

## THE INFLUENCE OF RELATIONAL MARKETING AND BRAND IMAGE ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY MEDIATED BY PATIENT EXPERIENCE

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### ABSTRACT

*Background: Based on a preliminary survey, it was found that there are still problems in: patient loyalty, complaint handling, and suboptimal communication in the outpatient installation service of dr. Sitanala General Hospital Tangerang. Research Objective: aims to analyze the direct and indirect effects of relational marketing and brand image on customer loyalty with patient experience as an intervening variable. Research Method: This quantitative study uses an explanatory method with a cross-sectional design. Data were collected from 119 patients of the Outpatient Installation of dr. Sitanala General Hospital Tangerang, who had been treated at least twice. Data analysis used Structural Equation Modeling - Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). Research Results: Shows that the brand image variable is the variable that has the most positive and significant effect on customer loyalty in the outpatient installation of dr. Sitanala General Hospital Tangerang. While patient experience partially mediates (complements) the effect of relational marketing and brand image on customer loyalty. In a managerial context, this study can be a basis and reference for hospitals on the importance of creating and building a positive and strong brand image consistently and continuously in order to form a positive and strong patient perception in order to achieve customer loyalty. In addition, it is also necessary to make efforts to improve the quality of interactions with patients and strive to achieve a positive patient experience.*

**KEYWORDS** Relationship Marketing, Brand Image, Customer Loyalty, Patient Experience



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### INTRODUCTION

The core of today's corporate competition is how companies are able to have a customer orientation so that they can create consistent customer preferences and loyalty in the long term. Customer loyalty is influenced by several factors, including: relationship marketing, brand image, and patient experience. Relationship marketing is a marketing strategy that emphasizes the creation of

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personal relationships between companies and other parties in order to build and maintain long-term relationships (Gronroos, 1994). Brand image is a series of perceptions about a brand and reflects the overall impression of the brand in the minds of customers. Brand image is one of the important factors that influences customer loyalty (Asmaryadi et al., 2020; Christi et al., 2023; Lin & Yin, 2020). Customer loyalty plays a very important role in healthcare organizations because it affects the long-term success of the organization. Consumers have many choices in deciding to use healthcare services and will tend to look for healthcare services that produce a better experience (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019).

Empirical studies show that relationship marketing has a positive influence on customer loyalty (Amoako et al., 2019; Huirse & Panique, 2024; Nugraha, 2023; Rahayu, 2023; Tufekci & Eser, 2023). There is a significant influence of brand image on customer loyalty (Asmaryadi et al., 2020; Bicer, 2020; Sofia, 2023; Sukartini & Indrawati, 2018; Vimla & Taneja, 2020). Several studies also highlight that patient experience will increase customer loyalty (Adyputra et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022). The results of Octaviani et al. (2023) study show Product quality, service encounter, servicescape, outcome quality, EWOM, which are part of the dimensions of relationship marketing as antecedents of patient experience. The dimensions of relational marketing, namely trust, commitment, and communication as determinants of patient experience (Zakkarm 2019). Research that states experience as an antecedent of brand image (Mihardjo et al., 2019; Tsai et al., 2021). Research by Nanggon et al. (2022) found that brand image influences customer experience.

Based on a preliminary survey at the outpatient installation dr. Sitanala General Hospital Tangerang found: 55.5% were dissatisfied with the service in general, 45% did not know the latest information about service developments in the last 3 years, 34% of respondents had alternative hospitals other than this hospital, 39% would probably recommend this hospital to family/relatives. There was a gap related to complaint handling of -8.83. The purpose of this study was to analyze the direct and indirect effects of relationship marketing and brand image on customer loyalty mediated by patient experience at the outpatient installation of dr. Sitanala General Hospital.

## **Theoretical Basis and Hypothesis**

### ***Customer Loyalty***

The concept of customer loyalty was introduced by Richard Oliver in 1999, defined as a firm commitment to repurchase a product or service consistently in the future despite potential situational influences that cause switching behavior (Oliver, 1999). According to Griffin (2005), customer loyalty is a strong commitment of customers to make repeat purchases/use services regularly. According to Robinson

& Etherington (2006), customer loyalty is a long-term commitment of customers to a brand/product that is characterized by a willingness to recommend the brand/product to others and is able to defend it from negative reviews.

