



THE IMPACT OF ADVERTISING ON PATIENTS' PREFERENCE: A STUDY OF SELECT PRIVATE HOSPITALS IN BENGALURU

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Abstract

Advertising has become an important communication tool in the healthcare sector, enabling hospitals to increase public awareness, communicate service information, and influence patients' healthcare decisions. The present study investigates the impact of advertising on patients' preferences toward private hospitals in Bengaluru. The study is grounded in Consumer Behavior Theory and Relationship Marketing Theory, which provide a theoretical basis for understanding how advertising influences patients' perceptions, trust, and hospital selection behavior. A quantitative research approach was employed, and primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to patients at selected private hospitals in Bengaluru. A total of 410 valid responses were obtained and used for the final analysis. The findings reveal that advertising has a positive and statistically significant impact on patients' preferences toward private hospitals. The results indicate that advertising activities help shape patients' perceptions and influence hospital selection decisions. The study further demonstrates that advertising helps increase awareness of healthcare services, reduces uncertainty during the healthcare decision-making process, and strengthens patients' confidence in healthcare providers. The findings support the assumptions of Consumer Behavior Theory and Relationship Marketing Theory by demonstrating that advertising serves both as an informational tool and as a mechanism for strengthening trust and institutional credibility. The study concludes that advertising remains an important strategic component of healthcare marketing and contributes significantly to patient engagement and hospital preference. The findings provide valuable insights for hospital administrators and healthcare marketers seeking to enhance communication effectiveness and strengthen the competitive position of private hospitals in Bengaluru.

Keywords: Advertising; Patient Preference; Private Hospitals; Healthcare Marketing; Consumer Behavior; Relationship Marketing; Bengaluru.

Introduction

With the rise in patient expectations, awareness of healthcare, and the rise of private healthcare institutes, the field of healthcare has become more competitive. Patients are not the mere recipients of health services anymore; they seek information, do comparison shopping on health providers, analyses services and make decision about hospitals. In such a competitive environment, hospitals need to effectively communicate with the patient population and stand out from the other health care providers in the area. As a result, private hospitals have turned to advertising as one of the key promotional tools to raise consumer awareness and awareness about health care products and services and to influence consumer perceptions and preferences (Belch & Belch, 2018; Kotler et al., 2022).

Advertising is the paid non-personal communication used to inform, persuade and influence a target audience about a product, service, or organization using a variety of media (Shimp & Andrews, 2012). In the health care industry, advertising is often done via television, radio, newspapers, magazines,



brochures, billboards, social media, and other communication media to educate the public about health care services, health care facilities, doctor skills, and hospital capacities (Dahlén & Edenius, 2007; Huang et al., 2013). Advertising is an effective way for hospitals to improve visibility, build a hospital image, and influence the healthcare consumer about a healthcare organization.

The increased role of advertising in health marketing has been noted previously. Healthcare organizations are increasingly turning to advertising and integrated marketing communication activities to build engagement with patients and to raise the visibility of their organizations (Elrod & Fortenberry, 2020). Likewise, Purcarea (2019) highlighted the importance of marketing communication in providing differentiation for a healthcare organization in a competitive healthcare market and to impact the behavior of healthcare consumers. In an environment of growing competition among private hospitals, advertising has emerged as a crucial tool for patients to find the hospital and for the hospital to promote its organization's value.

There are also a number of research studies that have investigated the connection between advertising and consumer behavior for healthcare. According to Coşa et al. (2022) healthcare advertising plays a significant role in consumers' choice of the private hospital on which they will seek treatment. From their results, they found that advertising enhances awareness of healthcare services and helps consumers to compare healthcare providers prior to choosing a hospital. Similarly, Petrochuk and Berg (2015) found that advertising is important for both hospital selection and the decision to proceed with the patient's choice of hospital, especially in a competitive healthcare market where patients receive multiple healthcare options.

Other studies have also identified some factors that affect patient preference and choice of hospitals. Marsidi et al. (2014) stated that the determinants of the choice of healthcare providers include the effectiveness of communication, accessibility and organizational image. In the same way, Schuldt et al. (2017) concluded that patients' decision to choose a hospital is significantly affected by information availability, hospital reputation and perceived service quality. As advertising is a direct source of enhancing information availability and boosting the image of the organization, it can affect patients' preferences for private hospitals.

