of healthcare service experiences also highlights that healthcare experiences are complex, emotionally significant and affect the patient's wider journey of healthcare service (Corbin, 2001; Thomas, 2024).

2.2 Intangibility and variability of healthcare services

Because health is intangible, there is an information imbalance between provider and patient. Patients can see certain elements of hospital, like cleanliness, buildings, technology, staff appearance, etc., but can struggle to evaluate technical aspects of the diagnosis or treatment on their own. As a result, patients often rely on other factors like hospital reputation, professional qualifications, accreditation, recommendations, experiences, online reviews, communication quality and perceived service quality to assess a healthcare provider. This is a quality that is especially crucial in the healthcare marketing. In situations like a complicated diagnosis or a medical emergency, patients might need to make choices without sufficient information. Thus, the trustworthiness of promotion messages and reputation of the organization are significant elements of perceived value. Secondly, there is variability. Healthcare experiences may vary based on the patient's clinical condition, providers' behavior, wait time, communication, treatment pathway, administrative process and other organizational factors. This has led to the research interest in service quality to focus on the patient's perception of quality in addition to the professional view of quality. A large survey of the research on service quality in the healthcare sector has uncovered an emerging interest in user-defined service quality. In the case of corporate hospitals, variability has specific implications in terms of brand building. Branding a hospital through advertising and digital communication can be very strong, but inconsistent experiences by patients will defeat the branding. On the other hand, a regular and patient interaction with the service will strengthen the credibility of the hospital brand. Therefore, service delivery becomes a crucial element of healthcare marketing (Mehta, 2022).

2.3 Patient as consumer

Marketing-mix element	Application in healthcare services
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In addition to patient empowerment, increasing choice, private health care markets, online information and active patient involvement in decision-making, the 'patient as a consumer' has become a focal point. Patients are seeking out information about the hospital, the doctor, treatment options, facilities, costs, access, and what other patients have to say about you before choosing a healthcare provider. But the patient is just another consumer has conceptual and ethical flaws. Decision making about healthcare is often carried out in a vulnerable situation, in an uncertain or stressful environment, with asymmetrical information and where the consequences are likely to be significant. Thus, patients are not always informed and autonomous consumers like ordinary consumers of commercial products. The patient-as-consumer idea has been discussed by scholars who point to a conflict between the empowerment of the patient and the possible commercialization of health care. It is more accurate to think of patients as active partners in their healthcare and see the professional and ethical duty of healthcare providers as well. Patient-centred health care practices are based on patient participation, communication, respecting patients' preferences, and responding to patients' needs. A study of patients as customers also shows that healthcare delivery is complex, co-produced and intangible in nature while highlighting the role of patient centred practices in enhancing satisfaction and perceived service quality. This change in marketing perspective, from “attract patients” to “create patient value,” underscores that marketing is a process aimed at generating value for the patient. Patient value could come in the form of clinical effectiveness, access, convenience, communication, empathy, safety, transparency, continuity of care, and positive service experience. Evaluating healthcare marketing success should not only be done based on patient acquisition or revenue metrics, but also patient experience, satisfaction, trust, engagement, and long-term relationships (Berkowitz, 2021; Thomas, 2024).

2.4 Healthcare marketing mix

The 4Ps marketing mix, product, price, place and promotion, is a good foundation for understanding healthcare marketing (Lexa and Berlin, 2006; Thomas, 2024). But, in a service intensive industry where human interactions play a significant role, the extended seven Ps (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence) is relevant (Das et al., 2021; Rochford et al., 2026).

Product	Clinical services, diagnostic services, preventive care, specialized treatments, emergency
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	care, rehabilitation and wellness services
Price	Consultation charges, treatment costs, diagnostic fees, packages, insurance-related payments and financial transparency
Place	Hospital location, accessibility, satellite centres, telemedicine and digital access
Promotion	Advertising, public relations, health campaigns, digital marketing, educational content, community outreach and social media
People	Physicians, nurses, technicians, administrators,

People and process are two major elements that are important in this context, as the provision of healthcare relies heavily on interpersonal communication and the interdependence of the organisation's working practices. Likewise, deliverables in service cases can clarify some of the ambiguity in cases where the services are intangible, and the tangible features of the services offer tangible clues to the quality of the organization. Promotion involves more than just traditional advertising. It might involve health education, medical awareness programmes, community screening camps, professional communication, public relations, website, social media, online appointment, patient testimonials, and other digital platforms. But to be effective, communication should be promotional in nature while also representing the quality and nature of the services that a given organization offers. In recent years, the link between healthcare service quality, patient satisfaction, and patient loyalty has been highlighted in academia addressing the healthcare sector in India (Lexa and Berlin, 2006; Das et al., 2021; Thomas, 2024; Rochford et al., 2026), indicating that the service quality dimensions need to be incorporated into a broader patient-centred hospital strategy, not as a stand-alone component of marketing.

2.5 Ethical issues in health promotion practice

One of the primary differences between healthcare marketing and most commercial marketing scenarios is ethics. Making health care decisions can have significant physical, psychological, social and financial implications, and patients may be especially vulnerable due to illness, anxiety, lack of medical

	reception staff and other personnel interacting with patients
Process	Appointment booking, registration, diagnosis, treatment pathways, billing, discharge and follow-up
Physical evidence	Hospital infrastructure, cleanliness, signage, waiting areas, equipment, ambience, digital interfaces and visible accreditation

knowledge and/or the need for immediate treatment. Thus, the promotion of health in health organizations must carry out a balance between the organization interests and the responsibility to the patient as a professional. Principles of ethically responsible healthcare promotion include truthfulness, accuracy, transparency, evidence, respect for patient autonomy, confidentiality, fairness, and refraining from making misleading claims. Promotional communication should not overstate treatment results, guarantee results where they cannot be guaranteed, fail to disclose pertinent information, set up false expectations, or take advantage of patient vulnerabilities.

