

UNDERSTANDING PATIENTS' CHOICE OF HOSPITAL: AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY

Raed Mohammed Ali Al-Daoar

Research Scholar, Management studies,
B.S. Abdur Rahman Crescent University, Vandalur, Chennai India
Email: raedmbd@gmail.com

Dr. M.Jamal Mohamed Zubair

Asst professor (S.G), Management studies,
B.S. Abdur Rahman Crescent University, Vandalur, Chennai India
Email: zubair4317@gmail.com

Abstract: Several studies of the healthcare market from developing economies present that the reputation, convenience, the experience of other patients and specialties as the main criteria for the choice of the hospital. In this paper, the authors reviewed 28 studies on the subject of hospital choice to know the current status of the literature and conduct interviews with 10 Arabian patients who currently treat in an Indian hospital in Chennai city, to understanding how they select their hospital and determine the main criteria of choice. The questions of the interviews have addressed based on the existing criteria of selection of hospital. The data were analyzed by building themes within the interviews data and finding of the previous studies. The main finding of this study are that the Arabian patients give more important to the quality and cost of treatment, hospital reputation, the experience of other patients, modern equipment, and convenience as the main criteria of hospital choice.

Keywords: Patient, Choice criteria, Indian hospitals,

1.0 Introduction

The health care sector in developing countries such as India, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, China and Iran is growing in the globalization, developing markets. The world health care currently spending at around \$7.2 trillion or 10% of world GDP [1], Within Asia, the total Indian healthcare industry size is expected to touch US\$ 160 billion by 2017.

Choice standards of hospitals have become a great issue among the consumers. The type of hospitals and availability of the universal scope of services has facilitated the patients will receive appropriate treatment and getting cured (Choi, Cho, Lee, Lee, and Kim, 2004).

In a developed countries the hospital choice more influence by the reputation, convenience, quality of the care, and availability of specialties among other factors. In developing countries, the cost of treatment and facilities play a major role in hospital choice along with hospital reputation.

Many studies had reflected that the patient's perceptions about the quality of health care service represent a significant role when choosing a hospital. As we know that patients have alternative hospital choices if they are not satisfied with one they can easily choose another one. This study aim is to explore the dimensions influence on the Arabian patient choice of an Indian hospital in Chennai City.

This paper begins with an overview of literature relevant to evaluation of factors effect on hospital choice, followed by methodology and data collection of 10 qualitative interviews, the analysis of findings using coding and verbatim, discussion of results, and conclusion.

Literature Review

This section reviewed previous studies on the hospital choice, followed by an overview of the criteria of the hospital choice in India.

Criteria of Hospital Choice

(Al-Doghaither, Abdelrhman, Saeed, & Magzoub, 2003), identified that the medical service and accessibility represent a significant role in hospital choice in Saudi Arabia. An England survey, by Jones, & Mays. (2009), reported that the perceptions of cleanliness, quality, travel costs, the reputation and waiting times had a strong effect on the hospital choice.

The reputation of hospital and doctor are the most reason effect on hospital choice (Dijis-Elsinga, Otten, Versluijs, Smeets, Kievit, & Vree 2010). Several studies report that the recommending of the doctor is the most trustworthy information source with a great impact on patient choice (Dixon, 2010).

Ringard, & Hagen (2011), examined the impact of waiting times for hospital admissions on patients' choices and mobility and found that there is a negative association between health status and waiting time in Norwegian hospitals. They also noted that the experience of other patients and family regarding hospital choice could reduce the waiting time. (Victoor, Delnoij, Friele, & Rademakers, 2012), revealed that the patient will actively choose the best provider based on high-quality care while minimizing costs also the found that the longer time waiting had negatively influenced in hospital choice.