Although advertising in the healthcare market has become a crucial part of the healthcare marketing mix, many hospitals remain mostly concerned with what to offer their patients and do not concentrate enough on the role advertising plays in the patients' preferences and their decision to receive healthcare. While some studies have focused on healthcare communication (Alrubaiee & Alkaa'ida, 2011), marketing activities (Elrod & Fortenberry, 2020; Willie, 2025), hospital reputation (Senyapar, 2024) and patient satisfaction (Hosseinzadeh et al., 2024; Karim et al., 2025), the connection between advertising and patients' preference for a private hospital in the Indian healthcare environment has been inadequately explored. This is especially relevant in the city of Bengaluru, with all the private hospitals competing to offer the best care environment, and exposure of patients to a very rich communication campaign by several healthcare service providers.

To address this, the present study investigates how the advertisement affects the preference of patients towards the private hospitals in Bengaluru. The study aims to examine the impact of advertising on patient awareness, perception, evaluation, and choice of the hospital. It acknowledges that advertising



isn't only a promotional tool, but also a valuable means of communication that influences the perception of patients and their decisions regarding treatment.

The study is guided by the following theories: Consumer Behavior Theory (CBT) and Relationship Marketing Theory (RMT) (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Solomon, 2018). Consumer Behavior Theory is the prediction of the consumer's information search, alternative evaluation, and choice of products based on the information and perceptions available. In the healthcare area, advertising acts as an information source that can affect a patient's opinion of the healthcare provider as well as their choice of a hospital. RMT highlights the role of trust, communication, and development of the relationship between an organization and consumers. Advertising can also help build institutional credibility, foster greater trust, and help build long-term relationships between hospitals and patients.

The main focus of the present study is to analyse the effect of advertising on the patients' preferences towards private hospitals in Bengaluru. The research aims to offer empirical evidence on the influence of advertising on the perception and selection of hospitals. The study helps to understand the behavior of the patients in response to advertising activities and provides a better understanding of the private healthcare sector.

The study has theoretical and practical implications. In theory, it brings a contribution to the healthcare marketing literature as it investigates advertising and patient preferences from the viewpoints of CBT and the RMT. From a practical perspective, the results can help hospital managers and healthcare marketing executives craft more targeted advertising campaigns that can help build awareness, improve institutional brand and position, and increase their competitive edge. The study concludes that advertising plays a significant role in the strategic communication process in the contemporary healthcare context.

Theoretical Foundation of the Study

Theoretical foundations play a fundamental role in academic research by providing a conceptual lens through which research problems, variables, relationships, and findings can be systematically understood and interpreted. This section discusses the selected theories in this study.

Consumer Behavior Theory (CBT)

CBT is the process in which consumers search for, evaluate, select and use a product or service to meet their needs and preferences. The theory emphasizes psychological and behavioral processes that affect consumer decision making, such as perception, motivation, information processing, attitude and buying behavior (Solomon, 2018). CBT states that consumers do not make random choices in the selection of products. They are motivated by internal and external factors like availability of information, social influence, personal experience, etc. and value perceived (Bray, 2008).

Consumer behavior is even more crucial in the healthcare sector, where patients frequently make decisions about healthcare providers based on their perceived trustworthiness, ease of access to information, service quality, and communication effectiveness. Today's consumers are relying on online resources more and more when seeking information about products and services and when shopping around. Knowing the behavior of the consumer is therefore an important element to understand the patient's preferences for the health care institutions and health care services (Manuere et al., 2022).



CBT is one of the theoretical foundations used in the present study, as the study focuses on the influence of advertising on the patient's choice towards private hospitals in Bengaluru. The theory underpins the argument that patients are accessing information through digital communication avenues like hospital websites, online reviews, social media sites, and digital health information to assess hospitals and make informed healthcare decisions.