According to Oliver (2010), customer loyalty is a deep commitment to purchasing products/services continuously in the long term, which has three dimensions: behavioral loyalty, attitudinal loyalty, and cognitive loyalty. According to Levy & Weitz (2012), customer loyalty is a customer's commitment to purchasing products/services from a particular seller.

### **Relationship Marketing**

According to Gronroos, 1990 a marketing professor from Finland emphasized the importance of two-way communication and interaction between companies and customers. According to Gronroos, 1994 relationship marketing is a form of marketing that emphasizes personal relationships between companies and other parties. The dimensions of relationship marketing according to Gronroos (1994): Trust, Commitment, and Communication.

According to Morgan & Hunt (1994), relationship marketing is all marketing activities aimed at building, developing, and maintaining relationships between a company and its customers. According to Peck et al. (1999), relationship marketing is a strategic approach that focuses on building and maintaining long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between a company and other parties. According to Christopher et al. (2001), relationship marketing not only focuses on relationships with customers but also involves building relationships with internal and external stakeholders in a company. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), relationship marketing is a form of marketing that creates, maintains, and develops strong relationships with customers and stakeholders.

### **Brand Image**

According to Aaker (2013), brand image is a set of unique associations associated with a brand name. A good brand image will influence consumer perception and behavior towards a brand. According to Keller (1993), brand image is a set of brand associations formed in the minds of consumers. According to Webster & Keller (2004), brand image consists of attributes and benefits associated with a brand, so that the brand is very distinctive from other brands. According to Kotler et al. (2016), brand image is an association that appears in the minds of consumers when consumers remember a particular brand. According to Shimp & Andrews (2018), brand image is an association that is active in memory when someone thinks about a particular brand.

According to Keller (1993), brand image has 4 (four) dimensions, namely: Type (brand identity), Favorability (favorability), Strength (strength/advantage), and Uniqueness.

### **Patient Experience**

Patient experience is the patient's perception of the entire process of health care they receive, including aspects of communication, empathy, responsiveness, and clinical outcomes (Institute of Medicine, 2001). Patient experience also includes patient interactions with health workers, the physical environment of the hospital, and the overall health care system (Boyle, 2015). According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality/AHRQ (2024), patient experience is all interactions that patients have with the health care system, including: health care (health plans) from doctors, nurses, and staff in the hospital.

According to Wolf (2013), defines patient experience as the sum of all interactions shaped by organizational culture that influence patient perceptions throughout the care chain. Patient experience according to the National Health Service (NHS) (2013), is what patients feel when undergoing the service process in the hospital. According to Baker (2018), patient experience includes all patient interactions with the health care system, from initial contact to final results.

According to Snyder (2015), patient experience is the result of all interactions that shape patient perceptions during the care process, both factual and subjective interactions. According to Garratt et al. (2005), there are 6 dimensions in the OutPatient Experiences Questionnaire (OPEQ), namely: Access to the clinic, Communication, Organization, Hospital Standards, Information, and Communication before the patient visit.

### **The Influence of Relationship Marketing and Brand Image on Customer Loyalty with Patient Experience Mediation**

H1 There is an influence of relational marketing and brand image on customer loyalty with the mediation of patient experience at the Outpatient Installation of dr. Sitanala General Hospital Tangerang.

### **The Impact of Relationship Marketing on Patient Experience**

H2 There is an influence of relational marketing on patient experience at the Outpatient Installation of dr. Sitanala General Hospital Tangerang.

### **The Influence of Brand Image on Patient Experience**

H3 There is an influence of brand image on patient experience at the Outpatient Installation of dr. Sitanala General Hospital Tangerang.

