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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Contributions of the Servqual Model in Promoting Patients' Revisit Intentions through Trust and Brand Image in the Private Hospital in Yangon

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Abstracts

The study investigated the contributions of sub- dimensions of the SERVQUAL model, including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, in promoting patients' revisit intentions through trust and brand image in the private hospital in Yangon framed by social capital theory. The survey data were collected from 414 patients in private hospitals, representing a response ratio of 69%. According to PLS_SEM and Sobel test results showed that trust mediated the effects of tangibles ($t = 2.104$, $p = 0.035$), responsiveness ($t = 3.251$, $p = 0.001$), and assurance ($t = 3.507$, $p = 0.000$) on revisit intentions and results indicated that brand image also mediated the influence of tangibles ($t= 2.552$, $p = 0.010$), reliability ($t = 3.377$, $p = 0.000$), responsiveness ($t = 5.279$, $p = 0.001$), assurance ($t = 2.708$, $p = 0.006$), and empathy ($t = 4.661$, $p = 0.000$) on revisit intentions. Moreover, the results also revealed that trust directly affects brand image ($\beta = 0.0152$, $p < 0.014$). These findings offer new insights into the SERVQUAL model, demonstrating how it promotes patients' revisit intentions through mediating trust and brand image in private hospitals, extending social capital theory in a previously unexplored way. The study offered helpful guidelines to promote private hospital businesses, policymakers, and practitioners to improve healthcare service quality for long-term success.

Keywords: SERVQUAL, Trust, Brand image, Revisit intentions, Patients, Private hospital

Introduction

In today's competitive environment, businesses must prioritize delivering high-quality products and services that meet constantly evolving customer demands (Jiang & Pan, 2020; Ratasuk, 2023c; Ratasuk & Buranasompob, 2021). This is particularly important in healthcare, as it promotes societal well-being and prosperity (Fukuti et al., 2020; Rastogi & Sharma, 2020). Healthcare providers can ensure operational efficiency while maintaining affordability by emphasizing safety, quality, and patient-centric care (Bäckström et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2022). A recent report by Global Health Care Sector Outlook (2024) indicated that the investment in healthcare technology has surged to $44 billion in 2021, representing a significant increase aimed at improving service delivery. As investments in healthcare continue to grow, hospitals compete for market share by offering high-quality services and providing customers with various options (Azam et al., 2023).

The Ministry of Health and Sports in Myanmar provides an extensive healthcare system that includes preventive, promotive, and curative services (Ministry of Health and Sport, 2020). Myanmar's healthcare landscape comprises public hospitals, private hospitals, and clinics (Hospitals Statistics Report, 2020). According to the annual report published by Hospitals Statistics Report (2020), there are currently 5,000 private general clinics, 800 private dental clinics, 249 private hospitals, and 200 private specialist clinics in the healthcare industry. At the time, clinics were the most preferred healthcare service providers, accounting for 76% of the market share. Subsequently, private

hospitals are preferred by 17% of people, while public hospitals are the least popular, with only 3% of people opting for them (E-saan Center for Business and Economic Research, 2015). Due to the highly competitive market, private hospitals must gain competitive advantages to ensure long-term success.

Revisit intention, influenced by a customer's commitment to future purchases based on past experiences, serves as a reliable parameter for achieving long-term business success (Ratasuk, 2022b; Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2022; Zhang et al., 2021). Various factors, such as service quality, innovation, company image, satisfaction, and loyalty, have been investigated as contributors to revisit intention (Adi et al., 2022; Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2020, 2022).

In this study, the SERVQUAL model as a potential driver of revisit intentions through customer trust and brand image grounded in social capital theory. This perspective, not yet explored in private hospitals in Yangon, adding to the existing body of knowledge (Khoo, 2020; Lai et al., 2020; Rivero et al., 2023; Wang & Xu, 2024; Zia et al., 2022).

Framed by the social capital theory, this study examined the impacts of the SERVQUAL sub-elements, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, on patients' revisit intention through trust and brand image.

The study's findings were expected to enrich new knowledge and predictions based on social capital theory, the contribution of SERVQUAL to promoting revisit intentions through patient trust and brand image, and the extensive use of social capital theory. The study aimed to provide a valuable guideline for healthcare service providers, policymakers, and practitioners to enhance healthcare service quality and implement effective marketing strategies.