Karkee, & Kadariya. (2013), measured the impact of free essential health services in choice of health care facility, and they found that there is a positive impact on the free essential health care policy on the patient's choice of health care provider in Nepal. An England survey by (Hunter, Chew-Graham, Langer, Stenhoff, Drinkwater, Guthrie, & Salmon, 2013), found that the patents in highly influenced by the access to services, personal quality, experiences, on the process of hospital choice.

Pilny, & Mennicken (2014), examined the impact of hospital reputation on choice of hospital perspective of patients. They found that the hospital reputation has a significant impact on hospital choice in Germany.

The Ghanaian survey by (Aikins, Ahmed, & Adzimah, 2014), identified that the service quality of hospital had a significant effect on patient's choice of hospital.

(Ward, Rokkas, Cenko, Pulvirenti, Dean, Carney, & Meyer, 2015), found that the reputation and quality care were the key dimensions which have a significant impact on hospital choice and patients' trust in South Australia.

An Iranian survey by (Bahadori, Teymourzadeh, Ravangard, Nasiri, Raadabadi, & Alimohammadzadeh. 2016), narrated that the doctors, staffs and the clinic's environment have highly influenced on patient's choice of hospital. (Gutacker, Moscelli, Siciliani, Moscelli, & Gravelle, 2016), showed that the quality of service is highly important for competition to attract additional patients in England. (Moscelli, Siciliani, Gutacker, & Gravelle, 2016), reported that the distance, higher quality, and lower waiting times have highly influenced on the patient choice of hospital.

(Santos, Gravelle, & Propper, 2017), examined the impact of the practice quality on patients' choices. They found that the quality of service and location of the hospital has positively influenced on the patient choice of hospitals in the UK. Lena, & Babu (2017), explored the choice criteria and consumer perceptions of international hospitals in Vietnam and, identified that the main choice criteria of the international hospital were; the convenience, patient service, and convenient facilities.

Criteria of Hospital Choice In India

Singh, & Shah (2012), concluded that the availability of professional physicians and surgeons, and the hospital infrastructure are the main reasons for the hospital choice in India.

Dubey, & Sharma. (2013) explored the most factor impact on the patient choice of hospital and they found that the Indian patients are given more importance to location of hospital, availability of punctual staff specialist doctors, 24 hours accessibility to laboratories, quicker admission, availability of medicines close to hospitals, cost, the experience of other patients, in their choice criteria.

Dharmesh, & Devendra (2014), they found that the physicians qualified and experienced twenty-four hours and seven day service, past experience with hospitals and trained nursing employees respectively are contributing towards the patient's choice of an Indian hospital.

Ankur, & Sanjeev (2015) highlighted that the quality of doctors, facilities, lower cost of services, distance, recommendation from the friends and relatives were the most important reason to be considered while selecting the India hospital. Ghosh, (2015) found that the quality of services and treatment, cost, transport convenience, and safety had a significant influence in the Indian hospital choice.

(Kamra, Singh, & De, 2016), found that the essential conveniences, reputation, quality, infrastructure, cost, experiences, the responsiveness of services, references and recommendations, clinical support, privacy and information sharing, and domain of services have a significant effect on the hospital choice in India.

Methods

The study was used the interpretive approach to analysis and discuss the data. The interpretive approach includes different informal discussions in which the researcher shares a sense of time, space, and mutual anxieties with respondents (Huber, Clandinin & Huber, 2006).

In interviews with patients, we asked them about their current treatment and choice conditions. Our observations and information from the interviews were interpreted and we tried to draw the meaning from them. In the second interpretive moment, the data which collected from the interviews were compared with previous studies which reviewed in the literature review section.

In the third interpretive moment, the data were analyzed and wrote about the findings.

Based on the presented data and logic processes, we assume that the Arabian patient choice of an Indian hospital is affected by the cost and quality of treatment.

This hypothesis aims to test to what extent Arabian patients are affected by the cost and quality of treatment.

Research Objectives

To know how the Arabian patients are selecting the Indian hospitals.

To know what are the main criteria of hospital choice in Indian context.