### **The Influence of Relationship Marketing on Customer Loyalty**

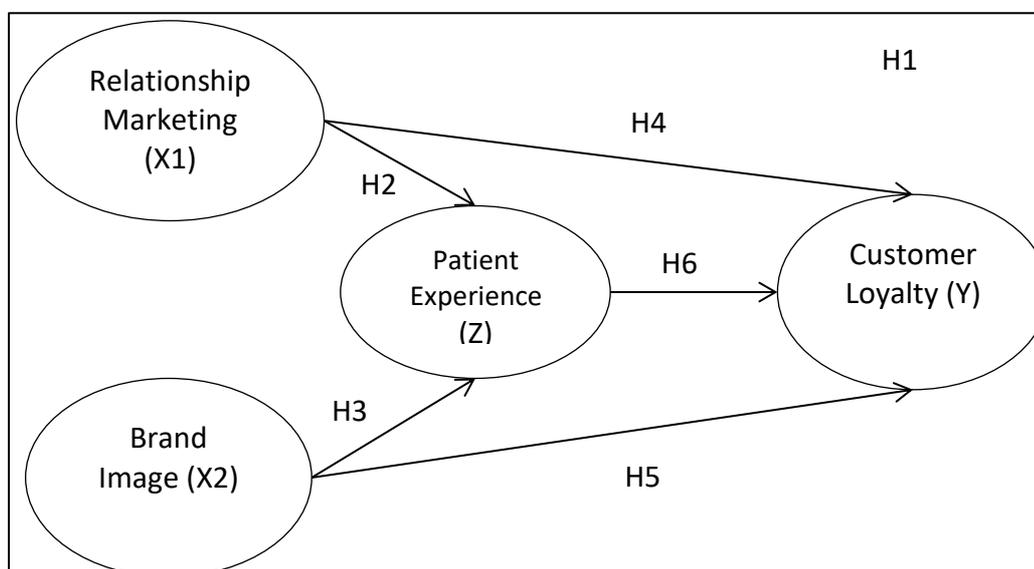
H4 There is an influence of relationship marketing on customer loyalty at the Outpatient Installation of dr. Sitanala General Hospital Tangerang.

### **The Influence of Brand Image on Customer Loyalty**

H5 There is an influence of brand image on customer loyalty at the Outpatient Installation of Dr. Sitanala General Hospital Tangerang.

### **The Impact of Patient Experience on Customer Loyalty**

H6 There is an influence of patient experience on customer loyalty at the Outpatient Installation of dr. Sitanala General Hospital Tangerang.



**Figure 1 Research Constellation**

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The location of the study was at the Outpatient Installation of dr. Sitanala General Hospital with the address of Jalan dr. Sitanala no. 99, Tangerang City, Banten Province. Research period: June 2024 to September 2024. This type of research is quantitative, which uses numerical data as a basis for analysis. This study uses an explanatory method that aims to explain the cause and effect relationship. The design of this study is cross-sectional. The population in this study were general patients who had visited the outpatient installation, with more than one visit. The minimum number of samples using calculations from the G\*Power application. The number of samples is 119. The sampling technique used purposive sampling. The criteria in this study are:

- a. Inclusion Criteria:
  - 1) Non-BPJS outpatients, with  $\geq 2$  visits, aged  $\geq 18$  years.
  - 2) Non-BPJS outpatients with  $\geq 2$  visits, patients aged  $< 18$  years, accompanied by the patient's parents or guardian.
  - 3) Non-BPJS outpatients with  $\geq 2$  visits, who have special limitations, accompanied by the patient's family.
- b. Exclusion Criteria:  
Outpatients who are not willing to be respondents.

### Data collection technique

Data collection techniques using questionnaires. The type of questionnaire used is a questionnaire with closed statements, using a Likert scale (scale 1-4). The distribution of questionnaires is carried out directly to patients in outpatient installations. Before prospective respondents fill out the questionnaire, participants will be given an explanation of information related to the study, including the purpose, how to fill out the questionnaire, and benefits. If prospective participants agree, then the participants will sign the informed consent form.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1. Distribution of Respondent Characteristics**

No.	Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Age	18-30 years	32	26.9
		31-40 years	29	24.4
		41-50 years	33	27.7
		Over 50 years	25	21.0
		<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>
2	Gender	Man	55	46.2
		Woman	64	53.8
		<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>
3	Seek medical treatment at the polyclinic	Adyatma	3	2.5
		Surgery	1	0.8
		Heart	3	2.5
		Midwifery	8	6.7
		Skin	41	34.5
		Leprosy	4	3.4
		Eye	4	3.4
		MCU	34	28.6
		Occupation	2	1.7
		Orthopedics	1	0.8
		Internal disease	9	7.6
		Nerve	7	5.9
		ENT	2	1.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>	

Source: Primary Data, 2024 (Processed)

The validity test of each variable has  $r_{count} > r_{table}$ , so it is concluded that all statement items of each variable are declared valid. Based on the results of data processing, it was found that the reliability test of each variable met the criteria, so that each indicator of each variable is valid because the loading factor  $> 0.700$ . The Reliability Value (CR) is greater than 0.7 and Cronbach's Alpha is more than 0.6.