Ethical issues in healthcare advertising have been well documented. Schenker and colleagues pointed out the ethical issues that arise in healthcare-service advertising due to the informational asymmetry, the high stakes decisions and the vulnerability of the patient, which might not be covered by traditional advertising concepts. Likewise, studies of direct to consumer (D2C) health care products have come up with concerns such as misleading claims, weak regulation, dubious quality and effectiveness, safety, privacy, financial costs, and targeting vulnerable populations. This becomes an important consideration if hospitals feature patient testimonials, treatment success rates, before and after photos, celebrity endorsements or any statements about specialized procedures. Promotional material should give enough background to patients for them to understand the information. When promoting high-risk or complex treatments, evidence-based communication is particularly important. The ethical

issues in ads to cancer centres, for instance, have focused on the need to avoid false claims and to use appropriate supporting evidence for claims about treatment success, and communicate in a balanced way. As well as patient protection, patient-generated content and transparency about sponsored content, there are new ethical challenges with digital marketing, such as how to manage patient online reviews and how to avoid manipulative communication. In short, it is not enough to consider ethics as a constraint of the promotion; it is rather a part of the hospital's brand identity and long term trust building strategy (Lexa and Berlin, 2006; Das et al., 2021; Thomas, 2024; Rochford et al., 2026).

2.6 Integrated perspective

The marketing of healthcare services can thus be regarded as a complex process that involves the design of services, the needs of patients, communication, service delivery, service experiences, trust and the reputation of the healthcare organization. Healthcare services are unique, and despite the fact that they can be promoted, there is no way to create a sustainable hospital brand. Rather, promotional communication is only credible if the message sent by the hospital is received in the same way by patients (Thomas, 2024; Rochford et al., 2026).

3. Hospital Brand Building

With the proliferation of hospital and health care providers and information sources available to patients, hospital brand building has become an essential element in the health care management process. In the past, hospital reputation was primarily linked to clinical skills, doctors' reputations, facility, and treatment results. Today, however, hospital branding is about more than just the quality of services, it's also about patient's experience, communication, availability, technological capacity, trust, values of the organization, and reputation. Hospital branding is not just a marketing campaign; it is the creation of a unique and believable brand that is reinforced by the patients' multiple healthcare experiences. The literature review following a systematical procedure yielded traditional hospital brand dimensions like brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand associations, brand awareness, and brand image as well as some hospital-specific ones like patient satisfaction, service quality, treatment processes and the performance of the medical staff. This illustrates the importance of traditional marketing concepts as well as the nature of healthcare provision (Thomas, 2024; Rochford et al., 2026).

3.1 Concept of hospital branding

Hospital branding is the process of systematically building and nurturing an organization's brand,

reputation, perceived value, and relationships with patients and other stakeholders. A hospital brand sets expectations to the patient about the nature and quality of services he/she can expect to receive at the hospital. The nature of healthcare services is intangible and technically complex, and the branding can help to minimize some of the uncertainty associated with the delivery of this service by offering patients more recognizable signals of the competence, reliability, facilities, professionalism and quality of service of the healthcare provider. But healthcare branding is more than just visual branding or marketing. When any organizational claims are backed by actual service quality, the potential role of branding for transparency, patient choice, communication, and patient retention is acceptable. Some studies have suggested that branding can help enhance technical quality and service quality levels, as well as to improve communication and the appropriateness of care, by making consumers' decisions about care more informed (Thomas, 2024; Rochford et al., 2026).

3.2 Brand identity and brand image

Brand identity is the manner in which a hospital wants to be identified and communicated, encompassing the values, mission, clinical skills, service philosophy, visual identity, communication style and unique qualities of a hospital. Unlike that, brand image is the actual perception of the hospital by the patients and other stakeholders. The difference is significant because the image a patient forms can be advanced technology, compassionate care, clinical excellence, patient-centredness—or something entirely different. Patient choice is especially related to the hospital brand image. A conceptual review of healthcare branding suggested a relationship between the hospital brand image, perceived service quality, patient satisfaction and patient loyalty. The model proposes patient loyalty can be affected by the perception of service quality and satisfaction in terms of brand image. So, in order to build a successful brand, there is a need to have congruence between the intended and experienced brand image. Patients may feel disappointed when the reality differs from the hospital's expectations, which can impact their satisfaction and loyalty (Lexa and Berlin, 2006; Das et al., 2021; Thomas, 2024; Rochford et al., 2026).

3.3 Brand trust and credibility

The element of trust is critical in healthcare branding as there is often a lack of information and uncertainty for patients when they are making decisions. Patients may not have the technical expertise to evaluate the quality of diagnosis, treatment or clinical decision making on their own. As a result, credibility of the organization, professional reputation, transparent communication and previous experiences can be

sources of confidence. In a recent systematic review, that included 149 studies representing 52 countries, organizational characteristics were shown to be a significant proportion of the predictors of trust in health organizations, including: (t)ransparent communication, competence, service quality, and perceived fairness.

The credibility of brands can therefore be enhanced by:

- adequate, relevant, and informed communication; and
- skilled and competent health care practitioners;
- transparent service information;
- consistency in the claims made on promotional materials and the services offered;
- respect for personal preferences; and appropriate knowledge sharing about treatment options and limitations;
- response to complaints; and Commitment to patient welfare that is evident.

Therefore, trust should be considered as an organizational resource that is built through successive and credible experiences of patients (Pelizzari et al., 2026).

3.4 Brand reputation

A patient's perception of a hospital's reputation is built over time from the experiences of all those who come into contact with it, including patients and their families, healthcare providers, referring physicians, hospital staff, other community members, media outlets, and others. While clinical results and professional experience are significant, reputation can also be shaped by communication, infrastructure, patient services, responsiveness, a digital footprint, public relations, social responsibility, and what patients say about them. With the rise in the amount of information readily available online, hospital reputation is becoming more apparent and possibly more malleable. Positive or negative experiences can be shared quickly and easily digitally so reputation management is an ongoing organizational responsibility. Thus, the reputation must not be considered as a standalone promotional good. It is an outcome of the organization's clinical performance, service quality, communication practices, patient experience and their relationships with stakeholders (Thomas, 2024).

3.5 Patient experience and brand loyalty

Patient experience relates to the spectrum of interactions that patients may have with a health-care organization from beginning to end. These interactions may involve appointment scheduling, registration, waiting, consultation, treatment, and nursing care, billing, discharge, follow-up, and

communication after treatment. The literature suggests there is a strong association between patient experience and communication and patient centredness. A systematic review on patient and provider perspectives found that communication was an important element of enhancing patient experience and patient centred care. Brand loyalty in healthcare can manifest as patients' intentions to return to the hospital, recommending it to others, using its services and spreading positive feedback. An integrative review resulted in the identification of determinants of patient loyalty which include satisfaction, quality, value, hospital brand image, trust, commitment, and complaint related factors. So, loyalty should not be viewed as just a matter of repeat buying. In the healthcare sector, loyalty may demonstrate trust in the healthcare provider, continuity of care, satisfaction, trust, and recommending the healthcare organization to others (Thomas, 2024).