Literature review

Social capital theory

Social Capital Theory, introduced by Bourdieu (1986), explains the relationships and networks between individuals within a specific community as valuable capital that can accumulate preferable outcomes. The theory has been applied to various fields, including education, sociology, political science, management, and marketing (Ratasuk, 2024). For example, Dehcheshmeh et al. (2020) used social capital theory to explain the connection between social capital and health services quality in Ahvaz, Iran. This study applied social capital theory to predict how SERVQUAL sub-dimensions contribute to revisit intentions, highlighting trust and brand image as key factors reflecting positive relationships between private hospitals or patients.

SERVQUAL

Parasuraman et al. (1988) introduced the SERVQUAL model to assess service quality, which consists of five sub-dimensions: tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy. The model is widely used to examine the customers' response to service quality in various phenomena, including aviation, banking, education, healthcare, and so on (Altuntas et al., 2021; Ratasuk, 2022a). Umoke et al. (2020) employed the SERVQUAL model to explore the association between patients' satisfaction and the quality of care in general hospitals in Nigeria.

Tangibles

Tangible refers to the physical appearance of services, equipment, facilities, and personnel presence (Ali et al., 2022; Parasuraman et al., 1988). From the customer's perspective, tangibles contribute to the antecedent of perceived service quality and can lead to customer satisfaction (Phonthanukitithaworn et al., 2020). For instance, Kim et al. (2022) studied the effect of tangible and intangible hotel in-room amenities on customer experience in South Korea before and during the pandemic.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the ability of the service providers to consistently and accurately perform the services as promised (Ali et al., 2022; AlOmari, 2020; Parasuraman et al., 1988). Reliability has played a significant part in the operation of traditional service operators, involving the accuracy of billings, making precise quotation records, and filling orders as promised (Fida et al., 2020). For example, Zia et al. (2022) confirmed that reliability plays a significant role in shaping the customers' perceived value of e-commerce websites in the retail industry.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to the preparedness of staff to assist and provide efficient service delivery to customers (Ali et al., 2022; Parasuraman et al., 1988). It involves offering contact details, promptly addressing customer queries, and resolving problems (Ashiq & Hussain, 2023). Responsiveness and assurance are vital for service quality, fostering commitment and trust (Kalia et al., 2021). Ighomereho et al. (2022) found that responsiveness significantly enhances e-service quality in Nigerian Internet banking and Marine Times services.

Assurance

Assurance refers to the service provider being knowledgeable and courteous and making the customers feel confident and trust in them (Ali et al., 2022; Parasuraman et al., 1988). Service providers' capability of delivering services tailored to customers' preferences can significantly boost their confidence and trust. Assurance is one of the factors driving service quality and leading to satisfaction (Haron et al., 2020). For instance, Syahidah and Asikin (2023) employed the SERVQUAL model, particularly empathy and assurance, to enhance satisfaction with Indonesia's Franchise Food Cart.

Empathy

Empathy refers to how much service providers genuinely care, pay attention, and cater to an individual's feelings' unique needs, and wants (Ali et al., 2022; Parasuraman et al., 1988). Empathy is a critical aspect of service quality and a significant antecedent in influencing behavioral intentions and satisfaction (Swain & Singh, 2021). Empathy is not a fixed personality trait or a fleeting emotion influenced by evolution, genetics, education, and life experiences (Yu et al., 2022). For instance, Wang et al. (2022) investigated the impact of caregivers' empathy on patient satisfaction with healthcare services in Hangzhou, China.

Customer trust

Customer trust refers to a general belief that the other party in a social exchange will act ethically and socially appropriately and will not be opportunistic (Gefen et al., 2003; Guo et al., 2021). Customer trust can lead to favorable outcomes such as loyalty, repurchase intentions, and satisfaction (Ratasuk, 2023a; Upamannyu et al., 2022). Kalia et al. (2021) found a positive impact of customer trust and commitment on customer loyalty and service quality dimensions in the telecom business in India.

Brand image

Brand image refers to the specific set of associations held in the target customer's mind, which perceives a brand based on their interactions with its products and services, and this perception evolves (Huang et al., 2019; Ratasuk & Buranasompob, 2021; Shehzadi et al., 2021). It can lead to several favorable business outcomes, such as trust, brand loyalty, customer purchase decisions, and repurchase intentions (Ratasuk, 2023a). For example, Khan et al. (2022) revealed that brand image is enhanced through customer-defined orientations and increases customer satisfaction in South Asian restaurants in Malaysia.

