The Influence of Hospital Digital Marketing on Patient Loyalty through Patient Experience: A Study of Hospitals in Makassar, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Background. Competition in the healthcare industry has intensified, requiring hospitals to adopt effective marketing strategies to maintain patient loyalty. Digital marketing is one of the key solutions in improving patient experience which directly contributes to patient loyalty. Objective. This study aims to analyse the effect of hospital digital marketing on patient loyalty through patient experience of hospitals in Makassar.

Methods. This study used a correlation analytic method with a cross-sectional design. The study was conducted in three hospitals in Makassar, namely Wahidin Sudirohusodo General Hospital, Stella Maris Hospital, and Hasanuddin University Hospital, from March to June 2024. The study population was all outpatients who used the general payment method. The sampling technique used proportionate stratified random sampling, with a total sample of 393 patients. Primary data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, while secondary data were obtained from literature and relevant agencies. Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS programme, with univariate and bivariate techniques and multivariate using PATH analysis.

Results. The results of this study indicate that there is an effect of digital marketing on patient loyalty through patient experience with a significant value (0.010). Overall, the results of this study confirm the importance of implementing effective digital marketing in increasing patient loyalty through patient experience in hospitals. This study concludes that hospital digital marketing has a significant influence on patient loyalty through patient experience.

Conclusions. Effective digital marketing, which includes the use of social media, websites and mobile apps, is able to improve patient experience, which in turn strengthens patient loyalty. Although patient experience has an indirect influence on loyalty, the results show that digital marketing makes a major contribution in creating positive experiences that influence patient satisfaction and commitment.

Keywords: digital marketing, patient loyalty, patient experience, hospital

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing is important because it is the key to achieving organizational goals more effectively to compete because it combines marketing activities to satisfy the needs and wants of the target market. Marketing management is an effort that can be made so that the utilization of hospital services becomes higher so that it has an impact on increasing the degree of

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public health. Fulfilment of expectations from customers or consumers to attract new customers with the best value and continuously by paying attention to factors that continue to grow including competitors and product development. This can provide satisfaction to customers and can create repeat and loyal customers (Kotler et al., 2016). This change in patient behaviour forces health services to become more professional and follow the digital transformation process. This research can serve as a basis for hospitals in Bangladesh as a market opportunity analysis for hospital digital marketing and to determine the right digital marketing strategy for hospitals in attracting consumers through the most effective and efficient digital methods or channels (Mishra, 2018).

Data from PERSI cited by Risnawati (2021) also states that consumers in Indonesia who search for medical information on the internet, 47% are looking for information about doctors, 38% hospitals and health facilities, and 77% to book health check-up schedules. Based on these facts, the hospital management team needs to know the needs of the target market, namely consumers or patients, and incorporate them into the digital system (Risnawati, 2021). The gap that occurs today is because currently consumer behaviour has changed so that businesses or companies must change their business models (Haryanto et al., 2021, Mouratidis et al., 2021). The development of the Internet, World Wide Web, and digital technologies such as technology platforms from desktops, laptops, smartphones, to tablet devices used by consumers has changed marketing (Chaffey, 2016, Pasaribu et al., 2022).

Preliminary data collected by researchers at the Hasanuddin University Teaching Hospital found that there was an increase in general patient outpatient visits in 2020, which was 125% of the number of patients the previous year. In 2021 there was an increase of 17.6% of patients. However, in 2022 there was a significant decrease in the number of patients, which was 41% of the previous year. This condition continued in 2023 where there was again a greater decline of 47%. These general patients are patients who pay for treatment at their own expense so they do not depend on referrals provided by BPJS or insurance in choosing the desired hospital.

Digital marketing is important because traditional marketing strategies no longer work. Digital marketing is the process of building and maintaining customer relationships through online activities to facilitate the exchange of product ideas, and services that can satisfy the goals and both parties (Haryanto et al., 2021). The concept is an effort by companies or business owners to create demand by knowing the wants and needs of consumers or customers, through marketing strategies with internet media (Haryanto et al., 2021). Digital marketing is flexible, can be accessed anywhere and anytime information related to products. Therefore, every company must be able to provide the right and appropriate service. Thus, consumers or customers feel the presence of the company wherever they are and when they need it (Haryanto et al., 2021).