3.6 Relationship between service quality and hospital brand equity

Hospital brand equity is the extra value that the hospital brand brings to a patient and other stakeholders due to their recognition of the brand. This is especially crucial since the quality of service that patients perceive is an important factor in determining the credibility of the brand in their eyes, as they judge the quality of the service they receive during actual service interactions. A systematic review of hospital brand equity revealed the following traditional factors as critical: perceived quality, brand loyalty, brand associations, brand awareness, and brand image, and the following healthcare-specific factors: patient satisfaction, treatment processes, and medical staff performance. Indian private health care industry has also found correlations between perceived service quality, satisfaction and loyalty in the field of research. Among the 475 patients included in the study from five private hospitals in India, relationship with the service providers, facility quality and interactions with the supporting personnel influenced the perceptions and loyalty-related outcomes. The significance of service quality and trust is further upheld by recent evidence in India (Monika et al., 2026). There was positive correlation between the perceived quality of hospital services and trust and loyalty among patients in the two hospitals (government and private hospitals) in Chhattisgarh and the association between satisfaction and loyalty was different in the two hospitals (Monika et al., 2026).

4. Strategies Adopted by Corporate Hospitals for Healthcare Promotion

Corporate hospitals operate in increasingly competitive healthcare environments in which

awareness, accessibility, reputation, differentiation, and patient relationships influence organizational performance. Healthcare promotion therefore encompasses a broad range of activities extending from conventional mass communication to community-based initiatives and professional networks. Importantly, healthcare promotion differs from ordinary commercial promotion because healthcare decisions involve health risks, professional responsibility, and information asymmetry. Promotional strategies should therefore provide accurate information and communicate genuine service value rather than simply attempting to increase patient volume (Röthlin, 2013; Bjørnstad, 2024).

4.1 Traditional advertising

Traditional advertising remains relevant for increasing awareness of hospital services, specialties, facilities, diagnostic capabilities, preventive programmes, and newly introduced services. Corporate hospitals may use advertisements to communicate information about:

- ☐ specialty departments;
- ☐ specialist physicians;
- ☐ diagnostic facilities;
- ☐ emergency services;
- ☐ surgical procedures;
- ☐ preventive health packages;
- ☐ maternity and child-health services;
- ☐ health-check programmes; and
- ☐ newly established clinical facilities.

The effectiveness of advertising, however, depends on credibility and relevance. Advertising can create awareness, but the patient's subsequent experience determines whether the communicated brand promise is reinforced or weakened (Thomas, 2024).

4.2 Print and television media

The media, including newspapers and magazines, TV, radio and mass media, can achieve wide geographic coverage. Articles on health, public-health messages, hospital announcements, profiles of specialists and awareness campaigns can be printed. The television can be used to better convey a message visually and emotionally, whether in the form of an interview, an expert discussion, a health programme or an institutional advert. These types of communications may be especially applicable for hospitals that are trying to build a name for themselves outside of the local area. The information, however, should be based on evidence and should not include exaggerated claims for treatment (Thomas, 2024).

4.3 Outdoor advertising

Outdoor advertising refers to billboards, banners, transit advertising, signage and other forms of advertising through location. Hospitals are allowed to broadcast on television, radio and other media about

the location of the hospital, emergency services, specialties, health camps, and major public-health campaigns. The advantage is that the populations are geographically relevant and repeat exposures occur. However, it is generally not possible to communicate a complex clinical claim responsibly in an outdoor context, as a communication is usually short. So, it's better to do that communication in the context of awareness and identification of services rather than in detail for medical decision making (Thomas, 2024).

4.4 Public relations

Public relations is a more comprehensive way of communicating about the relationships between hospitals, patients, communities, professionals, media, and others. These can range from press releases, expert interviews, public health events, institutional reports, academic conferences, community programmes, and disseminated health information that's based on evidence. Public relations can be a factor in building the reputation of a hospital by allowing organizations to use it to show they are experts and are being helpful rather than just advertising individual services (Thomas, 2024).

4.5 Health camps and screening programmes

Health camps and screening programmes are valuable tools for community involvement and preventive-health promotion. Corporate hospitals can arrange programmes for diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, cancer screening, women health, eye health, oral health, occupational health and more. These programmes could provide opportunities for early detection and health education, and raise awareness of hospital services within the community. In the case of the ethical implementation, however, there are certain steps that need to be taken, including the appropriate referral pathways, informed participation, confidentiality, and the avoidance of unnecessary diagnostic or treatment recommendations (Thomas, 2024).

4.6 Medical awareness programmes

Medical awareness programmes involve the use of educational communication to enhance awareness of public understanding of diseases, disease prevention, symptoms, available treatment options and healthy behaviors. The programmes can be delivered in seminars, workshops, public talks, webinars, expert talks and awareness days. Educational communication can help a hospital's branding to convey credible health information. When the information is correctly provided, transparent and focused on the patient's well-being, and not only on promoting the organisation, this can help build trust (Alhomoud et al, 2025).

4.7 Physician referral networks

Physician/specialist, primary-care, diagnostic centre, and hospital relationships may affect patient flow in

the healthcare system. Clinician skills, hospital structures, communication, referrals, and the professional image of the hospital will affect the development of these networks. However, referral relationships should continue to be professionally appropriate and care continuity and appropriateness oriented. They should not compromise patient autonomy or promote inappropriate health service use (An et al., 2018).

4.8 Corporate and community outreach

There is an increasing trend for corporate hospitals to reach out to communities via workplace health programmes, school health initiatives, outreach to rural areas, occupational health services, public-health campaigns, and collaboration with community groups. Community outreach can also help meet public-health goals while enhancing organization visibility. The branding value is greatest if the activities are perceived as being a long-term commitment to the community and not just a one-off marketing stunt (Choyke et al., 2022).