Data Collection

Interviews of approximately 15-20 minute were conducted face-to-face with 10 patients, of which 6 patients under 40 and 5 patients aged 40 and above. The authors formed a topic outline with main and penetrating questions, which were reviewed by a research expert then translated into Arabic. Three pilot phone interviews were conducted to test response, brainstorm more probing directions, and estimated duration. In the actual interviews, the researchers started with introducing themselves to the respondents and explained the purpose of the study and clarified ethical and privacy concerns. The author got approval to record the interviews and took notes on body language for later review. The main questions that We asked the patients were “how do you come to know about the Indian hospitals?, why do you choose the Indian hospital?, what are the most important difficulties faced at the hospital choice?, and what were your first criteria when are you choosing an Indian hospital? The authors have translated the records from Arabic into the English language. Based on repeated issues the data were coded and the authors prioritized main themes by importance and focus on the useful data for quoting in the actual paper.

Analysis and Discussion

Based on the data reviewed and collected the analysis will be conducted in this section, first will start with the demographic factors of the patients, followed by summaries the main criteria for Indian hospital choice from the foreign patients' perspective

Patient Profile

Based on the nationality of the respondents, the sample of the study was divided into two patients from Yemen, three from Oman, two from Bahrain, and three from Sudan. About all the patients were male which can be considered as one of the limitations of the study. Almost the patients who are in the age group of under 40 hold a bachelor degree or higher education and held a job within a good salary. Almost the patients came with the heart, cancer, and kidney problems few of them came only for diagnostics.

Criteria of Hospital Choice

As reflected in the review of literature and interviews, choice factors: hospital reputation, Waiting Time doctor quality, Times and Cost of Travel, Experience of other patients, facilities, location, and Quality and cost of treatment

Waiting Time

In the review section the studies which done by (Jones, & Mays. 2009; Ringard, & Hagen. 2011; Victoor, et al., 2012; Birk & Henriksen, 2006 and Moscelli, et al., 2016), found that the long time spent waiting for the treatment has negatively impact on the choice of hospital. Moreover, research shows that the some of the Arabian patients showing that they are ready for traveling long distance and spending a long waiting time to get a good treatment.

Times and Cost of Travel

The travel times and cost of traveling have an importance in the patients' choice of the hospital. (Burge, Devlin, Appleby, Rohr, & Grant, 2005; Al-Doghhaither, et al., 2003; and Varkevisser, & Schut, 2012). In this study, it observed that the Arabian patients considered the travel times and cost of traveling as an important factor for choosing the hospital.

Experience of Other Patients

The experience of the other patients is a highly valuable source in hospital choice. (Ringard, & Hagen, 2011; Dubey, & Sharma, 2013; and Dharmesh, & Devendra, 2014). The research found that the experience of other patients, and recommendation of national doctor, is triggered in the decision to choose the Indian hospitals.

Quality and Cost of Treatment

The high-quality care while minimizing costs of treatment are correlated with hospital selection (Jones, & Mays, 2009; Victoor, et al., 2012; Ward, et al., 2015; and Santos, et al., 2016), the patients who came from Gulf countries are considering the quality of treatment as the most important reason for selecting the Indian hospital rather than other patients because they are not having any financial issues.

Hospital Reputation

The reputation of the hospital and physician is one of the most reasons for hospital choice (Jones, & Mays, 2009; Dijs-Elsinga, et al., 2010; Pilny, & Mennicken, 2014; and Ward, et al., 2015). The study also indicates that the Arabian patients are given more value to the hospital and doctor's reputation when choosing the hospital.

Findings Related to the Research Questions

The research questions were answered based on the data analyzed and reviewed in the literature review and analysis discussion sections.

How do you come to know about the Indian hospitals?

The main source of information about Indian hospitals were the other patients, the recommendation of the national doctor, government or private agencies and friends who currently stay in India. Some patients who have higher education came to know about Indian hospital through the website of the hospitals.