Effective marketing strategies in recent years have aimed to improve customer experience. Their voice is the voice that builds brands, shapes markets, and directly affects sales, so it makes sense that marketers should strive to improve customer experience (Tiago et al., 2014). Customers seek to engage with service brands and interact with service organisations that are likely to provide them with a good patient experience (Bolton et al., 2018).

Hospitals need to carry out marketing strategies to attract patient visits, one form of marketing strategy that can support health is the use of a marketing mix or also known as Marketing Mix. The marketing mix is used by marketers to solve customer problems (Mothersbaugh et al., 2019). Marketing mix is a set of controllable tactical marketing tools, which is the main business of the hospital which is closely related to passion behaviour to use services (Kotler et al., 2018).

Data collected by researchers at Stella Maris Hospital Makassar recorded that the number of outpatient visits by patients who paid independently or generally in 2020 decreased by 41.5% compared to 2019. In 2021 there was also a 6.4% decrease from the previous year. In 2022 it decreased by 32% from the previous year, and decreased again by 43% in 2023 when compared to the number of visits in 2022. A significant decline is shown by Stella Maris Hospital's visit data from year to year in the last five years. The decline in 2020 coincided with the Covid- 19 pandemic where people were asked not to travel outside their homes and there was a fear of being infected if they visited risky places such as hospitals. This condition further decreased in the following years until it began to increase entering 2023. According to information gathered, Stella Maris Hospital Makassar has had its own unit that handles marketing since 2023. This unit manages digital marketing media such as social media, YouTube, email, website, and WhatsApp application. However, people are more likely to use whatsaap media in registering for services and in finding the service information they need. From a brief interview conducted by researchers, patients revealed that their experience was easier in using whatsapp than if they had to open a website.

Data from Wahidin Sudirohusodo Central General Hospital shows a decrease in the number of outpatient visits for general patients in 2020 compared to 2019, which was 43%. However, the following years experienced an increase. It was recorded that in 2021 it increased by 14.5%, in 2021 it increased by 7.5%, and in 2023 it increased by 15.6% of the total.

This is in accordance with the theory expressed by Gilligan (2018) regarding the factors that make someone seek health services. These factors are divided into factors that can be controlled and factors that cannot be controlled. Uncontrollable factors include government legislation, health authority policies, direct and indirect competition, changes in patient profile, catchment area and profile of the local population, general level of demand for medical services, unexpected events, accidents and epidemics, and local and national economic climate. Factors that can be changed are the range of products/services, the

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price level, the location of the hospital or healthcare facility, the image, and how the hospital or healthcare facility is promoted formally and informally, the workers in the organization, the physical aspects, and the management processes.

The development of information and communication technology allows global citizens to continue to conduct at least some of their daily life activities virtually rather than physically. Telework, telemedicine, e-learning, e-shopping, and video calling are some of the remote online activities (also called 'teleactivity') undertaken to replace, if possible, face-to-face work, healthcare, education, shopping, and physical meetings (Mouratidis et al., 2021).

Based on this background, it is necessary to conduct research on the effect of hospital digital marketing on loyalty through patient experience in Makassar hospitals. It is hoped that digital marketing can make people who currently use digital technology more widely can reach health information and services wherever they are and can have a good experience so that they are willing to return to use these services at the same hospital.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Location and research design

This type of research is quantitative research using analytic observational study with cross sectional study design. This phase of research was conducted at Hasanuddin University Teaching Hospital, Stella Maris Hospital Makassar, and Wahidin Sudirohusodo Central General Hospital located in South Sulawesi during March-June 2024.

Population and sample

The population in this study were all patients who used outpatient health services using the general payment method. Patients who use the general payment method are considered to choose hospital services that do not depend on predetermined referrals such as BPJS patients or other insurance. The sample taken in this study was using Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling, namely Hasanuddin University Hospital 88 patients, Stella Maris Hospital 61 patients, Dr Wahidin Sudirohusodo General Hospital 244 patients.

Data analysis

Data analysis in this study used statistics to answer the objectives of the study with univariate analysis consisting of descriptive analysis of respondent characteristics, descriptive analysis of research variables and crosstabulation analysis between respondent characteristics and research variables. Bivariate analysis uses the Chi-square test because the data scale on the variables in this study is nominal and the frequency of respondents or samples used is quite large. Then multivariate analysis uses Path Analysis which is carried out using the SmartPLS application or software. Path analysis allows researchers to describe the hypothesised influences, which are called models (Sugiyono, 2007).

3. RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1 shows general characteristics of the 393 respondents including age, gender, occupation, latest education and income.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Subject	
	N	%
Sex		
Male	145	36.9
Female	248	63.1
Age		
<20 years	46	11.7
21-40 years	273	69.5
41-60 years	67	17.0
>60 years	7	1.8
Occupation		
Housewife	43	10.9

Students	109	27.7
Nongovernmental employee	60	15.3
Civil servant	52	13.2
Police	6	1.5
Unemployed	58	14.8
Soldier	2	.5
Self employed	63	16.0
Education		
Elementary school	4	1.0
Junior high school	16	4.1
High school	186	47.3
Diploma 3	21	5.3
Diploma 4	3	.8
Bachelor	129	32.8
Masters	30	7.6
PhD/Doctor	4	1.0
Monthly income		
< IDR3.500.000	180	45.8
> IDR3.500.000	152	38.7
≤ IDR3.400.000	40	10.2
≥ IDR3.400.000	21	5.3

Table 1. Shows that of all the research subjects, the total subjects in the study were 393 subjects. The percentage of research subjects was female as much as 63.1% and male as much as 36.9%. In the age category, 46 subjects (11.7%) were less than 20 years old, 273 subjects (69.5%) were 21-40 years old, 67 subjects (17%) were 41-60 years old, and 7 subjects (1.8%) were over 60 years old. Education in research subjects is divided into four categories with each percentage of the whole subject is elementary school level as much as 4 (1%), junior high school level 16 (4.1%), high school 186 (47.3%), and college 187 subjects (47.6). Based on income, the research subjects were divided into two categories, namely less than IDR3,500,000 and more than IDR3,500,000. The percentage of research subjects earning less than IDR3,500,000 was 56% and more than IDR3,500,000 was 44%. Then the work of the research subjects was divided into two categories, namely working and not working. The percentage of research subjects who worked was 46.6% and those who did not work was 53.4%.

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents Based on Respondent Characteristics

Variable	Subject	
	N	%
Digital Marketing		
Good	201	51.1
Poor	192	48.9
Patient Experience		

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Good	213	54.2
Poor	180	45.8
Loyalty		
Good	220	56.0
Poor	173	44.0

Based on the table above, for the frequency distribution on digital marketing variables obtained from 393 research subjects, 201 subjects (51.1%) were in the good digital marketing category, then 192 subjects (48.9%) were in the bad digital marketing category. The frequency distribution on the patient experience variable, which is in the good patient experience category as many as 213 subjects (54.2%), then respondents who are in the category of poor patient experience are 180 subjects (45.8%). Frequency distribution on the Loyalty variable, which is in the good loyalty category as many as 220 subjects (56%), then respondents who are in the poor loyalty category are 173 subjects (44%).

Influence of Hospital Digital Marketing on Patient Experience

Table 3. Crosstabulation of Digital Marketing and Patient Experience

| Digital marketing | Patient Experience | | | | Total | | *p* |
| | Good | | Poor | | | | |
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Good	155	77.1	46	22.9	201	100	0.000
Poor	58	30.2	134	69.8	192	100	

Influence of Hospital Digital Marketing on Patient Loyalty

Table 4. Crosstabulation of Digital Marketing and Patient Loyalty

| Digital marketing | Loyalty | | | | Total | | *p* |
| | Good | | Poor | | | | |
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Good	150	74.6	51	25.4	201	100	0.000
Poor	70	36.5	122	63.5	192	100	

Influence of Patient Experience on Patient Loyalty

Table 4. Crosstabulation of Digital Marketing and Patient Loyalty

| Patient Experience | Loyalty | | | | Total | | *P* |
| | Good | | Poor | | | | |
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Good	152	71.4	61	28.6	213	100	0.000
Poor	68	37.8	112	62.2	180	100	

Based on the results of the cross tabulation in the table above, it shows that of the 393 respondents, the chi square test results obtained a p value for the relationship between Hospital Digital Marketing and Patient Experience, namely 0.000, where the

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value is less than 0.05 so that there is a relationship between Hospital Digital Marketing and Patient Experience. The chi square test results obtained a p value for the relationship between Hospital Digital Marketing and Loyalty, namely 0.000, where the value is less than 0.05 so that there is a relationship between Hospital Digital Marketing and Loyalty. The chi-square test results obtained a p value for the relationship between Patient Experience and Patient Loyalty, namely 0.000, where the value is less than 0.05 so that there is a significant relationship between Patient Experience and Patient Loyalty.