4.9 Patient education

Patient education now plays an integral part in the promotion of health care, as an educated patient is able to grasp the health conditions, treatment options, directions for drug use, measures to avoid, and follow-up needs. Patient education can be delivered using printed resources, counselling, websites, video, mobile apps, webinars, discharge information, and face-to-face with health care professionals. The educational function of the hospital is especially significant, since the quality of the information on the Internet is not always reliable and patients need to access good hospital communication. Studies have highlighted reliability and accuracy of health information on the Internet experiences by patients and the public (Nettles, 2005).

5. Digital Marketing Strategies in Healthcare

Digital transformation has significantly altered patient search behaviour and expectations for health information, their perception of health services, their interactions with hospital staff and systems, their appointment booking experiences and how they share their experiences. This makes digital marketing a vital part of the modern communication and reputation management strategy for hospitals (Vettriselvan, 2025).

5.1 Hospital websites

The hospital website frequently functions as the central digital information platform. It can provide information concerning:

- ☐ medical departments;
- ☐ physicians;
- ☐ clinical specialties;
- ☐ diagnostic services;
- ☐ hospital facilities;

- ☐ locations;
- ☐ appointment procedures;
- ☐ health education;
- ☐ emergency services;
- ☐ insurance information; and
- ☐ patient support services.

A professionally designed website can reduce information barriers and strengthen perceived organizational credibility. However, website content should be accurate, updated, accessible, and transparent (Bach et al., 2019).

5.2 Search-engine marketing

Patients increasingly use search engines to locate hospitals, physicians, specialties, symptoms, treatment options, and healthcare information. Search-engine optimization and paid search advertising can therefore increase hospital visibility when patients actively seek relevant services. Search visibility, however, should not substitute for the credibility of the underlying information. Hospitals should ensure that search-oriented content directs patients toward reliable and evidence-based information (Zenone et al., 2024).

5.3 Social media marketing

Social media provides hospitals with opportunities for two-way communication rather than one-way advertising. Hospitals can use social platforms to disseminate health education, public-health messages, physician interviews, event information, patient-support resources, and institutional updates. Social media can also facilitate interaction and feedback. Nevertheless, hospitals must manage patient confidentiality, professional boundaries, misinformation, and the potential misuse of patient-generated content (Bikowski, 2026).

5.4 Content marketing

Healthcare content marketing involves producing informative material designed to address patient information needs. Examples include:

- ☐ disease-awareness articles;
- ☐ expert interviews;
- ☐ FAQs;
- ☐ preventive-health information;
- ☐ treatment explanations;
- ☐ rehabilitation guidance;
- ☐ nutrition information; and
- ☐ patient education videos.

Content marketing can contribute to hospital credibility when information is clinically accurate, understandable, appropriately referenced, and regularly updated (Şenyapar and Nurgül, 2024).

5.5 Online patient reviews

Patient reviews are now more visible than ever in the online environment. Reviews can be useful for patients when they are deciding on a hospital or doctor. The findings, from a systematic review of 32

studies, revealed a consistent positive correlation between patient experience measures and online patient ratings, but mixed correlations between patient ratings and objective healthcare-quality measures. The distinction is critical: Online reviews may offer content regarding patient experience, but should not necessarily be viewed as a reflection of the quality of care. Structured mechanisms are thus needed in the hospital for monitoring reviews, professionally handling complaints, finding any recurring issues in their services, and security/privacy of the patient's data (Hong et al., 2019).

5.6 YouTube and health-education videos

The use of video platforms allows hospitals and health professionals to share information about health in a visual and verbal way. Videos may encompass symptoms, prevention, preparation for treatment, rehabilitation, and lifestyle modification, and often questions. The great benefit is the visual demonstration coupled with the expert explanation. But the trustworthiness of medical video content relies on the qualifications of the presenter, the evidence used to back up claims, the transparency of limitations, and the absence of sensationalized medical info (Neely et al., 2024).

5.7 Mobile applications

Hospital mobile apps can incorporate communication services, set up appointments, reminders, lab reports, medicine, payments, health records and other functions that help patients. These technologies can help hospital-patient interactions transcend the walls of the hospital. Mobile applications can enhance the convenience and continuity of communication when they are designed properly. But usability, accessibility, cyber security, privacy and digital inclusion need to be taken into account (Oldenburg et al., 2020).

5.8 Telemedicine promotion

With the advent of telemedicine, hospitals have new options for consultations and follow-up care. Digital consultation platforms can make it easier for patients who might have geographical, mobility or time related issues. The promotion of telemedicine should explicitly identify services suitable for teleconsultation and when in-person clinical assessment is required. This is crucial for patient safety and reasonable expectations (Ezeamii et al., 2024).

5.9 Online appointment systems

Online appointment systems make it easier for people to access it, enabling them to choose the department, doctors, date and time slots. Reminders and digital registration and follow up communication can enhance convenience. Accessibility is a component of the patient experience, so appointment technology can have an indirect impact on the perception of the

hospital's brand. Even as the hospital promotes its brand, it may have a bad experience getting an appointment. A hospital that has good marketing communication, but has bad appointment systems may not be able to establish consistency between the brand promise and the actual experience (Zhao et al., 2017).

5.10 Communication and personalisation using AI Chatbots, automated appointment reminders, personalized reminders, recommendation systems, patient-navigation tools, and the analysis of patient feedback are all examples of ways that artificial intelligence is relevant in health care communication. When properly designed, AI-driven communication can enhance responsiveness and personalization. But healthcare organizations have to differentiate between administrative or information AI from clinical decision making. When AI systems are designed for patient interactions, there is a need for privacy protection, transparency, proper human oversight mechanisms, escalation procedures, and measures to prevent the dissemination of inaccurate or misleading information (Li et al., 2024).

6. Patient-Centric Branding Strategies

It is a change from an organization-centred to a one that incorporates the needs, expectations, experiences, participation, and well-being of patients into the organization's strategy: patient-centric branding. This is the approach that involves branding not only in the communication activities but throughout the patient journey (Aguirre-Duarte, 2025).

6.1 Patient experience

Patient experience is the sum of perceptions that a patient has as a result of his or her experiences with the health care organization. It encompasses accessibility, communication, waiting, clinical, staff behaviour, physical environment, coordination, discharge and follow-up. Communication is particularly crucial. In a systematic review of patient trust and physician communication conducted in 2026, the authors made the following observations: Clear information delivery, empathy, active listening, shared decision-making, and supportive non-verbal behaviours were generally linked to greater patient trust with differing effects across clinical and technological circumstances. Therefore, patient experience should be treated as a key element of brand building instead of just a measure for quality assurance (Zhang et al., 2016; Kumar, 2026).