Theory of Relationship Marketing (RMT)

RMT is a theory that puts emphasis on the creation and maintenance of long-term relationships between organizations and customers based on trust, communication, interaction, and customer satisfaction. The theory was based on the notion that successful organizations will establish ongoing relationships with customers instead of simply transacting one-off transactions (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). RMT emphasizes the need to build trust and commitment to enhance organizational relationships and boost customer loyalty (Möller & Aino, 2000).

Patient-centered relationships are crucial in healthcare and are a key factor in patient satisfaction. Relationship building is significant in health care since patient satisfaction reflects the impression that the healthcare provider seems trustworthy, responsive, and patient-centered. Regular communication and interaction between hospitals and patients could raise patients' confidence, satisfaction, and long-term relationships with the healthcare institutions. Communication is thus a vital aspect of enhancing healthcare relationships and boosting an organization's reputation (Buttle, 1996).

The present study applies RMT, as advertising enables private hospitals to maintain continuous communication with patients through their websites, social media, the online appointment system, and healthcare-related digital content. This type of communication can help build patient trust, make things easier to access and have a positive impact on patient preference for private hospitals in Bengaluru. Thus, the theory can be used as a suitable basis for studying the role of digital communication with regard to the development of the relationship between hospitals and healthcare consumers.

Review of Literature

Among the various marketing tools available, advertising has emerged as one of the most popular marketing tactics used in healthcare. In recent years, many private hospitals have made use of advertising via television, radio, newspapers, magazines, brochures, outdoor billboards and other communication media to raise awareness of the public, inform people about their services and enhance their competitive edge. With increasing competition among healthcare markets, advertising has become one of the key tools that inform the public about the services they can access and affect perceptions of healthcare providers.

Belch and Belch (2018) state that advertising is a strategic tool that can be used to create awareness, change attitudes and affect purchases. Likewise, Shimp and Andrews (2012) stated that advertising helps build consumer knowledge and helps consumers compare and contrast their choices prior to the purchase. In the healthcare industry, advertising serves as a means to inform prospective patients about the medical services and facilities offered, as well as the skills of the medical practitioners and the capabilities of the healthcare organization.

A few studies have emphasized the effect of advertising on healthcare consumers. Recent studies have shown that advertising significantly influences consumers' choice of private hospital (Coşa et al., 2022).



Their research showed that advertising enhances awareness of healthcare services and helps consumers make an assessment of the provider prior to choosing a hospital. In similar fashion, Petrochuk and Berg (2015) found that advertising is important in hospitals' choice and selection, especially in a competitive healthcare industry where hospitals are competing for and trying to keep patients.

Elaborate on the influence of advertising on consumer perceptions and attitudes was also supported by previous studies. Huang et al. (2013) claimed that advertising creates both cognitive and emotional reactions or responses, which in turn impact attitudes and behavioral intentions of consumers. Likewise, Dahmén and Edénus (2007) pointed out that successful advertising helps in enhancing consumers' evaluations and thereby firms' image. These results may indicate that advertising can have a significant impact on patient perceptions of hospitals and on their choice of health care.

There are other studies that have explored the wider influence of marketing communication in the healthcare organizations. Elrod and Fortenberry (2020) stated that advertising and integrated marketing communication practices are increasingly gaining a significant role in healthcare organizations' efforts to engage their patients and organizations. Similarly, Purcarea (2019) suggested that marketing communication strategies play an important role in consumers' awareness, differentiation of the organization, and the use of the healthcare services.

Moreover, there are some factors found in the previous study that affect patients' preferences and choice of hospital to go to. Marsidi et al. (2014) concluded that communication effectiveness, organizational image, and accessibility play a significant role in patients' perception of healthcare providers. Likewise, Schuldt et al. (2017) found that availability of information, reputation of the institution and the quality of services are factors that influence the choice of hospital. As advertising is part of the toolbox of ways to make information more available and enhance the organization's image, it is likely that it can affect patient preferences towards healthcare institutions.