**Table 2. Reliability Test Results**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Critical Value	Information
Customer Loyalty	0.926	0.60	Reliable
Relationship marketing	0.847	0.60	Reliable
Brand Image	0.890	0.60	Reliable
Patient Experience	0.931	0.60	Reliable

Source: Primary Data, 2024 (Processed)

These results show that the Cronbach's Alpha value  $> 0.60$ , thus indicating that the question items for each variable have good consistency.

**Table 3. Outer model test results**

Variables	Item	Loading Factor	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha
Relationship Marketing (X1)	T1: The hospital provides the best quality services	0.787	0.578	0.925	0.909
	T2: The hospital provides services according to the information provided.	0.738			
	Q3: My suggestions are always well received	0.790			
	CM1: The staff provided special services to meet my needs.	0.781			
	CM2: The staff is willing to change the way they work, in order to meet my needs.	0.746			
	CM3: There is a comfortable, close relationship between me and the staff.	0.739			
	CC1: I always get the information I need on time.	0.768			
	CC2: Officers always provide information honestly.	0.777			
	CC3: I always get information about developments around the service.	0.713			
Brand Image (X2)	TP1: The color of the RS logo is green.	0.846	0.709	0.967	0.962
	TP2: This hospital is a hospital owned by the central government.	0.810			
	TP3: This hospital used to be a special leprosy hospital.	0.841			
	FV1: This hospital is known to be of high quality in the eyes of the wider community.	0.793			

Variables	Item	Loading Factor	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha
	FV2: This hospital is the main choice for families in and around Tangerang.	0.836			
	FV3: This hospital provides the best service without distinguishing between patients' social and economic levels.	0.753			
	STR1: If there is a traffic accident that needs to be referred, then it will definitely be referred to this hospital.	0.881			
	STR2: This hospital is the largest and most complete government hospital in Tangerang.	0.906			
	STR3: This hospital is the best choice, there is no other choice.	0.896			
	UNI1: This hospital is an old hospital that is still known to the public.	0.835			
	UNI2: I was treated at this hospital because it has services that I did not find at other hospitals.	0.879			
	UNI3: The people of Tangerang feel that this hospital is a source of pride for the Tangerang area.	0.812			
Patient Experience (Z)	CA1: I easily found the location of the outpatient clinic	0.730	0.547	0.956	0.951
	CA2: Directions to the polyclinic are very easy to find	0.735			
	CA3: When waiting in line, I felt like it wasn't too long.	0.710			
	C1: I understand the officer's explanation.	0.722			
	C2: The officer listened to me attentively.	0.777			
	C3: The doctor gives enough time to communicate.	0.750			
	O1: I am always satisfied with the explanation about my illness.	0.709			
	O2: The officer conveyed the danger signs related to my illness.	0.718			
	O3: Medical care is available at the polyclinic	0.722			
	HS1: Patient seating in waiting room: plenty	0.717			
	HS2: Clean toilets	0.821			
	HS3: Outpatient conditions appear calm	0.749			
	I1: The health worker explained it well so that I understood.	0.712			
	I2: I have enough information about my illness.	0.754			
	I3: Health workers explain the effects of the medication so that I understand.	0.790			
	PC1: I received my appointment on time.	0.749			

Variables	Item	Loading Factor	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha
	PC2: I received clear information from the clinic before visiting.	0.716			
	PC3: I can easily contact the officer if I have any questions before the visit.	0.716			
Customer Loyalty (Y)	BL1: I don't plan to switch to another hospital for treatment.	0.797	0.627	0.938	0.926
	BL2: I always go to this hospital for treatment	0.807			
	BL3: I have been treated at this hospital many times.	0.820			
	AL1: I had a memorable treatment experience here.	0.824			
	AL2: I recommend others to seek treatment here.	0.762			
	AL3: I would not hesitate to recommend this hospital.	0.784			
	CL1: This hospital is the best hospital in Tangerang	0.799			
	CL2: Doctors at this hospital are known for their friendliness.	0.759			
	CL3: The service process at this hospital is not complicated.	0.772			

Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processed Results (2024)

These results show that all constructs of each variable have a value loading factor  $> 0.70$ , so this shows that overall the observation data is valid and has good convergent validity. The AVE value is between 0.547 to 0.709, this also exceeds the recommended limit. The calculated Cronbach's Alpha value ranges from 0.909 to 0.962, this shows that all variables have high internal consistency. The Composite Reliability (CR) value varies between the range of 0.925 to 0.967. Since all indices are above the recommended threshold, strong internal reliability of the data is supported.