6.2 Communication and transparency

Transparent communication is the giving of understandable and timely information about the diagnosis, treatment options, likely treatment pathway, risks, costs, waiting time, follow up and other elements of care. Transparency helps to

diminish uncertainty and build trust. Transparency of communication and service quality were among the important organizational determinants of trust that were identified in a recent systematic review of organisational factors that lead to trust in health organizations. Transparency should be applied in both clinical and administrative relationships for corporate hospitals (Vermeir et al., 2015).

6.3 Accessibility and convenience

Accessibility encompasses physical location, transportation, appointment availability, digital access, emergency services, language accessibility and ease of navigating the health system. Patients' expectations are shifting to accommodate convenience. Digital appointment scheduling, electronic registration, teleconsultation, electronic communication, and coordinated follow-up can mitigate administrative challenges (Fortney et al., 2011).

6.4 Personalized services

Personalization is about modifying communication and services to the patient's situational context, preferences, clinical needs and healthcare journey. This can include appointment reminders, communication in multiple languages, patient education tailored to the individual, follow up (personalized) and navigation support. Personalization is possible, but there needs to be a balance between personalization and privacy, and between personalization and inappropriate automated recommendations, in hospitals.

6.5 Continuity of care

Continuity is about coordinating health care between consultations, departments, professionals and at different stages of care. Especially critical for patients with chronic and/or complex conditions. Continuity can boost confidence from a branding point of view because the patient feels this is a coordinated health care system rather than a series of independent services. The procedure for providing feedback and raising complaints is good. Feedback from patients

Table 1. Major dimensions of corporate hospital promotion and patient-centric brand building

Dimension	Major strategies	Expected patient response	Branding implication
Traditional promotion	Advertising, print, television, outdoor	Awareness	Brand recognition

can help hospitals understand the strengths and weaknesses of their services, as well as what they need to improve and what issues are occurring repeatedly. Feedback systems could include complaints management systems, suggestion systems, patient surveys, digital feedback platforms and post-discharge communication. A good grievance procedure should not only gather grievances, it should be designed to accept, investigate a grievance, respond to it, provide for corrective action and for learning from the grievance by the organisation (Mirzoev and Kane, 2018).

6.7 Patient engagement

Patient engagement is when patients are more involved in decisions about their health and healthcare. Shared decision-making is an important aspect of engagement. Shared decision-making, as a form of participatory approach to healthcare relationships, was the focus of a recent scoping review of interventions to strengthen these relationships and those that build trust and trustworthiness. Patients' engagement can enhance the brand relationship as they feel more engaged, respected and owned with the healthcare system (Vahdat et al., 2014).

6.8 Trust and emotional connection

Healthcare decisions frequently involve uncertainty, vulnerability, fear, and emotional stress. Consequently, a hospital's relationship with patients is not purely transactional. Empathy, compassion, respectful communication, responsiveness, and continuity can contribute to an emotional connection between patients and healthcare providers. However, emotional branding in healthcare must remain ethically grounded. Emotional communication should support patients rather than exploit fear, anxiety, or vulnerability. Sustainable emotional connection is more appropriately developed through authentic patient-centred care than through promotional messaging alone (Berry et al., 2017).

	media		
Community promotion	Health camps, screening, outreach	Engagement	Community reputation
Professional networks	Physician referral, professional	Provider confidence	Credibility

	communication		
Patient education	Seminars, articles, videos	Knowledge and empowerment	Expertise perception
Digital marketing	Website, SEO, social media, content	Information access	Digital visibility
Online reputation	Reviews, feedback, reputation management	Social proof	Brand image
Digital service	Apps, telemedicine,	Convenience	Patient-centric

7. Service Quality and Hospital Brand Perception

Patient satisfaction with service quality is one of the most critical factors that patients use to gauge the healthcare organization and is now a key element of a hospital's branding strategy. Healthcare services are assessed in many different ways, such as clinical encounters, interpersonal interactions, organizational processes, communication, accessibility, and physical environments, compared to tangible products. Patients might therefore judge the quality of the hospital treatment and care services not just by the outcome of care but also by the reliability, responsiveness, professionalism, empathic and physical aspects of the service experience. Parasuraman et al. (1985) offered a framework that was widely accepted for measuring the dimensions of perceived service quality: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. While the dimensions are specific to healthcare services, they can be applied to assessing patient evaluations of service interactions and eventually forming perceptions toward the healthcare organization (Wu, 2011).

7.1 Reliability

Reliability is the capacity of a healthcare organisation to provide the services it has guaranteed, accurately, consistently and dependably. Reliability in the hospital setting could be measured in the accuracy of appointments, diagnostic information, treatment

Processes	online appointments		Brand image
Service experience	Communication, accessibility, responsiveness	Satisfaction	Brand trust
Relationship management	Feedback, grievance handling, continuity	Engagement and confidence	Loyalty
Personalized care	Tailored communication and follow-up	Emotional connection	Long-term relationship

processes, communication, documentation, billing, and follow-up information. The services communicated to patients by the hospital are expected to be consistent and the second failure in the administrative or clinical procedure may affect the perception of the competence of the hospital. Therefore, reliability is one of the factors that will enhance the credibility of the hospital brand since the promotion of the product based on quality, advanced facilities, patient centred care or the special service that a hospital offers will only be meaningful if the service delivery is reliable. When a hospital consistently delivers on promises, it has a better chance of building a consistent and reliable reputation with patients and other stakeholders.

7.2 Responsiveness

Responsiveness is the readiness and capacity of health care providers and organisations to respond quickly and meet the needs of patients. Examples of responsiveness in hospitals include appointment management, waiting times, emergency communication, availability of information, responding to patients' inquiries, and responding to complaints/grievances. Quick and courteous responses can be seen as a sign of the organization's respect for the patient's time, concerns and well-being. Rapid and courteous responses can be seen as caring for the patient's time, concerns and well-being. On the other hand, a lack of communication, delays

in response and waiting times can lead to dissatisfaction and reduce perceptions of efficiency within the organization. As online appointment scheduling, digital communication platforms, automated reminders, and patient-navigation systems become more common, hospitals now have more opportunities to enhance their responsiveness and convenience.