Research Gap

While some studies have focused on advertising in healthcare or marketing communications in healthcare or hospital selection behavior, there has been less focus on the relationship between advertising and patients' preferences toward private hospitals. In this context, most of the existing research is based on healthcare communication, organizational image, patient satisfaction or overall marketing approaches and did not specifically cover the effect of advertising on patients' preferences for private hospitals. In addition, there is a lack of empirical evidence within the Indian healthcare landscape, especially in Bengaluru, where private hospitals are constantly competing in the healthcare industry. The effect of advertising on patient preference has also been rarely explored in previous studies with the theoretical foundations of CBT and RMT. Thus, the present study aims to fill this void by studying the effect of advertising on the preference of patients towards the private hospitals in Bengaluru. On this deficit, the following hypothesis was evolved:

H₀1: There is no statistically significant relationship between advertising and patients' preferences toward private hospitals in Bengaluru.

Research Method

This section delineates the methodological framework employed to obtain the study's objectives and experimentally evaluate the hypothesis.



Research Design

This study used a quantitative, descriptive-analytical design to examine the impact of advertising on patients' preferences for private hospitals in Bengaluru. This design is selected due to the study's nature, which entails evaluating hypotheses established from theory and assessing the strength and direction of the association between clearly specified constructs by statistical methods. Creswell and Creswell (2017) assert that quantitative research facilitates the investigation of correlations between variables via standardized instruments and statistical methods, hence enhancing objectivity and enabling potential replications.

Population of the Study

The present study's population comprised patients who visited selected private hospitals in Bengaluru. Due to the fact that patients are the main consumers of health services and directly affected by private hospital promotional and advertising, the study has focused on these patients. The study was designed to explore the impact of advertising on patient preference, while the most appropriate group for assessing the impact of digital communication on patients' perceptions, trust and choice of hospital was patients themselves.

The target population was adult patients with previous experience of private hospitals who were exposed to various types of hospital communication (websites, social media, online reviews, online hospital ads, and online appointment systems). To enhance the representativeness and diversity of the data analysis results, patients from various demographic groups (age, gender, education, occupation) were included.

Bengaluru was identified as the geographical location of the study because of its private healthcare market being one of the most competitive cities in India, and the digitalization of the city is growing rapidly. In Bengaluru, private hospitals have started using digital communication and online healthcare marketing to engage patients and attract them. The city was thus a suitable setting for investigating the link between advertising and patient preferences in healthcare.

Sampling Method

This study used a multi-stage sampling technique, a purposive sampling and a simple random sampling method. Initially, purposive sampling was performed to identify the private hospitals in Bengaluru which are actively using advertising techniques, such as websites, social media communication, online advertisements, and online appointment systems. The major private hospitals selected were Manipal Hospitals, Fortis Hospital, Cauvery Hospital, Electronic City, Gleneagles BGS Hospital, Suguna Hospital, United Hospital, AMC Multispecialty Hospital, Apollo Hospitals, ASTRA Super Specialist Hospital, Narayana Institute of Cardiac Sciences, Narayana Hospital, and Wockhardt Hospitals, owing to their strong digital footprint and huge patient base.

In the second stage, simple random sampling was used to select the respondents from the patients who attended the selected hospitals. This method was deemed to be an appropriate one as it allows the respondents an equal chance of participation and helps minimize sampling bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The sample included patients with prior exposure to private hospital advertising, as this was necessary to assess its impact on their choice of hospital.



Sample Size Determination

The sample size for the present study was based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) recommendations that a sample of at least 384 people for a large population size is required at 95% confidence level with 5% margin of error. In the present study, a total of 500 questionnaires were sent to the patients who visited selected private hospitals in Bengaluru and 410 questionnaires were received as a valid response for final analysis.

The sample size obtained is greater than the minimum required, and it is adequate for the statistical analyses (exploratory factor analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple regressions). The Hair et al. study found that the larger sample sizes enable the researchers to be more statistically reliable and to use multivariate analysis methods in quantitative research.

Primary Data

The major data for the present study were collected through self-administered online questionnaires from patients visiting selected private hospitals in Bengaluru. Primary data are data that are obtained from first-hand sources, direct observation and data collection by the researcher for a specific research project (Saunders et al., 2009). Such data is extensively used in quantitative research due to its directness and reliability in terms of the research objectives.