Revisit intention

Revisit intention refers to individual judgment about reusing a product or service, indicating the consumer's desire to interact with the same product, brand, place, or region and potentially form long-lasting relationships (Abbasi et al., 2021; Lai et al., 2020; Tosun et al., 2015). Customer experience and satisfaction strongly influence revisit intention (Seetanah et al., 2018). Customer trust in businesses can lead to commitment and future purchases (Garcia et al., 2020). For instance, Ratasuk and Gajesanand (2022) examined how food safety impacts repurchase intentions in Bangkok's food delivery service during COVID-19, using perceived risk and trust as mediators.

SERVQUAL, customer trust, brand image, and revisit intention

According to social capital theory, the positive relationship between healthcare service providers and their customers, particularly patients' trust reflected in the brand image perceived by patients, is a valuable asset representing a solid bond between them and can bring favorable outcomes and long-term success (Mandagi et al., 2023; Odoom et al., 2020; Ratasuk, 2023b). For instance, Chitthanom (2020) investigated the impact of servicescape, satisfaction, perceived value, trust, and revisit intention in the medical tourism

of Udon Thani Province, Thailand. In addition, Wardi et al. (2021) researched how the brand image of Padang halal restaurants influences customers' intentions to revisit Malaysia. Healthcare service quality attributes, such as well-maintained facilities, timely responses, and sufficient information, can foster a strong connection between patients and healthcare providers. Healthcare service quality attributes, such as well-maintained facilities, timely responses, and adequate information, can foster a strong connection between patients and healthcare service providers (Abdullah et al., 2022). This, in turn, leads to higher satisfaction as patients feel more engaged with the quality of healthcare they receive and tend to trust and develop a good image of it (Kalia et al., 2021; Shahbaz et al., 2020). As a result, patients are more inclined to return to the same hospital based on their previous positive experiences (Wu et al., 2022).

Trust and brand image

Patient trust is the belief that doctors have the necessary skills for diagnosis and treatment and can prioritize patient interests, leading to confident acceptance of medical services (Al-Hilou & Suifan, 2023; Liu et al., 2021). The provision of high-quality services not only increases satisfaction but also enhances trust (Al-Hilou & Suifan, 2023). Moreover, trust plays a crucial role in shaping the hospital's brand image, with satisfaction as the vital link between trust and brand image (Mandagi et al., 2023). According to social capital theory, building good relationships and networks can lead to other preferable outcomes, particularly developing a solid brand image (Ratasuk, 2023b). Therefore, we can propose the following hypotheses**:**

Table 1 Summary of proposed research hypotheses

Hypotheses	
H1	Trust acts as a positive mediator in the relationship between tangibles and revisit intentions.
H2	Trust acts as a positive mediator in the relationship between reliability and revisit intentions.
H3	Trust acts as a positive mediator in the relationship between responsiveness and revisit intentions.
H4	Trust acts as a positive mediator in the relationship between assurance and revisit intentions.
H5	Trust acts as a positive mediator in the relationship between empathy and revisit intentions.
H6	Brand image acts as a positive mediator in the relationship between tangibles and revisit intentions.
H7	Brand image acts as a positive mediator in the relationship between reliability and revisit intentions.
H8	Brand image acts as a positive mediator in the relationship between responsiveness and revisit intentions.
H9	Brand image acts as a positive mediator in the relationship between assurance and revisit intentions.
H10	Brand image acts as a positive mediator in the relationship between empathy and revisit intentions.
H11	Trust has a positive influence on brand image.

Methodology

This study investigated SERVQUAL factors' contributions to promoting revisit intentions through customer trust and brand image in private hospitals in Yangon, Myanmar. The study applied a quantitative method, and the population of interest is unknown. The study sample consisted of patients who have used healthcare services at private hospitals in Yangon and were over 18 years old. Therefore, the researcher used the formula to calculate the sample size and planned to collect data from at least 400 samples of patients from private hospitals in Yangon, Myanmar, which was considered adequate at a 95% confidence interval (Cochran, 1977). A purposive and stratified random sampling method was used to select 40 patients from 15 private hospitals in Yangon, Myanmar, representing a total of 600, in the initial sample group. However, 414 respondents, 69% of the total, completed to the survey, which was a sufficient sample size for an unknown population. A self-administered questionnaire collected data online, from various health groups. Before distributing the questions, respondents were informed

about confidentiality their right to withdraw at any time, and the use their information solely for this study.