7.3 Assurance

Assurance is the knowledge, competence, courtesy, professionalism and credibility of health care workers. The dimension is especially relevant in healthcare where patients may not necessarily possess the technical information to assess the clinical appropriateness of diagnosis and treatment on their own. Therefore, professional qualifications, communication, confidence, ethical behaviors and explaining medical information to patients/patients' safety can have an impact on the patients' perception of competence and safety. Assurance can thus directly influence patient trust, which is one of the most important factors of the hospital's brand perception. A patients' trust in the organisation may grow if they feel confident in the knowledge, respect, transparency and competence of healthcare professionals. So, professional assurance isn't just about the individual health care professional; it's about the whole hospital brand.

7.4 Empathy

Empathy is giving care and attention in a personalized, understanding, compassionate and sensitive way to the needs and circumstances of the patient. Interpersonal behaviour is especially significant in healthcare settings, where patients are often anxious, vulnerable and sick. Patients can appreciate the listening ear, the willingness to take the time to listen to their concerns, the ability to communicate in terms understandable to them, and sensitivity to their personal situation from the part of the health care provider. Empathy can thus play an important role in the patient experience and the image of the hospital. The key to a patient-centred spirit in a hospital is the consistent approach of doctors, nurses, administration, and other personnel. Previous studies in the area of physician communication have shown that patients tend to feel better trusting their doctors when they are given clear information, when doctors are empathetic to the patient, when they listen to the patient, and when the doctor and the patient make decisions together, although these relationships are not always as robust as other settings and technologies.

7.5 Tangibles

Tangibles are all the physical and visible elements of healthcare service delivery such as the hospital infrastructure, cleanliness, waiting areas, equipment,

signage, staff appearance, patient rooms, diagnostic facilities, and digital interfaces. Healthcare is an intangible product and so the initial impression of organizational quality can be perceived through factors that are observable in the physical product. Improved infrastructure, hospital facilities, cleanliness, adequate signage, easy accessibility, and sophisticated equipment, therefore, can help to enhance hospital image. However, a sustainable hospital brand can't be achieved solely through physical infrastructure. While advanced facilities might grab the attention of patients initially, the experience they have during the patient journey will ultimately shape their perception of the clinic.

7.6 Service quality, patient satisfaction, trust and hospital brand perception

The five dimensions of service quality can be linked with a chain of patient reactions that can include how they perceive reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles, which can lead to their perception of service quality and finally to levels of patient satisfaction and trust. Satisfaction is the judgment the patient makes about the healthcare experience, whether it met or exceeded expectations, while trust is the patient's confidence in the competence, reliability, honesty and intentions of the healthcare organization and practitioners. These factors can help build a positive hospital image and can then affect patient loyalty, desire to return to the hospital and referral. There are some studies related to hospital brand equity that have identified some interrelated components of hospital branding such as perceived quality, hospital image, patient satisfaction, trust, and loyalty. Here, these relationships must not be considered as linear in all patients, as severity of the disease, clinical outcomes, expectations, cost, availability, past experiences, and other factors may influence patient responses. However, the literature confirms that service quality plays a central role in creating "credible and patient-centred hospital brands".

8. Role of Healthcare Professionals in Brand Building

One of the key human factors involved in the development of the hospital brand is that patients often interact directly with the physicians, nurses, technicians, counsellors, administrative staff and other employees of the hospital. While branding is commonly considered as an advertising campaign, a digital solution, infrastructure and visual identity, the behaviour of the workers can have a more direct impact on the perception of the organization by patients. All contact with a patient can then become a brand interaction in which the organization's values, professionalism, competence, empathy and orientation to the service are displayed. In a corporate

healthcare setting, physician reputation is of special importance since patients may choose hospitals based on the perceived expertise, qualifications, experience, specialization and reputation of individual physicians. Physicians with a good reputation can be important in the hospital's reputation and affect patient trust in the hospital. But sustainable hospital branding is not possible on the basis of individual personalities only, as the overall experience of the hospital is a reflection of the various departments and service providers. High standards of professional behaviour and patient centred service throughout the organisation are more enduring to the institution's reputation.

Nursing services are another crucial factor that contributes to hospital brand awareness as they are often present with patients in the hospital and engage in constant interaction with them. The level of responsiveness, compassion, communication, attentiveness, technical competence and coordination with physicians have the potential to have a major impact on patient experience. Administrative and support staff are also stakeholders that impact the hospital's brand when interacting with patients and families. The perception of professionalism, respect, efficiency and culture of the organisation can be shaped by reception staff, bill staff, technicians, housekeeping staff, security, and other employees. Therefore, a successful hospital branding should not be limited to marketing or physicians but be part of an organization-wide culture of service.

Another important communication process that can shape hospital reputation and patient trust is through social media. Social media is another key avenue for healthcare professionals to impact hospital reputation and patient trust. Patients need understandable and timely information about their diagnosis, choices for treatment, procedures, risks, costs, follow-up needs, and outcomes. Effective, clear, respectful, and empathetic communication is the one way that can help to lower uncertainty and build confidence; ineffective or inconsistent communication can lead to dissatisfaction even if the technical aspects of the health care delivery are right. Technical skills, ethical conduct, communication, transparency and consistency are equally important for professional credibility. Patients may not be able to evaluate all the aspects of clinical competence, making professional behaviour and communication a reliable sign of reliability and expertise.

Healthcare providers and patients are not just one time service providers and consumers, then. These principles of continuity, empathy, respect, shared decision-making and responsiveness can enhance the patient-provider relationship, especially in chronic disease management, long-term treatment,

rehabilitation and repeated patient-provider interactions. As far as branding, these relationships can elevate the hospital from being just a service provider to a trusted health care partner. Healthcare practitioners should thus be actively involved in brand creation, as they are seen in their daily interaction with patients to either reinforce or challenge the organisational brand identity sent out by formal marketing efforts.