Why do you choose the Indian hospital?

The important choice criteria for Arabian patients of Indian hospitals in Chennai city are: quality of care, hospital reputation, the amenities, the experience of other patients, even the cost of treatment was considered only after other criteria such as hospital reputation, and the quality of treatment. Some of the patients choose the Indian hospital for both treatment and tourism which called medical tourism. The cooperate between Indian hospital and some Arabian hospital or health care ministry was one of the reasons for choosing the hospital.

What are the most important difficulties do you faced when you choice the hospital?

The main difficulties in choosing Indian hospitals contain the high price of treatment, Visa procedure, and longer spend waiting time.

What were your first criteria when you are choosing the Indian hospital?

For the patients from the Arabian Gulf, quality, hospital reputation, and the amenities, were paramount. For all other patients, especially who have low income or self-sponsor, for their treatment the quality of treatment with a reasonable price was the first criteria for choosing an Indian hospital.

Conclusions

From the literature review section, it observed that almost all papers which have discussed in the in the study are conceptual papers, and empirical papers which used interviews and surveys for collecting the data.

The study has achieved its objectives of knowing how the Arabian patients do to choice Indian hospitals (through other patients, the recommendation of the national doctor, government or private agencies and friends who currently stay in India), identifying the main criteria of hospital choice (The most important choice criteria are quality and cost of treatment, hospital reputation, modern equipment and facilities and the quality of doctors) and the main difficulties towards choosing Indian hospitals include the high cost of care and Visa procedure.

About The hypothesis which assumed, the study confirmed that quality and cost of treatment is the basic standard considered in the choice of Indian hospitals, also confirmed that Arabian patients got a positive impression about the Indian hospitals

Indian hospitals should make a good business to business relationship with Arabian hospitals to provide a good quality of treatment with reasonable price. This may will reduce the perceived price and Visa procedure difficulties and attracting more potential patients.

Limitations and Future Study

The limitations of this study were that the sample size of the study was small, so for the future studies the sample size could be extended and randomly selecting. The area of this study was limited to a relatively district of Chennai City, so for the future studies could be extended across Tamil Nadu state, also the same study could be conducted in any other Indian city which has more foreign patients.