Relationship Between Hospital Digital Marketing, Patient Experience, and Patient Loyalty
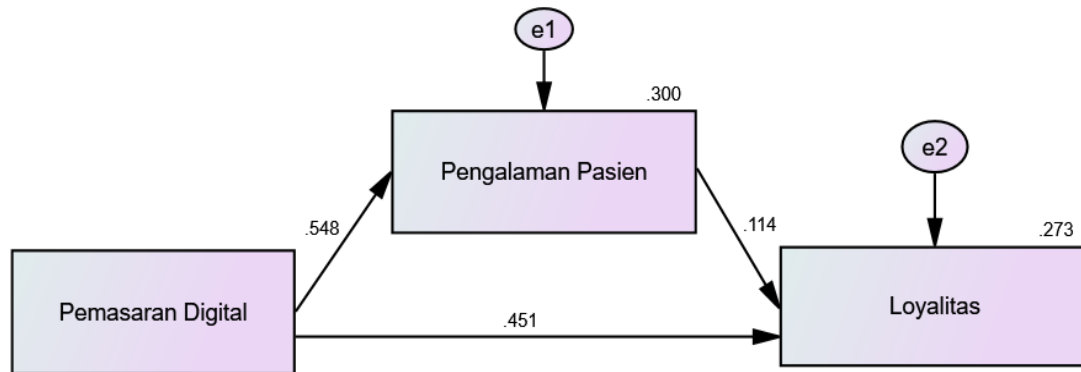

Figure 1. Structural Model of the Relationship Between Hospital Digital Marketing, Patient Experience, and Patient Loyalty

Based on the results of the table analysis above, the path coefficient value of hospital digital marketing and patient experience has a positive value of 0.548. The C.R>1.96 value (12.960>1.96) and p-value 0.000 (0.000 <0.05), so it can be concluded that there is a direct effect of digital marketing on patient experience. The path coefficient value of the loyalty patient and patient experience is positive at 0.114. The C.R>1.96 value (2.210>1.96) and p-value 0.000 (0.027 <0.05), so it can be concluded that there is a direct effect of patient experience on loyalty. The coefficient value of the hospital digital marketing path and patient loyalty is positive at 0.451. The C.R value> 1.96 (8.765> 1.96) and p-value 0.000 (0.000 <0.05), so it can be concluded that there is a direct effect of digital marketing on patient loyalty. The path coefficient value of digital marketing and patient experience loyalty is positive at 0.062. The C.R>1.96 value (2.572>1.96) and p-value 0.000 (0.010 <0.05), so it can be concluded that there is an indirect effect of digital marketing on loyalty through patient experience.

Table 5. Path Coefficients and Significance of the Relationships Between Digital Marketing, Patient Experience, and Patient Loyalty

Variables Relationship			Path coefficient	p-value	C.R.	Conclusion
Digital marketing	Patient experience		0.548	0.000	12.960	Positive and significant
Patient experience	Loyalty		0.114	0.027	2.210	Positive and significant
Digital marketing	Loyalty		0.451	0.000	8.765	Positive and significant
Digital marketing	Patient experience	Loyalty	0.062	0.010	2.572	Positive and significant

4. DISCUSSION

The characteristics of the study subjects include gender, age, education level, income, and occupation. The demographics of the subjects are shown in Table 1, a description of the demographic data of all subjects shows the most age range is 21-40 years and the second most in the range of 41-60 years, the average age of the research subjects based on each hospital is 27,95±9,83 years at Wahidin Sudirohusodo Hospital, age 30±13,49 is the average age at Stella Maris Hospital, while at Hasanuddin University Teaching Hospital has an average age of 33,47±13,47 years, the comparison between age based on

the category and the average of these three hospitals shows statistically significant results (p<0.05). Then, the research subjects were female more than male (63.1%) with the education level of the majority of high school and college graduates (47.3% and 47.6%), 53.4% of research subjects were not working with more than 50% of subjects earning <IDR3,500,000. Gender, education level, income, and occupation did not show statistically significant results (p>0.05) when compared between the three hospitals.