**Table 4. Goodness of Fit (GoF) Assessment Results**

Fit Model	
SRMR	NFI
0.064	0.718

Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processed Results (2024)

MarkThe NFI of 0.718 meets the fit criteria because it is still below 0.9. So overall this model has a fairly good level of model fit (GoF).

**Table 5. Results of Determination Coefficient Test**

Variables	R-Square
Patient Experience (Z)	0.580
Customer Loyalty (Y)	0.783

Source: SmartPLS 3.0 Processed Results (2024)

This shows that the coefficient of determination of patient experience (Z) is 58%, and the coefficient of determination of customer loyalty is 78%. This shows that the variation in the value of the patient experience variable can be explained by the relationship marketing and brand image variables by 58%, and the remaining 42% is explained by other variables outside the analysis model. While 78.3% of the variation in the value of the customer loyalty variable can be explained by relationship marketing, brand image, and patient experience. While 21.7% is explained by other variables outside the analysis model.

**Table 6. Results of the Indirect Influence Test of Research Variables**

Ha	Indirect influence	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P-Values	Information
H1	There is an influence of relationship marketing on customer loyalty through mediation of patient experience at the Outpatient Installation of dr. Sitanala General Hospital, Tangerang	0.068	2,207	0.028	Partial Mediation
	There is an influence of brand image on customer loyalty with the mediation of patient experience at the Outpatient Installation of dr. Sitanala General Hospital, Tangerang	0.099	2,296	0.022	

Source: SMARTPLS 3.0 Processed Results (2024)

**Table 7. Results of the Direct Influence Test of Research Variables**

Ha	Direct influence	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P-Values	Information
H2	There is an influence of relationship marketing on patient experience	0.343	4,079	0,000	Accepted
H3	The influence of brand image on patient experience	0.498	5,897	0,000	Accepted
H4	The influence of relationship marketing on customer loyalty	0.187	3,316	0.001	Accepted
H5	The influence of brand image on customer loyalty	0.594	8,709	0,000	Accepted

The Influence of Relational Marketing and Brand Image on Customer Loyalty Mediated by Patient Experience

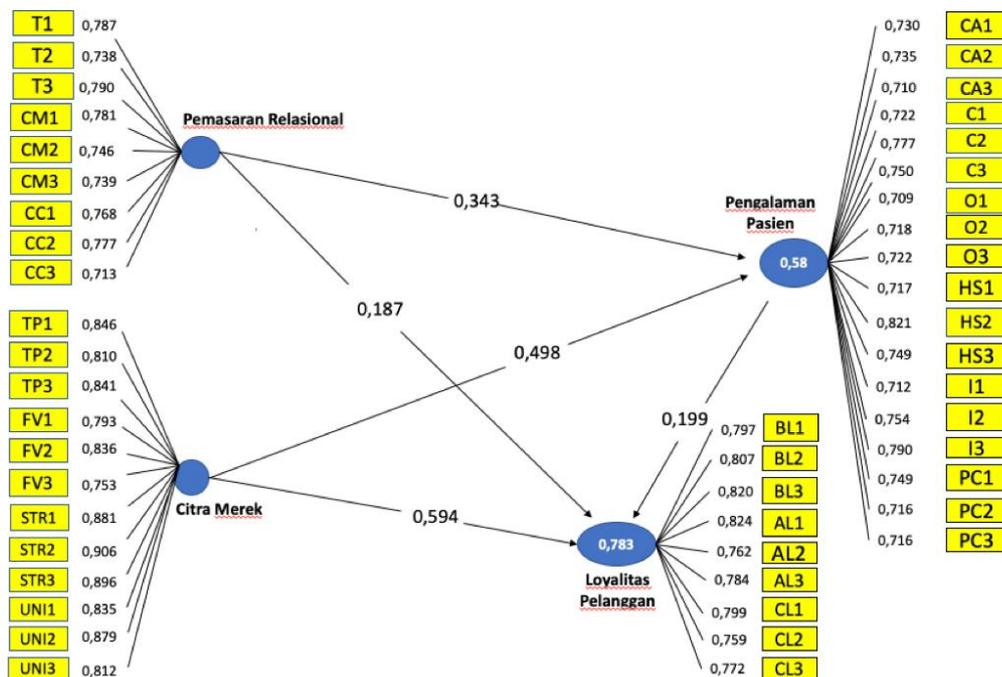
H6	The influence of patient experience on customer loyalty	0.199	2,625	0.009	Accepted
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Source: SMARTPLS 3.0 Processed Results (2024)