9. Role of Patient Reviews and Word-of-Mouth

Traditionally, word of mouth has played a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviours, but in the healthcare context, the importance of word of mouth has increased in relevance due to patients' ability to share their experiences via digital platforms. Electronic word-of-mouth is a form of digital communication that refers to online reviews and ratings, social media discussions, patient comments and testimonials, discussion forums, and other interactions about patient experiences. Patient-produced data differs from the formal advertising of the hospital, as that is the hospital's communication, but rather it is information about the hospital from the patient's perspective. Thus, eWOM can impact hospital awareness, expectations, perceived credibility, provider selection, reputation, trust, and behavioural intentions.

There is a huge visibility of patient reviews, especially via search engines and review sites online. Hospitals' ratings, written comments, photos and responses can be a consideration for patients when assessing healthcare providers. In a systematic review of studies that investigated the relationship between online patient reviews and patient experience measures, the online reviews were consistently associated with increased measures of patient experience, while the correlation between online reviews and objective measures of healthcare quality varied. This distinction is crucial since an online review is often based on a personal experience or perception and does not necessarily indicate clinical performance. However, reviews can give hospitals valuable feedback on issues that concern patients and areas which may be shortcomings in the provision of services.

Social media has also helped to speed up and increase patient communications. Reputations can be improved by positive experiences and can help to attract potential patients, while negative experiences can be very contagious and can work against the organization beyond the individual patient experience. Therefore, reputation management is now an integral part of hospital brand management. Good reputation management shouldn't just be about trying to squash negative information. Rather, hospitals

should look at whether any negative reviews point to actual issues related to waiting times, staff behaviour, communication, billing, accessibility, cleanliness, appointment procedures or anything else pertaining to the patient experience.

Patient testimonials can also play a part in communicating with patients and offer personal accounts of health care experiences. Testimonials can be a powerful tool in healthcare communication when used correctly, offering potential patients a glimpse into the patient journey and making it more relatable. Testimonials may, however, be used with proper consent and privacy protection and not in a way that appears to guarantee certain clinical outcomes. Ethical use of testimonials is especially critical since patients might be susceptible, and the requests of institutions might be interpreted differently by patients than by typical consumers.

This should be viewed as part of a larger concept of reputation management, however, because positive and negative reviews are connected. Positive reviews can help to build service, professionalism, approachability and patient-centredness, whereas negative reviews can highlight patient dissatisfaction or what needs to be improved. However, these individual reviews may not accurately reflect the experience of all patients. Online feedback should therefore be combined with patient satisfaction surveys, formal complaints, waiting time data, clinical-quality indicators, and structured patient-experience indicators, in the hospital. Thus, eWOM can not only be a marketing issue but also a learning issue and an improvement service one.

10. Ethical and Regulatory Issues

In the context of health care, ethics is a key factor to consider because choices made in health care affect human well-being, vulnerability, uncertainty, and possible physical, psychological, and/or financial consequences. Some marketing tactics that are acceptable in generic commercial markets may offer increased exposure in a healthcare environment. Patients might not be able to assess the quality of care, their clinical results, or the specific expertise of the healthcare providers they are receiving, and could thus be especially reliant on the information that they are given by the healthcare organization. Ethical hospital marketing should therefore be founded on the principles of truthfulness, transparency, evidence, patient autonomy, confidentiality, fairness and professional responsibility.

It is essential that hospitals be able to distinguish between factual information, evidence-based claims, professional opinions, promotional claims, and individual patient experiences when developing the

content of their healthcare advertisements. Fear, anxiety, sickness or vulnerability cannot be used as a means of communication in a promotional campaign to induce a change in health-care programs. Any statements of treatment success, cure rates, specialist skills or advanced technology, or claims for superiority should be supported by appropriate evidence. Overstated claims or promises regarding a treatment's results can lead to false expectations and potentially cause harm to an organization's reputation if the reality of the treatment is not what is being advertised. Ethical communication also needs to be accurate as well as the right way to show uncertainty and limitations.

As the healthcare marketing landscape becomes increasingly digital, patient privacy is a major concern. Sensitive personal and medical information is frequently handled by hospitals, and the presence of websites, social media, mobile apps, online appointment booking systems, patient reviews and online communication mechanisms adds to privacy concerns. Patient photographs, videos, treatment information, testimonials and other identifiable information should only be used with the proper consent and protection. It is especially critical to protect privacy since a breach of confidentiality can have a impact both on individual patients and on the reputation of the healthcare enterprise.

There is a need for the same care in handling patient testimonials. While testimonials can lend credibility to a hospital's communication, patients should be free to give them and should be made aware of how their information, images, or words will be used. Testimonials should not suggest a particular result or make it appear that an extraordinary experience is a typical result, without providing context. Hospitals should also refrain from communication tactics that might encourage patients to endorse good things.

Another one of the key points is the commercialisation of healthcare. Healthcare is also in a competitive market, and requires sustainable models that are financially viable, but the decision to buy a healthcare service is fundamentally different from a normal consumer purchase. If an overcommercial orientation leads to excessive use of the healthcare system, the decisions made by healthcare professionals, or the interests of the organization are influenced, then this can raise questions. It is therefore essential to strike the right balance between commercial and professional responsibilities in healthcare marketing.

Patients are also more likely to trust a provider when there is transparency about costs and information regarding services. Clear information regarding consultation fees, diagnostic costs, treatment packages, insurance coverage, extra charges, and

payment procedures might be required for patients and/or families. Even when clinical care is positively received, costs that are unexpected or poorly communicated can lead to dissatisfaction. Financial transparency should thus be seen as an integral part of the patient experience and an essential part of the responsible way of brand building at the hospital.

11. Challenges in Hospital Brand Building

Corporate hospitals operate in increasingly competitive healthcare environments in which multiple organizations compete through clinical specialization, infrastructure, technology, physician expertise, accessibility, patient experience, digital services, and reputation. High competition creates difficulties in developing distinctive and sustainable brand identities because similar hospitals may offer comparable technologies, specialties, facilities, and promotional campaigns. Differentiation based solely on advertising or infrastructure may therefore provide limited long-term advantage. Sustainable differentiation increasingly depends on the consistency and quality of the patient experience.

Increasing patient expectations represent another major challenge. Patients have greater access to health information and increasingly expect convenient appointments, shorter waiting times, transparent pricing, digital reports, responsive communication, telemedicine, personalized services, and continuous follow-up. These expectations have expanded the meaning of healthcare quality beyond clinical treatment alone. Hospitals must therefore continually adapt their service systems while maintaining appropriate standards of safety, professional competence, and ethical practice.