Measurements items

Measurement items for all latent variables were adapted from prior research and assessed for validity and reliability. Each item was evaluated using a five-point Likert scale. Tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy were measured using SERVQUAL scales adapted from Lai et al. (2020). Patient trust was assessed using items from Abdullah (2018) and Senasu (2012). Hospital image was measured using items from Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) and Odoom et al. (2020). Revisit intentions were assessed using items from Ai et al. (2022).

Control variables

The study included four control variables: gender, age, education, and income. All the variables were selected and found to significantly impact repurchase intention in Zimbabwe's tourism context (Manyangara et al., 2023).

Data analysis

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to evaluate the proposed research model, while the Sobel test was employed to test the mediation. Compared to CB-SEM, PLS-SEM is better suited for predictions and complex research models with multiple variables and relationship paths (Dash & Paul, 2021). PLS-SEM can also produce more accurate results with small sample sizes and data that are not normally distributed (Hair et al., 2012). The latest version of WarpPLS, version 8.0, was selected for this analysis to produce high-quality and precise results. Before conducting PLS-SEM, descriptive statistics, validity and reliability tests, normality tests, multicollinearity tests, and model-fit indices were used to test the model quality.

The PIM Research Ethics Committee (REC) has reviewed and approved this research paper. The approval number is PIM-REC 013/2567. The data collection process began after receiving the PIM REC number.

Results

As shown in Table 2, out of 600 respondents, 414 (69%) completed the survey; 229 (55.3%) were male, and 185 (44.7%) were female. 130 (31.4%) were between 31 and 40 years old, followed by 106 (25.6%) respondents between 41 and 50. Regarding monthly income, 126 respondents earned above 1,500,000 kyats per month, representing 30.4%, and subsequently, 80 respondents earned between 1,000,000 and 1,500,000 kyats, accounting for 19.3%. Furthermore, 302 (73.3%) respondents have a graduate degree, followed by 57 (13.8%) with a master's degree, representing the total sample.

Before conducting the PLS-SEM analysis, specific criteria were checked to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. Convergent validity, discriminant validity, common method bias (CMB), and model fit indices were examined to ensure the robustness of the model. To ensure the validity construct, convergent validity was evaluated using factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) based on recommendations by Cheung et al. (2023); Cheung and Wang (2017). Table 3 shows that all factor loadings ranged from 0.76 to 0.957, meeting the threshold of 0.5 or higher. The lowest CR value was 0.872, exceeding the satisfactory threshold of 0.7. AVE values for all constructs were above 0.5, ranging from 0.661 to 0.898, indicating minimal error. Thus, the data demonstrated satisfactory convergent validity.

Discriminant validity was tested using the hetero-trait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT). Table 4 shows that the HTMT criterion was met. Thus, the square root values of all the values were below the recommended ceiling value of 0.85, as suggested by Field (Henseler et al., 2015), which is lower than the threshold of 0.9.

Table 2 Characteristics of the sample and descriptive statistics

Characteristics	Categories	Descriptive statistics	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	229	55.3%
	Female	185	44.7%
Age	18 ~ 25	50	12.1%
	26 ~ 30	67	16.2%
	31 ~ 40	130	31.4%
	41 ~ 50	106	25.6%
	51 ~ 60	54	13%
	61 ~ 70	6	1.4%
Education	High School	31	7.5%
	Undergraduate Degree	16	3.9%
	Graduate Degree	302	73.3%
	Master Degree	57	13.8%
	Ph.D. Degree	6	1.5%
Income (per month)	0 ~ 300,000	38	9.2%
	300,001~500,000	55	13.3%
	500,001~800,000	62	15%
	800,001~1,000,000	53	12.8%
	1,000,001~1,500,000	80	19.3%
	Above 1,500,000	126	30.4%

Table 3 Convergent validity (Factor Loadings, CR, and AVE).