Based on the results of hypothesis testing, it is known that between age and interest in visiting the subject indicated a positive and significant relationship. This means that the higher or more mature a person's age, the greater the interest in visiting the hospital. Conversely, the younger the age of a person, the smaller the interest in visiting the hospital. These results are in line with research by Arifin (2019) and Harun & Listyowati (2022) confirming that there is a significant relationship between age and interest in patient visits. Meanwhile, based on the results of hypothesis testing, it is known that there is no significant comparison between gender and hospital visits. These results are similar to the research of Guswaman et al. (2019) and Amly et al (2020) confirmed that between the comparison of gender to the three hospitals as patient visits there is no significant relationship.

Age is an important determinant of health with profound implications for health care needs, health-related beliefs and behaviours, which is an important consideration for the integration of health and social services. The female gender dominates because women are weaker and have a greater risk of exposure to disease because in addition to taking care of the household, many women also work to help their husbands earn a living. This is also related to women who go through pregnancy who have to check their pregnancy regularly during pregnancy and childbirth. The number of patients visiting the obstetrics clinic occupies the third position for the most clinic visits, the same as the eye clinic (Lestari et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, a high level of education in subjects shows a high interest in visiting the hospital. These results are in line with Harun and Listyowati's research (2022) which confirms that there is a significant relationship between education and interest in patient visits. The results of this study also showed that generally subjects who did not work visited the hospital more than subjects who had jobs, this could be because subjects who did not work tended to have a history of illness that made the subjects unable to work or subjects who did not work had more free time than subjects who had jobs (Harun et al., 2022).

This study contradicts a previous study which confirmed that there is a positive and significant relationship between occupation and interest in patient visits, namely the better a person's job, the higher the interest in visiting the hospital (Yeta et al., 2020). Then, it was found that subjects with lower incomes generally visited the hospital more. These results are different from the research of Harun and Listyowati (2022) which confirms that between income and interest in patient visits there is a positive and significant relationship, which means that the amount of interest in patient visits is caused by high patient income.

There is an indirect effect of hospital digital marketing on patient loyalty through patient experience. Based on the statistical analysis conducted, it is known that the indirect effect of hospital digital marketing on patient loyalty through patient experience is positive at 0.062. The C.R value>1.96 (2.572>1.96) and p-value 0.000 (0.010<0.05). So, it can be concluded that the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted and the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected, in other words, there is an indirect effect of digital marketing on loyalty through patient experience.

The results of statistical analysis showing that the indirect effect of hospital digital marketing on patient loyalty through patient experience has a positive value of 0.062, with a C.R. value greater than 1.96 (2.572 > 1.96), and a p-value of 0.010 (p < 0.05) provide the conclusion that there is a significant indirect effect between digital marketing and patient loyalty through patient experience. Positive coefficient (0.062): This value indicates that hospital digital marketing has a positive indirect influence on patient loyalty through improved patient experience. This means that although the direct effect of digital marketing on loyalty is not as great as the effect through patient experience, digital marketing still influences patient loyalty through improving their experience. C.R. (2.572>1.96): A C.R. value greater than 1.96 indicates that this relationship is statistically significant, meaning that the indirect effect found is not coincidental. p-value (0.010<0.05): A p-value smaller than 0.05 indicates that this result is significant, and the null hypothesis (Ho) that there is no indirect effect should be rejected. Based on these results, it can be concluded that hospital digital marketing has an indirect influence on patient loyalty through patient experience. That is, although digital marketing does not directly influence patient loyalty, it plays an important role by improving the patient experience which in turn increases their level of loyalty towards the hospital. This confirms the importance of digital marketing in building a positive patient experience, which ultimately impacts patient loyalty.

Experience can also be interpreted as episodic memory, which is memory that receives and stores events that occur or are experienced by individuals at a certain time and place, which functions as an autobiographical reference (Syah, 2003). Consumer expectations are influenced by their previous purchasing experiences, the advice of friends or colleagues, as well as promises and information from marketers and competitors. If marketers raise expectations too high, buyers are likely to be disappointed, but if companies set expectations too low, buyers will not be interested. The patient's experience gained after getting service may affect the level of patient satisfaction itself. The more positive the experience, the more patient satisfaction will increase (Meyer & Schwager, 2007). This experience can cause feelings of pleasure or disappointment to customers, thus positively affecting customer satisfaction (Schmitt, 1999). The customer experience factor is one of the

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personal factors sourced from actors or users of services and products. The customer experience factor can be explored from experiences in sense (sensory impressions of the five senses), feel (feelings/emotions), think (thinking/cognitive), act (physical experience/behavior), and relate (social) (Schmitt, 1999).