This shows that relationship marketing variables affect customer loyalty positively and significantly both directly and indirectly through patient experience mediation. Brand image variables affect customer loyalty positively and significantly both directly and indirectly through patient experience mediation. Based on the Indirect and Direct Influence Path Coefficients, it is concluded that the direct influence is greater than the indirect influence.

**Table 8. Comparison of Indirect and Direct Influence Path Coefficients:**

Connection	Relationship Marketing (X1)	Brand Image (X2)
Indirect Effect X - Z - Y	$0.343 \times 0.199 = 0.068$	$0.498 \times 0.199 = 0.099$
Direct Effect of X - Y	0.187	0.594



**Figure 2. Inner Model Results**

### Discussion

The influence of relationship marketing and brand image directly on customer loyalty at dr. Sitanala General Hospital Tangerang is higher, compared to the indirect influence mediated by patient experience. Referring to the opinion Hair et al. (2017) states that if the direct and indirect influences are both significant, then

there is mediation with a partial mediation role (partial mediation/complementary). It was found that the influence of the brand image variable is directly stronger than the relational marketing variable.

Based on field analysis, previously in 2009 this Hospital was a leprosy hospital dr. Sitanala which is a class A Special Hospital, then since November 2019 it has undergone a transformation into dr. Sitanala General Hospital, class B which is one of the vertical hospitals of the Ministry of Health. Since this change, the hospital has begun to make very significant changes in various aspects. The restructuring of the form of this hospital was followed by a change in leadership. The changes that occurred include: physical changes to the hospital (construction of new buildings, renovation of old buildings and building renovations, cutting down tall trees so that the environment looks more open and bright, planting plants to create a beautiful hospital environment, arranging polyclinics to make the room more efficient, using transportation in the hospital area for service convenience, improving the appearance of officers so that they appear more attractive and authoritative. Publication efforts: hospital identity, service activities, introduction of the latest services, etc. are always encouraged (Instagram, YouTube, podcast). Human resource capabilities are improved by improving the competence of officers such as continuing their S2 education. Supporting examination facilities are increasingly complete. In line with this transformation, dr. Sitanala General Hospital then received the mandate as a supporting hospital in the regional area of Banten province. So that it makes it easier for the public to get health services in the Banten Province area.

Things that need to be done continuously include:

1. Efforts to improve the dimensions of commitment and communication in an applied manner have been made consistently and continuously (with the support of directors, management and managers).
2. Efforts to build a positive and strong brand image must continue to be pursued so that the public becomes more familiar and recognizes the hospital's identity.
3. The Favorability dimension of the brand image variable still needs to be built, because the younger generation has not been exposed to the development of dr. Sitanala General Hospital Tangerang.
4. Efforts to understand patient experiences and analysis and evaluation still need to be optimized for the future.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study found that relational marketing and brand image significantly influence customer loyalty, with patient experience serving as a mediator at the outpatient installation of Dr. Sitanala General Hospital in Tangerang. The research revealed that relational marketing and brand image both positively and significantly

impact patient experience, and in turn, customer loyalty. The brand image was identified as the most influential factor in increasing customer loyalty. Additionally, a positive patient experience was also found to play a crucial role in boosting customer loyalty. The findings support theories on relational marketing, brand image, patient experience, and customer loyalty, with the brand image being the most powerful variable in fostering loyalty.

In terms of implications, the study has both theoretical and managerial contributions. Theoretically, it strengthens existing theories, particularly those by Gronroos, Keller, Garratt, and Oliver. Managerially, it suggests that Dr. Sitanala General Hospital should continue to enhance its brand image through consistent and widespread promotion across various media. Improving communication skills among hospital staff and upgrading the hospital's information management system are also recommended. The study suggests that further seminars, special review teams, community outreach activities, and the development of a mobile application could further enhance customer loyalty. However, the research has limitations, including potential response bias from the self-report questionnaire and the constraints of a quantitative methodology.

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