Variable	Question items	Factor loadings	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Revisit Intentions	RI1: I intend to visit again to this hospital	0.887	0.945	0.776
	RI2: I plan to visit this hospital in the future.	0.923		
	RI3: I tend to visit this hospital in the future.	0.872		
	RI4: I find myself coming back to this hospital for my future health.	0.884		
	RI5: This hospital will be my first choice for my next health examination.	0.836		
Patient Trust	PT1: I feel safe when I use healthcare services at the hospital.	0.907	0.661	0.802
	PT2: I trust the doctors and other employees in the hospitals.	0.842		
	PT3: The care quality supported by this hospital is reliable.	0.839		
	PT4: The hospital treats me fairly and equally.	0.800		

Variable	Question items	Factor loadings	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
	PT5: I have full credibility in the services provided in the hospital.	0.780		
Hospital Image	HI1: I always have a positive impression of this hospital.	0.859	0.945	0.741
	HI2: I believe this hospital has a positive image in the consumers' minds.	0.860		
	HI3: I believe this hospital has a superior image over its rivals in the industry.	0.894		
	HI4: The hospital offers reliable medical service.	0.902		
	HI5: This hospital offers a wide range of medical services.	0.832		
	HI6: This hospital has competent personnel.	0.814		
Tangible	T1: This hospital has preserved and modern-looking equipment.	0.866	0.920	0.741
	T2: This hospital has visually appealing physical facilities.	0.849		
	T3: Doctors and other staff have a professional appearance and neat outfits.	0.869		
	T4: The physical facilities match with the services offered.	0.859		
Reliability	R1: This hospital is punctual in its activities.	0.881	0.945	0.774
	R2: This hospital genuinely cares about solving patients' problems.	0.878		
	R3: This hospital delivers the services quickly.	0.910		
	R4: This hospital delivers services on time as promised.	0.870		
	R5: This hospital ensures that reports and documents are accurate.	0.861		
Responsiveness	RE1: Doctors and other employees offer prompt services to patients.	0.758	0.872	0.694
	RE2: Doctors and other employees are willing to help patients.	0.901		
	RE3: The hospital staff are responsive to patients' requests.	0.835		
Assurance	A1: The behavior of doctors and other employees can instill confidence in patients.	0.935	0.972	0.898
	A2: I feel safe and secure with the hospital's services.	0.944		
	A3: The hospital staff treats patients politely.	0.957		

Variable	Question items	Factor loadings	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Empathy	A4: The hospital staff is knowledgeable and can answer patients' questions.	0.955	0.917	0.692
	E1:Doctors and other employees are polite and friendly when dealing with patients.	0.898		
	E2:Doctors and other employees in this hospital pay individualized attention to patients.	0.913		
	E3: The hospital staff understands patients' specific needs.	0.895		
	E4: This hospital has convenient operating hours for patients.	0.664		
	E5: The hospital staff provides personal attention to patients.	0.760		

Notes: RI = Revisit intention, PT = Patients Trust, HI = Hospital image, T = Tangibles, R = Reliability, RE = Responsiveness, A = Assurance, E = Empathy.

Table 4 HTMT ratio.

	Revisit	Trust	Image	Tan	Relia	Resp	Assure	Empat
Revisit								
Trust	0.624***							
Image	0.767***	0.717***						
Tan	0.595***	0.592***	0.736***					
Relia	0.680***	0.603***	0.818***	0.764***				
Resp	0.847***	0.778***	0.824*	0.691***	0.763***			
Assure	0.681***	0.715***	0.782***	0.598***	0.706***	0.811***		
Empat	0.734***	0.689***	0.880**	0.692***	0.836***	0.814*	0.777***	

Notes: *** = $p < 0.001$, ** = $p \leq 0.01$, * = $p \leq 0.1$, RI = Revisit intention, PT = Patients Trust, HI = Hospital image, T = Tangibles, R = Reliability, RE = Responsiveness , A = Assurance, E = Empathy.

The findings in Table 5 confirm that the data collection tool and collected data have good discriminant validity. All the square root values of AVE are higher than their relevant correlations, as Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommended. Data reliability was evaluated using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha, with values ranging from 0.777 to 0.962, all higher than the threshold of 0.7, as Peterson and Kim (2013) suggested. Testing for multicollinearity and common method bias (CMB) found that the highest full collinearity VIF value was 4.58, which is below the acceptable threshold of 5.0, as suggested by Petter et al. (2007) and Kock (2015), indicating the absence of serious multicollinearity issues and CMB in the model.

Table 5 Correlation, reliability, and multicollinearity.