Research by Mohammad, A. A. S. (2022) concluded that the success of digital marketing contributes directly to increasing customer loyalty, especially through personalization and superior customer experience. Positive experiences, such as easy navigation and attractive design, contribute significantly to increased customer loyalty. Customers who more actively interact with brands through digital channels are more likely to remain loyal. Research by Ajina, A. S. (2019) concluded that quality and interactive content marketing can be a key strategy to strengthen customer loyalty in the private hospital sector. This is important for hospitals in creating long-term relationships with patients. Content that meets the information needs of patients has a positive impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Accurate, clear, and easy-to-understand information increases patients' trust in the healthcare institution. Features that enable two-way communication between hospitals and patients, such as quick responses to questions on social media or websites, encourage stronger emotional connections with customers. Research by Al-Weshah, G. A., Kakeesh, D. F., & Al-Ma'aitah, N. A. (2021) concluded that a well-planned digital marketing strategy can significantly increase international patient satisfaction. This can help Jordanian hospitals improve their competitiveness in the global healthcare market.

Customer experience has a significant influence on the formation and maintenance of customer loyalty (Mascarenhas et al., 2006; Pullman & Gross, 2004). The experience of good quality can create loyalty and tend to share the experience with others (Wolf, 2013). In this study, it can be seen that there are several variables that significantly affect patient loyalty, namely patient experience, dimensions of nurse communication, doctor communication, responsiveness, physical comfort, communication about medicine and discharge information. Patient experience is different from patient satisfaction. To assess patient experience, one must find out what really happened, what the patient really experienced during the treatment process, for example, whether good communication with service providers was really experienced by the patient. Satisfaction, on the other hand, is about whether the health services received by consumers are equal to or exceed what they expected.

Patient experience during hospitalization was also rated favorably by respondents. This experience includes control over the patient's illness, both control over the pain felt by the patient and communication about the drugs given. This assessment certainly cannot be separated from the two aspects, namely the services of nurses and doctors who are directly involved in the patient care process so as to build an assessment of the patient's experience in the hospital.

Research by Julia Famor Pratami et al. (2024). this analyzes how digital marketing affects patient loyalty in health facilities through patient experience. Digital marketing is measured by service quality, innovation, and digital channels, which have a positive impact on patient experience and, in turn, increase patient loyalty. Effective digital marketing through digital platforms improves the quality of the patient experience, which serves as a mediator in building patient loyalty to the hospital. Adequate digital marketing improves patient interactions with the facility, which strengthens trust and satisfaction, and has a direct effect on loyalty.

In this study, it was found that digital marketing contributes to improving patient experience through digital services such as health apps, which leads to patient loyalty. A good experience, including transparent information services and the use of digital technology, increases patient loyalty to return to use the health service. Digital marketing has a significant influence on patient experience, which in turn plays a role in increasing patient loyalty. A better patient experience is closely related to the effective use of digital channels. This study concludes that digital marketing has an indirect influence on patient loyalty through the experience gained during interactions with healthcare services. Factors such as efficient digital communication, service quality, and ease of digital access play an important role in mediating patient loyalty.

The loyalty referred to in this study is the formation of attitudes and behavior patterns of a consumer towards the purchase and use of products as a result of their previous experience, using other services provided by the hospital, recommending the hospital to family or others, not being affected by the attractiveness of competitors, Customers who continue to make repeated purchases are an indicator that customers are satisfied with the service. To get customer satisfaction, service sellers must first try to always provide a positive experience to customers (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000). Satisfied customers are an important asset for healthcare providers as they intend to reuse these services and recommend them to their family and friends. According to the Institute of Medicine (IoM), the core elements of high-quality healthcare are safety, effectiveness, timeliness, efficiency, equity, and patient-centeredness. Patient-centered care is respecting and being responsive to patients' preferences, needs, and ensuring that their values are met (Institute of Medicine, 2001). Responsiveness to patients' individual needs reflects respect for human dignity.