References

1. Aikins, I., Ahmed, M., &Adzimah, E. D. (2014).Assessing the role of quality service delivery in client choice for healthcare: a case study of bechem government hospital and green hill hospital. *European Journal of Logistics Purchasing and Supply Chain Management*, 2(3), 1-23.
2. Al-Doghaither, A. H., Abdelrhman, B. M., Saeed, A. W., &Magzoub, M. E. M. A. (2003).Factors influencing patient choice of hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.*The journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 123(2), 105-109.
3. Ankur, & Kumar, s. (2015). A study of consumer's preference for various medical facilities while choosing a hospital. *International Journal of Research in Management, Science & Technology*, 3 (4), 115-120.
4. Bahadori, M., Teymourzadeh, E., Ravangard, R., Nasiri, A., Raadabadi, M., &Alimohammadzadeh, K. (2016).Factors contributing towards the patient's choice of a hospital, clinic from the patients' and managers' perspective.*Electronic Physician*, 8 (5), 2378.
5. Birk, H. O., &Henriksen, L. O. (2006). Why do not all hip-and knee patients facing long waiting times accept re-referral to hospitals with short waiting time?: Questionnaire study. *Health Policy*, 77(3), 318-325
6. Burge, P., Devlin, N., Appleby, J., Rohr, C., & Grant, J. (2004). Do patients always prefer quicker treatment?. *Applied Health Economics and Health Policy*, 3(4), 183-194.
7. Choi, K. S., Cho, W. H., Lee, S., Lee, H., & Kim, C. (2004). The relationships among quality, value, satisfaction and behavioral intention in health care provider choice: A South Korean study. *Journal of Business Research*, 57 (8), 913-921.
8. Dijs-Elsinga, J., Otten, W., Versluijs, M. M., Smeets, H. J., Kievit, J., Vree, R., ...&Marang-van de Mheen, P. J. (2010). Choosing a hospital for surgery: the importance of information on quality of care. *Medical Decision Making*, 30(5), 544-555.
9. Dixon, A., Robertson, R., Appleby, J., Burge, P., & Devlin, N. J. (2010). Patient Choice: How Patients Choose and How Providers Respond.
10. Dubey, P., & Sharma, S. K. (2013).Factors affecting choice of hospital services in bilaspur city.*Abhinav: International Monthly Refereed Journal of Research In Management and Technology*, 2, 97-104.
11. Dharmesh, M., &Devendra, S. (2014).Factors affecting patients' decisionson selection of the hospital. *Management Strategies Journal*, 25 (3), 5-10.
12. Ghosh, M. (2015).An empirical study on hospital selection in India.*International journal of health care quality assurance*, 28 (1), 27-39.
13. Gutacker, N., Siciliani, L., Moscelli, G., &Gravelle, H. (2016). Choice of hospital: Which type of quality matters?. *Journal of Health Economics*, 50, 230-246.
14. Huber, M., Clandinin, D. J., & Huber, J. (2006).Relational responsibilities of narrative inquirers.*Curriculum and Teaching Dialogue*, 8(1&2), 209-223.
15. Hunter, C., Chew-Graham, C., Langer, S., Stenhoff, A., Drinkwater, J., Guthrie, E., & Salmon, P. (2013). A qualitative study of patient choices in using emergency health care for long-term conditions: The importance of candidacy and recursivity. *Patient education and counseling*, 93(2), 335-341.
16. Jones, L., & Mays, N. (2009).Systematic review of the impact of patient choice of provider in the English NHS. London: London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.
17. Karkee, R., &Kadariya, J. (2013). Choice of health-care facility after introduction of free essential health services in Nepal. *WHO South-East Asia Journal of Public Health*, 2(2), 96.

18. Kamra, V., Singh, H., & De, K. K. (2016). Factors Affecting Hospital Choice Decisions: an exploratory study of healthcare consumers in Northern India. *Asia Pacific Journal of Health Management*, 11(1), 76.
19. Lena Bucatariu1 & Babu P George. (2017). Patient Perception and Choice Factors Related to International Hospitals: A Study in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. *Journal of Health Med Informat*, 8:3 2-8.
20. Moscelli, G., Siciliani, L., Gutacker, N., & Gravelle, H. (2016). Location, quality and choice of hospital: Evidence from England 2002–2013. *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, 60, 112-124.
21. Pilny, A., & Mennicken, R. (2014). Does Hospital Reputation Influence the Choice of Hospital? (No.0516). Rheinisch-Westfälisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung, Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Universität Dortmund, Universität Duisburg-Essen.
22. Ringard, Å., & Hagen, T. P. (2011). Are waiting times for hospital admissions affected by the patients' choices and mobility?. *BMC health services research*, 11 (1), 170.
23. Santos, R., Gravelle, H., & Propper, C. (2017). Does quality affect patients' choice of doctor? Evidence from England. *The Economic Journal*, 127(600), 445-494.
24. Singh, R. G., & Shah, M. K. (2012). Customers' preference for selecting private hospital: a study in Manipur. *Management Convergence*, 2 (2), 41-50.
25. Varkevisser, C. M., Geest, S. A. & Schut, F. T. (2012). Do Patients Choose Hospitals with High Quality Ratings? Empirical Evidence from the Market for Angioplasty in the Netherlands. *Journal of Health Economics*, 31 (2), 371-378.
26. Victoor, A., Delnoij, D. M., Friele, R. D., & Rademakers, J. J. (2012). Determinants of Patient Choice of Healthcare Providers: A Scoping Review. *BMC Health Services Research*, 12 (1), 272.