	Revisit	**Trust**	**Image**	**Tan**	**Relia**	**Resp**	**Assure**	**Empat**
Revisit	(0.881)							
Trust	0.563***	(0.813)						
Image	0.714***	0.647***	(0.861)					
Tan	0.545***	0.521***	0.667***	(0.861)				
Relia	0.631***	0.545***	0.758***	0.695***	(0.880)			
Resp	0.719***	0.645***	0.791***	0.586***	0.661***	(0.833)		
Assure	0.644***	0.661***	0.740***	0.556***	0.668***	0.717***	(0.948)	
Empat	0.666***	0.602***	0.806***	0.626***	0.782***	0.764***	0.720***	(0.832)
Composite Reliability (CR)	0.945	0.907	0.945	0.920	0.945	0.872	0.972	0.917
Cronbach's Alpha	0.928	0.872	0.930	0.884	0.927	0.777	0.962	0.885
Full Collin. VIF	2.531	2.140	4.580	2.268	3.479	3.639	2.968	4.139

Notes: *** = $p < 0.001$, ** = $p \leq 0.01$, * = $p \leq 0.1$, RI = Revisit intention, PT = Patient Trust, HI = Hospital image, T = Tangibles, R = Reliability, RE = Responsiveness, A = Assurance, E = Empathy.

Table 6 Model fit indices

Model fit indices	**Coefficient**	**Result**
Average path coefficient (APC)	0.149	Significant
Average R-squared (ARS)	0.608	Significant
Average adjusted R-squared (AARS)	0.602	Significant
Average block VIF (AVIF)	2.130	Ideally
Average full collinearity VIF (AFVIF)	2.350	Ideally
Tenenhaus GoF (GoF)	0.725	Large
Simpson's paradox ratio (SPR)	0.900	Acceptable
R-squared contribution ratio (RSCR)	0.993	Acceptable
Statistical suppression ratio (SSR)	0.950	Acceptable
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	0.975	Acceptable
Nonlinear bivariate causality direction ratio (NLBCDR)	0.952	Acceptable

Notes: ** = p-value ≤ 0.01

Table 6 shows the ten measurement criteria used in the PLS-SEM analysis to represent data quality. All requirements were satisfactory.

PLS-SEM analysis results

Once the model quality was confirmed to be satisfactory, the PLS-SEM was used to test the proposed hypotheses. The findings of the PLS-SEM analysis, which illustrate the relationships among all the variables in this study, are summarized in Figure 1. Additionally, the Sobel test was conducted to assess for mediation, and the results were represented in line with the PLS-SEM outcomes. Please note that ** ═ indicates a p-value ≤ 0.01 and *═ indicates a p-value ≤ 0.05.

Before conducting the Sobel test, the direct effects of all the variables were tested. The results showed that tangibles, responsiveness, and assurance significantly influence patient trust while reliability and empathy do not have a considerable impact trust. In addition, the results revealed that tangibles, reliability,

responsiveness, assurance, and empathy significantly influence hospital image. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that patient trust and hospital image significantly influence revisit intentions, and trust also significantly influences hospital image.

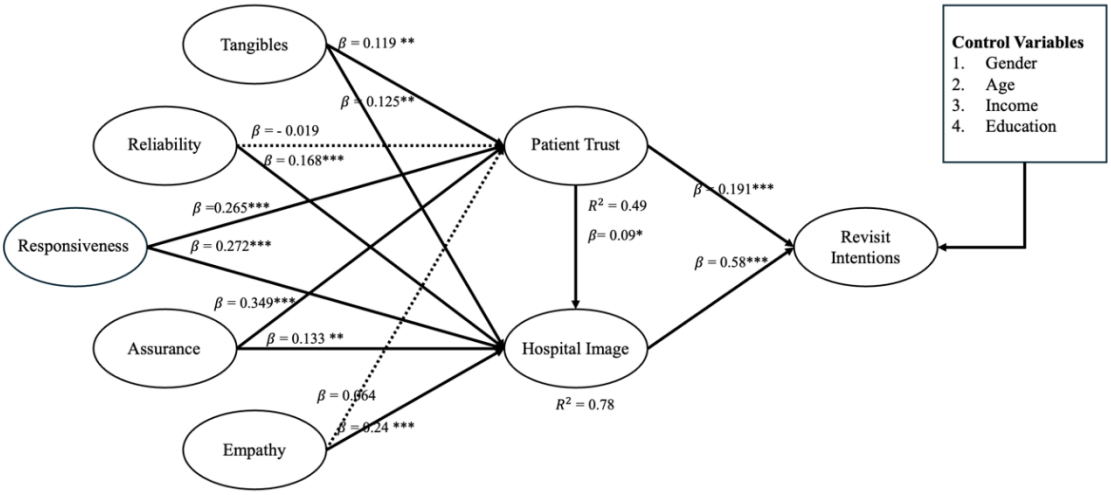

Figure 1 The PLS-SEM results.
Source: Authors' calculation

Sobel test

The results found that reliability and empathy do not positively and significantly impact patient trust among all five variables. Thus, the mediating roles of patient trust on the relationship between the four factors, tangibles, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, were tested. On the other hand, all five variables showed a positive and significant effect on hospital image. Therefore, the mediating roles of hospital image on the relationship between the five factors, tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy, were tested.