The data were gathered by designing a structured questionnaire that was created on the basis of literature regarding advertising in healthcare, and consumer behavior (Dillman et al., 2014). After collecting the responses, the responses were analyzed in SPSS to explore the relationship between advertising and patient preference towards private hospitals.

Additionally, a professional with experience in this type of questionnaire assessed the questionnaire and surveyed professors and subject-matter experts to propose areas for phrasing, structure, and content validity improvements. They provided input before the tool was distributed. To improve the instrument's validity and reliability, 30 target population patients participated in a pilot study. Minor changes were made to increase item clarity and coherence based on their suggestions.

Operationalization of Variables: In this sub section, the operationalization of variables and their construction are discussed in detail.

Independent Variable: Advertising

The operationalization of this construct, advertising, was based on ten items that measured the impact of advertising used to communicate information to target audiences and influence their attitudes and behavior (Dahlén & Edenius, 2007; Huang et al., 2013).

Independent Variable: Patients' Preferences

This construct is operationalized through the measurement of ten items that represent patients' tendencies and inclinations to select specific private hospitals based on their perceptions and experiences of promotional and communication activities. In the highly competitive healthcare environment, patients' preferences are increasingly influenced by medical quality, communication effectiveness, institutional reputation, and promotional exposure (Brown & Einsiedel, 2013; Marsidi et al., 2014; Schuldt et al., 2017).



Data Analysis Techniques

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed for data analysis. The validity and reliability of the measurement scales and the hypothesis testing of the study were conducted using various statistical methods. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was initially employed to assess the internal consistency of the study constructs. The factor structure of the measuring items was subsequently analyzed by Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), confirming construct validity. Skewness and kurtosis values were utilized to evaluate normality, confirming the data's appropriateness for parametric statistical analysis. Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship among the study variables. Ultimately, simple linear regression analysis was employed to examine the impact advertising on patients' preferences for private hospitals in Bengaluru.

Data Analysis: This section delineates the empirical findings of the investigation. The process commenced with preliminary statistical tests, proceeded to descriptive analysis, included the demographic profile of respondents, and concluded with inferential analysis employing simple linear regression to test the proposed hypothesis.

Preliminary Statistical Tests: This subsection conducts preliminary statistical tests to verify that the dataset satisfies the assumptions necessary for robust regression analysis in the primary empirical investigation. Initially, Cronbach's alpha is performed, followed by exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and normality assessment. Ultimately, correlation analysis is conducted to examine the strength and direction of correlations among the studied variables.

Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha); the study's measuring scales were evaluated for internal consistency through reliability analysis. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was employed to assess the internal consistency of items within the constructs and ascertain their measurement of the same underlying construct.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document..1: Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha) of Study Constructs

No.	Code	Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
1	AD	Advertising	0.888	10
2	PP	Patient Preference	0.883	

Table 1 indicates that the internal consistency reliability for all study variables is adequate. The Cronbach's alphas obtained exceeded 0.883, surpassing the required threshold of 0.70, demonstrating the reliability of the measurement scales used in the study.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

EFA was employed to examine the factor structure of the measurement items and the construct validity of the study variables. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were employed to evaluate the appropriateness of the data for factor analysis.

Table 2: Summary of Exploratory Factor Analysis Results

Construct	No. of Items	Factor Loading Range	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained (%)
Advertising	10	0.607– 0.749	4.987	49.871
Patient Preference	10	0.649– 0.742	4.874	48.742



KMO = 0.899; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: $\chi^2 = 7.807$, df = 1225, $p < 0.001$

The KMO value and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity indicate that the data are appropriate for factor analysis, as shown in Table 2. Moreover, the factor loading values for all items exceeded 0.60, which is the threshold for confirming adequate construct validity and item convergence within constructs.

Normality Test of Data Distribution

The normality of the study variables was evaluated using normality tests to determine whether they satisfied the essential assumption for parametric statistical analysis. Skewness and kurtosis are used to assess the normality of the data distribution.