On the other hand, customer loyalty is the goal of all companies including hospitals, which can be realized by increasing customer satisfaction and customer trust. The results of this study are consistent with empirical studies conducted by Akbar and Parvez (2009) who examined the relationship between service quality, trust, customer satisfaction and loyalty in the telecommunications industry. The findings state that customer satisfaction is significantly positively related to customer loyalty. The results of this study are also consistent with the results of empirical studies of previous studies (Nejad et al., 2014, Liao and Wu, 2009) which found that customer satisfaction has a significant effect on customer loyalty.

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The results obtained are in line with research conducted by Tabib J at al (2012), Gee R et al (2008), and Olorunniwo F et al (2006) which state that patient experience in terms of service in hospitals has a strong impact on patients' desire to return and recommend it to others. The results of this study are in line with the results of Prasojo's research (2013), which states that there is a significant relationship between the Analysis of Determinants of Inpatient Loyalty at Dr. Moewardi Hospital in Surakarta. According to the researcher, inpatient loyalty experiences treatment at the hospital. Loyalty of inpatients can decrease if it is caused by several factors, one of which is the experience of being treated less optimally received by patients such as satisfaction and trust. So that the experience in care can increase the loyalty of inpatients.

Research by Pratami, J. F., Gaffar, V., Dirgantari, P. D., Furqon, C., & Maryati, M. (2023) concluded that a good digital experience is very important in managing patient loyalty. Health facilities that can utilize digital technology to improve convenience, communication, and accessibility will be more successful in building long-term relationships with patients. Quick responses from healthcare facilities through digital channels, such as social media or apps, provide a feeling of being cared for and increase patient satisfaction and loyalty. Hospitals and healthcare facilities need to utilize digital technology to create a better patient experience and improve interaction and convenience.

The results show that digital marketing increases patient engagement and strengthens their loyalty to medical facilities through attractive promotions on social media and hospital websites. Research by Qian et al. (2018) examined the implementation of digital marketing in 12 hospitals and evaluated its efficiency. The findings of this study indicate that digital marketing can increase patient loyalty by introducing hospital services through wider digital channels, thereby improving patient perceptions and experiences of the hospital.

Research by Burhan & Sulistiadi (2022) emphasized that digital marketing plays a big role in introducing hospitals to new patients and encouraging them to return. Digital marketing helps hospitals to stay relevant in a competitive market, and builds a positive image that encourages patient loyalty. The right marketing strategy helps in increasing patient engagement with hospital services. Research by Rony & Panuju (2018) revealed that digital marketing applications such as those implemented at PHC Surabaya Hospital, help increase patient interaction with the hospital. As a result, patients are more likely to remain loyal and recommend the hospital to others. Effective digital-based marketing focuses on features that make it easier for patients to access information and interact with the hospital more easily. Savitri et al. (2022) suggested that digital marketing not only increases patient satisfaction but also helps build their loyalty. Well-done digital marketing increases patient engagement with hospital services, which in turn strengthens their loyalty. This research highlights the importance of using social media and relevant content in a hospital's digital marketing strategy. Keegan & Rowley (2017) suggest that the use of digital marketing can build closer relationships between hospitals and patients. By building trust through informative and responsive digital platforms, hospitals can increase patient satisfaction and foster their loyalty. Digital marketing that focuses on improving the patient experience is a key factor in maintaining long-term relationships. These studies show that digital marketing, especially through social media and other digital platforms, is not only instrumental in attracting new patients, but also highly effective in building and maintaining patient loyalty.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study indicate that there is an indirect effect of hospital digital marketing on patient loyalty through patient experience. This means that digital marketing does not directly increase patient loyalty, but through improving patient experience first. In other words, patient experience acts as a mediating variable. Hospital digital marketing will contribute to patient loyalty if it succeeds in improving patient experience first. Patient experience is the key link that turns digital marketing into long-term loyalty. This study concludes that hospital digital marketing has a significant influence on patient loyalty through patient experience. Effective digital marketing, which includes the use of social media, websites and mobile apps, is able to improve patient experience, which in turn strengthens patient loyalty. Although patient experience has an indirect influence on loyalty, the results show that digital marketing makes a major contribution in creating positive experiences that influence patient satisfaction and commitment. It is suggested that hospital management needs to strengthen their digital marketing strategy, including website development, mobile apps, and more interactive use of social media. These technologies can provide services that are more accessible to patients, improve the experience, and support patient loyalty.

Author Contribution

All authors contributed equally to this manuscript and agreed to the published version of this article.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Data Availability

The data underlying this study is available upon request from the corresponding author.

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