Hypothesis testing

After analyzing all the hypotheses in this study using PLS-SEM analysis and Sobel tests, hypotheses H2 and H5 were rejected due to their insignificant coefficients while all the other hypotheses were accepted.

Discussion

This study explored how the SERVQUAL model influenced patients' revisit intentions to private hospitals in Yangon by moderating trust and brand image. The findings can guide private healthcare providers and management teams to enhance service quality and improve effective strategies. The results of the PLS-SEM analysis supported nine out of eleven hypotheses proposed. According to the PLS_SEM results, customer trust emerged as a mechanism for promoting revisit intentions by SERVQUAL, namely tangibles, responsiveness, and assurance, which aligns with prior studies (Abin et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2020; Mandagi et al., 2023). For instance, Al-Hilou and Suifan (2023) found a significant relationship between tangibles and trust in private hospitals in Amman, Jordan, while Kalia et al. (2021) discovered the positive impacts of responsiveness on trust among telecom service users in India. Swain and Singh (2021) also highlighted the assurance of service providers' expertise and communication on the trust of insured and uninsured patients in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, and Kolkata, India. The results of PLS-SEM indicated that tangibles, responsiveness, and assurance promote trust, which can lead to the accumulation of revisit intention consistent with the social capital theory and several previous studies (Abdullah et al., 2022; Ratasuk & Gajesanand, 2022). Findings also signified that tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy contribute to revisiting intentions by mediating through the brand image, consistent with the previous studies (Mandagi et al., 2023; Odoom et al., 2020; Wardi

et al., 2021). These findings are further supported by Ampaw et al. (2020), who identified a significant influence of tangibles on the patients' brand image in Ghana. Shahbaz et al. (2020) also identified a significant relationship between reliability and revisit intentions, mediated by brand image among Tabao online e-commerce users in China. These findings aligned with Zhang et al. (2021), who found that responsiveness positively affected the brand image of US Amazon mobile shopping buyers in the United States. For example, Haron et al. (2020) found a positive and significant influence of assurance on the brand image perception of customers of Islamic Banks in Malaysia. In addition, Wang et al. (2022) found additional support with a significant and positive effect of empathy on the brand image of healthcare services through an electroencephalography (EEG) experiment in Hangzhou, China. According to the results of PLS-SEM, brand image mediates the influence of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy on revisit intention, which is concurrent with the social capital theory that emphasizes the relationship and network was driven by brand image in accumulating of human capital and consistent with other prior studies (Umoke et al., 2020; Wardi et al., 2021). Moreover, the findings and estimations of PLS-SEM showed that patients with a superior level of trust are more inclined to perceive a positive image of a reputable brand. These results are supported by Shie et al. (2022), who reported that patients significantly influenced brand image in tertiary hospitals in China. These results aligned with the social capital theory that trust facilitates the relationship between individuals and capital development, supported by previous studies (Ashiq & Hussain, 2023; Santana et al., 2020).

Table 7 Summary of hypotheses testing results.

Hypothesis	Path	Beta value (β)	P -value	t-value	P-value	Decision
H1	T → PT → RI	0.067	0.007	2.104	0.035	Accepted
H2	R → PT → RI	-0.011	0.415	-0.385	0.699	Not Accepted
H3	RE → PT → RI	0.150	0.001	3.251	0.001	Accepted
H4	A → PT → RI	0.197	0.001	3.507	0.000	Accepted
H5	E → PT → RI	0.036	0.207	1.240	0.214	Not Accepted
H6	T → HI → RI	0.096	0.001	2.552	0.010	Accepted
H7	R → HI → RI	0.115	0.001	3.377	0.001	Accepted
H8	RE → HI → RI	0.208	0.001	5.279	0.001	Accepted
H9	A → HI → RI	0.117	0.001	2.708	0.006	Accepted
H10	E → HI → RI	0.175	0.001	4.661	0.000	Accepted
H11	PT → HI	0.090	0.032			Accepted

Note: *** = $p < 0.001$, ** = p-value ≤ 0.01 and * = p-value ≤ 0.05. RI=Revisit intention, PT=Patients Trust, HI=Hospital image, T=Tangibles, R=Reliability, RE=Responsiveness, A=Assurance, E=Empathy.