Table 3: Skewness and Kurtosis of Study Variables

Construct	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Interpretation
AD	3.301	0.807	0.02	-0.594	Normal
PP	3.358	0.825	-0.263	-0.724	

The findings in Table 3 demonstrate that the skewness and kurtosis values for all research variables are within the permissible range, indicating that the data are normally distributed within the small population. The results indicate that the data are appropriate for additional parametric analyses.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the association between advertising and patient preference. The analysis aimed to determine whether a significant association existed among the variables under study.

Table 4: Pearson Correlation Matrix Among Study Variables

Variables	CAR	IBP
Advertising	1.000	.388**
Patient Preference	.388**	1.000
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).		

Table 4 illustrates a statistically significant positive correlation between advertising and patient preference ($r = 0.388$, $p < 0.05$). The results indicated a substantial correlation between the study variables.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile, part (A) of the questionnaire, indicates that 39.3% of respondents were male and 55.1% were female. The age distribution of respondents revealed that the predominant age group was 35 – 44 years (37.6%), followed by 25 – 34 years and 45 – 54 years (22%), 55 years and above (10%), and below 25 years (8.5%). The majority of respondents are categorized as married (51.2%), single (34.1%), divorced (8.8%), and widowed (5.9). At the same time, the majority of respondents have a bachelor's degree (42%), followed by a master's degree (22.7%), a diploma (16.1%), high school or below (12%), and a PhD or above (7.3%). Regarding their annual income level, the majority represented by those whose income is between 4 – 6 Lakhs (29.8%), followed by 1 – 3 Lakhs (29.3%), 7 – 8 Lakhs (16.6%), above 9 Lakhs (12.9%), and below 1 Lakh (11.5%). The respondents are permanent residents in Bengaluru (43.4%), migrant (working/studying) (41.2%), and temporary residents (15.4%).



Furthermore, part (A) of the questionnaire indicates that 62.0% of respondents visit the same hospital, while 38% do not. In addition, 38.3% have been hospitalized in a private hospital, and 61.7% do not. The duration of the recent treatment was between one and two weeks (36.6%), followed by less than one week (27.8%), two to four weeks (22.2%), and more than one month (13.4%).

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics are computed to analyses the overall response patterns for the research variables. Mean scores and standard deviations were employed to offer a preliminary insight into respondents' preferences for private hospitals in Bengaluru.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Advertising	3.301	0.807
Patient Preference	3.36	0.825

Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics of the study. The findings reveal that advertising had a mean score of 3.301 and a standard deviation of 0.807, while patient preference had a mean score of 3.36 and a standard deviation of 0.825. The mean indicates a moderate to relatively high level of agreement among respondents, while the relatively moderate standard deviation values for both variables indicate an acceptable level of consistency in respondents' opinions, suggesting that participants shared somewhat similar perceptions of the study variables.

Inferential Analysis: Simple Linear Regression

A simple linear regression analysis was used to examine the impact of advertising on patients' preferences for private hospitals in Bengaluru. To test this relation, the study formulated the following hypothesis:

H₀1: There is no statistically significant relationship between advertising and patients' preferences toward private hospitals in Bengaluru.

Table Error! No text of specified style in document.6: Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Advertising on Patient Preference

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Constan	2.049	0.158	—	12.938	<0.001	—	—
AD	0.396	0.047	0.388	8.503	<0.001	1.000	1.000
R				0.388			
R ²				0.151			
Adjusted R ²				0.148			
F-statistic				72.306			
Sig. (F-statistic)				<0.001			
Std. Error of Estimate				0.761			
Sample Size (N)				410			
Dependent Variable: Patient Preference							



The results in Table 6 reveal that advertising has a positive and significant impact on patient preference for private hospitals in Bengaluru. The regression coefficient ($B = 0.396$) indicates that an increase in advertising activity is associated with higher patient preference. Also, the standardized beta value ($\beta = 0.388$) indicates a moderate positive association between the two variables.

The t-value of 8.503 at the 0.001 significance level indicates that the influence of advertising is statistically significant. This indicates that advertising plays an important role in shaping patients' perceptions and choices when selecting private hospitals.