The growth of online reviews has created additional challenges for reputation management. A negative experience can become publicly visible and may influence prospective patients who encounter the review during their search for healthcare services. However, the appropriate response to negative reviews should not simply be the removal or suppression of criticism. Instead, hospitals should determine whether complaints identify genuine organizational weaknesses and use such information as an opportunity for service improvement. At the same time, individual online reviews should be interpreted cautiously because they may not represent the experiences of the wider patient population.

Maintaining consistent service quality across large corporate hospitals is also challenging because these organizations may involve multiple departments, specialists, branches, administrative units, and service processes. A hospital may develop a strong promotional identity around advanced technology, compassionate care, or patient-centredness, but inconsistent service encounters can create a gap

between the intended brand identity and the patient's actual brand experience. Consistency therefore requires organizational coordination, employee training, service-quality monitoring, and effective internal communication.

Digital misinformation presents another emerging challenge. Patients increasingly use search engines and social-media platforms to obtain health information, but the digital environment contains information of varying accuracy and credibility. Hospitals must therefore compete for visibility while ensuring that their own communication remains evidence-based, understandable, and transparent. This requires appropriate clinical oversight of digital content, responsible use of health information, and clear differentiation between general educational information and individualized medical advice.

Privacy and data-security concerns have also become more significant as hospitals increasingly rely on digital platforms, mobile applications, telemedicine systems, online appointment services, patient portals, and AI-enabled communication. Personalization can improve convenience and engagement, but it may require the collection and processing of sensitive information. Hospitals therefore need appropriate data-governance mechanisms to ensure that technological innovation does not compromise patient confidentiality or trust.

A further challenge is the potential erosion of trust when patients perceive inconsistencies between promotional claims and actual experiences. Trust may be weakened by unclear communication, unexpected costs, long waiting times, poor coordination, perceived conflicts of interest, or dissatisfaction with service delivery. Because trust develops gradually through repeated interactions but can be damaged by individual negative experiences, hospitals must approach trust as a continuous organizational responsibility rather than as an outcome that can be achieved through advertising alone.

Finally, corporate hospitals must balance commercial objectives with patient welfare. Financial sustainability and competitive positioning are legitimate organizational considerations, but they should not compromise patient autonomy, informed decision-making, confidentiality, clinical appropriateness, or professional ethics. The long-term sustainability of hospital branding therefore depends on the organization's ability to integrate commercial objectives with responsible healthcare delivery.

Overall, the literature suggests that hospital brand building is fundamentally an experience-based and relationship-oriented process. Promotional communication can generate awareness and shape initial expectations, but actual service quality, professional interactions, patient experience, trust,

and organizational credibility determine whether those expectations develop into a favourable hospital image. The relationship can therefore be conceptualized as healthcare promotion → patient expectations → service quality → professional interaction → patient experience → satisfaction → trust → hospital brand image and reputation → loyalty and recommendation. Digital platforms increasingly influence each stage by providing patients with new mechanisms for information seeking, communication, feedback, and public expression of their experiences. Hospital branding should consequently be understood not merely as a marketing function but as an organization-wide process involving service delivery, professional behaviour, communication, ethics, digital reputation, and long-term patient relationships.

12. Conclusion

The present review highlights that hospital brand building has evolved considerably from conventional promotional activities toward a broader, patient-centred approach involving service quality, healthcare professionals, patient experience, trust, digital engagement, and organizational reputation. The increasing competition among corporate hospitals, changing patient expectations, expansion of private healthcare services, and rapid growth of digital communication have made effective healthcare promotion an important component of organizational strategy. However, the literature indicates that promotion alone is insufficient to establish a sustainable hospital brand. Advertising and communication activities may create awareness and shape initial expectations, but the long-term perception of a hospital depends largely on the quality and consistency of the services experienced by patients. Service quality emerges as a central foundation of hospital brand perception. Reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles influence how patients evaluate healthcare organizations and contribute to satisfaction, trust, perceived hospital image, loyalty, and recommendation behaviour. The role of healthcare professionals is equally important because physicians, nurses, administrative personnel, and other staff members represent the hospital through their everyday interactions with patients. Professional expertise, effective communication, empathy, responsiveness, and credibility can strengthen the relationship between patients and healthcare organizations and thereby contribute to institutional reputation and brand equity.

The review also demonstrates the increasing importance of digital technologies in healthcare promotion and brand management. Hospital websites, search engines, social media, online reviews,

educational videos, mobile applications, telemedicine platforms, online appointment systems, and AI-enabled communication have expanded the ways through which hospitals interact with existing and prospective patients. These technologies provide opportunities to improve accessibility, information delivery, engagement, and personalization, but they also introduce challenges related to misinformation, privacy, cybersecurity, digital inequality, and the responsible use of patient information. Online patient reviews and electronic word-of-mouth have particularly strengthened the influence of patient experiences on hospital reputation, making service quality and reputation management increasingly interconnected.

Ethical responsibility remains fundamental to sustainable healthcare promotion. Accuracy of promotional claims, transparency in pricing and services, protection of patient privacy, responsible use of testimonials, evidence-based communication, and avoidance of misleading or exaggerated claims are essential for maintaining credibility. Corporate hospitals must therefore balance commercial and competitive objectives with professional obligations and patient welfare. A hospital brand that is strongly promoted but inconsistently experienced may generate short-term awareness without establishing long-term trust. In contrast, a brand supported by reliable service delivery, professional competence, transparent communication, positive patient experiences, and ethical organizational practices can contribute to stronger and more sustainable patient relationships.

Future research should increasingly adopt patient-centred and evidence-based approaches to examine how traditional promotion, digital marketing, service quality, professional interactions, patient reviews, trust, and brand loyalty operate together. Greater empirical attention is also required to understand differences across regions, hospital types, patient groups, and healthcare specialties. In particular, context-specific studies involving corporate hospitals and patients in regional healthcare markets can provide valuable evidence regarding the relative importance of promotional strategies, service quality, digital reputation, and patient experience in hospital brand development. Such research can assist healthcare organizations in designing promotional strategies that are not only commercially effective but also ethically responsible, patient-centred, and aligned with the long-term objective of delivering trustworthy and high-quality healthcare services.

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