Conclusions

In healthcare, patients who perceive higher-quality services tend to have higher levels of patient trust and a favorable attitude toward the hospital image; they are inclined to return to the hospital for future medical treatments. Conversely, patients who perceive a lower level of healthcare service quality are less likely to have trust in the hospital and a less favorable view of the hospital' s image. In promoting revisit intentions, patients who perceive particular service quality attributes such as assurance, responsiveness, and tangibles tend to have higher trust. This may be attributed to the expertise of healthcare staff, effective communication, and the cleanliness of the healthcare environment and facilities, including waiting areas and advanced diagnosis equipment. On the other hand, patients who significantly perceive these specific service quality areas, such as responsiveness, empathy,

reliability, assurance, and tangibles, tend to have a favorable view of the hospital's image. The availability of attentive care, active listening, accurate healthcare treatment, the ability of healthcare service providers and well- maintained healthcare facilities, and the appearance of hospital staff may influence this.

Academic contributions

Based on the social capital theory, the study enriched novel knowledge into how the SERVQUAL model promoted patients' revisit intentions through patient trust and brand image. It enhanced a deeper understanding of the outcome and supporting sub-dimensions of the SERVQUAL model. It investigated the antecedents of revisit intentions by adding new evidence to the existing literature. The study also explored the mediating roles of customer trust and brand image as a crucial link between the SERVQUAL model and revisit intentions. Furthermore, the results contributed to the expansion of social capital theory, particularly literature explaining how sub-dimensions of SERVQUAL promoted patients' revisit intentions through trust and brand image in the healthcare context of a private hospital in Yangon.

Practical contributions

The study's findings offer practical insights for healthcare providers, especially private hospitals, regarding the significance of patients' revisit intentions. 1). Patient trust and hospital image significantly influence revisit intentions. Notably, it is crucial to prioritize the hospital's image, which significantly impacts revisit intentions. In prioritizing SERVQAUL's sub-dimensions, responsiveness has been identified as the most significant element contributing to a favorable hospital image and revisit intentions, followed by empathy, reliability, assurance, and tangibles. 2). Responsiveness in a private hospital entails that the healthcare team is expected to conduct a prompt medical assessment and communicate a proper treatment plan, immediate diagnosis tests, and efficient care, for instance, when a patient with chest pain arrives at the emergency room. This can be achieved by encouraging the hospital staff to offer extended hours of telehealth services and regularly training the doctors and nurses to utilize a clear and accessible communication channel proactively, such as informing the patients and their families about the treatment plan and decision promptly, to reduce their fear and concerns. 3). Empathy also significantly influences creating a good perception of a private hospital's brand image and revisiting intentions. For example, healthcare personnel, including doctors, nurses, and hospital staff, are crucial in reassuring patients' comfort, managing pain, and providing emotional support during recovery from a major surgery. This can be reinforced by conducting patient-centered workshops or simulation programs to enhance the healthcare staff's emotional intelligence. Such initiatives are vital for fostering skills like actively listening to patients' pain and concerns with compassion and care. Additionally, providing a support system for staff to reduce stress and burnout is crucial for delivering personalized care tailored to patient's specific needs.

Limitation

This study has some limitations. The data were collected based on online from patients in private hospitals in Yangon, which might not be represented other healthcare settings, such as clinics and public hospitals. The subjective evaluations could introduce bias into the measurements. The study may not have considered other influential variables like customer satisfaction and perceived value. Lastly, the cross-sectional data collection method may show correlations but cannot prove causality.

Recommendation for future

This study examines SERVQUAL's impact on promoting revisit intentions through trust and brand image. Future research could extend this study to explore areas outside Yangon and other diverse industries such as banking and tourism. Exploring other variables that might influence SERVQUAL and contribute to revisit intentions is recommended, such as loyalty and word of mouth. Furthermore, examining other variables as mediators between SERVQUAL and revisit intentions can provide a comprehensive understanding.

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