Also, the correlation coefficient ($R = 0.388$) indicates a moderate positive association between advertising and patient preference. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.151$) indicates that advertising accounts for 15.1% of the variance in patient preference, with the remaining variance potentially influenced by other factors not included in the model.

The F-statistic of 72.306, with a significance level below 0.001, further underscores the model's statistical significance and appropriateness for predicting patient preference. In addition, the VIF value of 1.000 implies that there is no multi-collinearity problem in the model.

Based on the above results, we reject the null hypothesis. The study finds that advertising has a significant influence on patients' preferences for private hospitals in Bengaluru.

Discussion

Based on the findings from the study, it can be inferred that advertising plays a vital role in shaping patients' choices of a private hospital in Bengaluru. The results indicate that advertising positively and statistically significantly influences patient preference and thus supports the formation of patient evaluations and the decision to choose a hospital. This discovery suggests that information and messages conveyed through hospital advertising affect patients' evaluations of the healthcare providers and their decision-making around health care. Advertising can help hospitals to become more visible, inform people about the services they are providing, and distinguish themselves from other healthcare institutions.

According to CBT, the results imply that advertising plays a significant role in the information process in healthcare decision-making. Healthcare services are complex and come with high personal risk and patients may be unsure about how to choose a healthcare provider. The uncertainty can be decreased by advertising, as a way of obtaining information on hospital facilities, medical expertise, available services, and institutional capabilities. Therefore, with the help of advertising messages, the patients have the opportunity to compare the healthcare alternatives and to establish perceptions about the hospitals before taking into account healthcare decisions. The results therefore corroborate the assumptions of CBT, which assumes that consumers actively search, process, and evaluate information before making a decision. Within healthcare, advertising plays a role in the evaluation process, as patients become more aware and are better informed on their options for hospital admission.

The results also confirmed the assumptions of RMT, which highlights the significance of trust, credibility, and relationship building between organizations and consumers. Good advertising can make hospitals visible and help to strengthen their professional image in the healthcare market. Hospitals may reinforce their credibility and trustworthiness in the eyes of prospective patients through regular



and well-informed advertising communications. Consequently, advertising plays a role in awareness creation and building patient confidence and trust. The results indicate that advertising is a communication tool that facilitates the process of relationship building between hospitals and healthcare consumers.

The findings of the present study are in line with the results obtained by Coşa et al. (2022) which show that advertising plays an important role in the decision-making process of choosing private hospitals. According to their study, advertising helps to "raise awareness about healthcare services and helps consumers to assess healthcare providers before making decisions on hospitals. Their conclusions are like those of the present study, which show that advertising has a significant effect on perceptions held by consumers and on consumers' decisions to choose a hospital.

The results also support Petrochuk and Berg (2015), who suggested that advertising has an impact on hospital choice and selection. They noted that advertising has become an important tool for healthcare organizations to use for securing new patients and bolstering their competition in the healthcare industry. The current results are in line with this argument, as the findings show that the preferences of the patients towards the private hospitals in Bengaluru are influenced positively by the advertising. Advertising is an important communication tool in both studies, influencing the patients before they use healthcare services.

Likewise, this finding corroborates that of Elrod and Fortenberry (2020), who stated that integrated marketing communication plays a strategic role in healthcare organizations. They said that advertising will continue to be one of the main ways for educating, raising awareness and communicating with healthcare consumers. The present results support this view by establishing the important role of advertising in the development of patient preferences and assessment of hospitals.

The present results also align with the results of Purcarea (2019), which highlighted the increasing role of marketing communication in healthcare systems. Purcarea indicated that communication activities are becoming more and more crucial to healthcare institutions for changing the consumers' behavior and improving their competitiveness. This is the vision that was supported by the current research study, which found empirical evidence that advertising is a positive factor in patients' preferences for private hospitals.

Moreover, the results corroborate those of Belch and Belch (2018), who stated that advertising affects consumer behaviors in terms of awareness, attitude and image of the company. These roles are especially significant in the healthcare industry, as patients are likely to form their first impressions through small amounts of information and experience, they have had. According to the present results, advertising does lead patients to better known health care providers and to more positive appraisals of private hospitals.

The findings can also be understood in terms of (Huang et al., 2013), who emphasized the importance of understanding consumer's cognitive and affective reactions to the stimuli of advertising. Advertising has the power to inform as well as affect perceptions, attitudes and emotional responses toward organizations. Advertisements can have a positive effect on the perception of professionalism, competence and reliability in the healthcare sector. The results indicate that patients equate their



perception of visible and informative advertising activities with better quality of health care institutions, which enhances their preference for health care institutions.

One of the major implications of this present study is that advertising accounts for a significant portion of patient preference variance. The findings suggest that in the private health care context, advertising continues to play a significant role in influencing hospital choice, although other variables can play a part in this process. The result implies that consumers still use information from advertising when judging hospitals and making health care choices.

Overall, the results are in harmony with the CBT and the RMT in private healthcare services. The study has shown that advertising plays roles in the acquisition of information, the formation of perception, the growth of trust, and the evaluation processes of hospitals. Therefore, advertising is still a significant means of communication strategy that can still influence patients' preference towards private hospitals in Bengaluru.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study reveal that advertising plays a significant role in patients' preferences for private hospitals in Bengaluru. The study results revealed that as patients exposed to more hospital ads, their evaluations of hospitals and preferences for private hospitals became more favorable. Online advertising can raise awareness of healthcare services and improve patients' perception of healthcare providers. Advertising information proved to be important for patients in this study as a means of informing them about the services they are able to access in the health care system, a way to compare health care providers, to alleviate uncertainty and as a tool to help them in their health care decision-making process. This suggests that the influence of advertising on choice behavior is a key communication strategy in the health care industry and the influence continues.

In terms of theory, the results are in line with the assumptions of CBT and RMT. From the results, it can be seen that patients actively look for and assess information before choosing a health care provider, and advertisement is one of the important ways they acquire information. Advertising helps patients become aware, compare options and create perceptions about hospitals prior to making health care decisions. Meanwhile, advertising helps to reinforce the visibility, credibility and trust of institutions, a fundamental element in developing a relationship between the hospital and the patient. The results therefore underscore the ongoing significance of advertising as an information and relationship building tool in the healthcare marketing arena.

The study highlights the need for investment in successful advertising to raise the engagement of patients and enhance the competitiveness of hospitals from a practical perspective. Private hospitals should concentrate on creating informative, credible and patient-centric advertising that effectively conveys health-care services, medical skills, facilities and institutional abilities. Good advertisements can help create awareness, enhance the institutional image, and boost patient trust. The results further indicate that hospitals that have an advertising campaign visible and well designed could have a competitive edge in the very competitive healthcare market of Bengaluru. Thus, the marketing and communication strategy of a hospital should incorporate the use of advertising as an important tool.

However, there are some drawbacks to be recognized with these contributions. The study is based on the private hospitals of Bengaluru, which might restrict the applicability of findings to other hospitals or areas. Second, the study focused specifically on ads as a predictor of patient choice and did not



explore the impact of other factors that may influence patient choice, such as service quality, hospital reputation, physician competence, treatment cost, patient satisfaction, and healthcare accessibility. Thirdly, the study was of a cross-sectional nature which makes it difficult to explore changes in patient behavior and the effectiveness of the adverts over time.

Other marketing and healthcare-related variables which can affect patient preferences with regard to hospitals could be explored in future studies. Intermediates like trust, perceived service quality, patient satisfaction, healthcare awareness and hospital reputation could also be examined as the moderating or mediating variables. In addition, a longitudinal study could offer more information on the effect of advertising on patient preferences in the long term and the impact of changes in healthcare communication practice on health care decision making. Comparative analyses of various cities, regions or healthcare systems could also help to develop a general insight into the advertising of healthcare products and services and its impact on patient behavior.

The study overall concludes that advertising is an important promotional tool that has a significant impact on the patient's preference to the private hospitals in Bengaluru. The results underscore the importance of advertising as a tool for awareness creation, alleviating uncertainty, building trust, and aiding in health care decision-making. As a result, well-designed advertising can help to create better patient engagement with your private hospital and help you gain a competitive edge in today's highly competitive healthcare environment.

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