

Healthcare Services Marketing: A Systematic Literature Review and Future Research Directions

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to review articles on healthcare services marketing published in the past decade to identify research gaps created in the backdrop of the recent pandemic and propose a future research direction necessitated by the global crisis.

Design/methodology/approach – A literature review is performed based on the search term "healthcare services marketing" applied to the Scopus database, resulting in a final pool of 65 articles. The authors conducted the analysis based on Callahan's 6 W framework (2014).

Findings – In the last decade, healthcare service marketing research emphasised medical tourism and concentrated on service quality. Towards the end of the last decade, the research on online healthcare service marketing saw a rise indicating a trend in the field. Based on this and considering the recent pandemic, the paper proposes possible topics for future research.

Originality/value – The growing importance of global healthcare services is well-understood post-pandemic, and there is a growing interest in this area. A comprehensive review exploring topics researched in healthcare services marketing in the preceding decade before the pandemic will help identify research trends that will need further exploration to handle future global health crises.

Keywords Healthcare services marketing, Healthcare marketing, Literature review

Paper type Literature review

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1. Introduction

Healthcare services marketing is the application of marketing strategies and tactics to the highly complex, enormously expensive and universally used healthcare services that affect economies and daily life (Berry and Bendapudi, 2007; Butt, Iqbal and Zohaib, 2019). The healthcare services market comprises entities (sole traders, organizations and partnerships) that offer human healthcare services and related goods. Hospitals and outpatient treatment centres, physicians and other health providers, ambulatory health and ambulance services are the principal healthcare services. Other types include dental services, home health care, medical and diagnostic laboratory services, and residential nursing care services.

The healthcare services market size is projected to increase from \$6.87 trillion in 2021 to \$7.55 trillion in 2022, and further, it is expected to reach \$10.41 trillion in 2026 (Guirdham, 2022). Market growth is primarily due to companies reorganizing their operations and making up for the losses sustained during the COVID-19 crisis, which resulted in restrictive containment measures that entailed remote working, social distancing, and the closure of commercial activities. The literature on healthcare services is increasing with the rise of global healthcare services market (Butt, Iqbal and Zohaib, 2019; Crié and Chebat, 2013). Research in the healthcare services sector is suggested as a high potential area for making significant contributions (Berry and Bendapudi, 2007). Marketing of healthcare services is identified as a significant domain within the marketing of intangible services (Berry and Bendapudi, 2007; Butt, Iqbal and Zohaib, 2019). Thus, this study aims to systematically review the literature on healthcare services marketing and identify future research directions.

A literature review on healthcare marketing based on citation analysis was carried out by Butt, Iqbal and Zohaib (2019), with 1950 articles published in 30 years from 1987 to 2016; however, it was limited to articles published in 11 journals. In another review on Asian medical marketing by Zarei and Maleki (2019) with 30 articles, the limitation was that it focussed on medical tourism related research. Yaghoubi et al. (2017) studied 24 articles to identify factors influencing healthcare services marketing, but they were limited to research studies from Iran. The extant literature revealed very few systematic reviews on healthcare services marketing and focussed on specific journals, single countries and particular topics under healthcare services. The current study is expected to extend the literature on healthcare services marketing by systematically reviewing articles from 2012 to 2022 with the support of the 6 W framework by Callahan (2014). This study contributes by addressing the below research questions:

1. What do we know about healthcare services marketing from an academic perspective?
2. Where is the research in this area happening?
3. How was the research in this area conducted?
4. Who conducted the research?
5. When was the research conducted?
6. Why should practitioners, academicians and policymakers know more about healthcare services marketing?

The rest of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 describes the methodology used to carry out the literature review, followed by data analysis and discussion in Section 3. The directions for future research are presented in Section 4, and in Section 5, we have reported the study's conclusion, limitations and implications.

2. Methodology

A systematic literature review is used in this study to analyse and identify research gaps (Booth et al., 2012; Butt et al. 2019); Kennedy, 2007). A systematic review of papers can be carried out using different methods. Structured review, Framework-based, Theory-based, Hybrid, Meta-analysis, Bibliometric, Method-based review (Canabal and White, 2008; Paul and Criado, 2020; Gilal et al., 2019; Randhawa et al., 2016) are some of the methods. The framework-based literature review design presents a more acceptable robust structure (Paul and Criado, 2020). Callahan's 6 W Framework of literature review (Callahan, 2014) was used in this study comprising of – What, Where, How, Who, When and Why. The 6 W framework by Callahan (2014) has been used in the studies related to marketing areas, namely: panic buying (Billore and Anisimova, 2021), virtual reality and gamification (Loureiro et al., 2020).

The authors of this paper participated in the research process, which included searching the Scopus database for all publications in scholarly journals. Scopus is a comprehensive abstract and citation database of Elsevier. It covers 25.8+ thousand active peer-reviewed journals, 84+ million records as far back as 1788, and focuses on arts and humanities, social sciences, science, technology, and medicine (ELSEVIER, 2022). The keywords "healthcare

services marketing" were chosen based on the topic's relevance under review. Initially, the keywords search for 'all fields' in Scopus resulted in 56127 documents. Next, the search was refined to "Title, Abstract, Keywords, " resulting in 1969 documents. Further, the search was refined to articles published in the 10-year window from "2012 to 2021" under the subject area "business management and accounting", language "English", and type "journal". Thus, the output of the word string used in Scopus resulted in 123 articles.

Word string:

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TITLE-ABS-KEY(Healthcare Services Marketing) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR,2021) OR LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR,2020) OR LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR,2019) OR LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR,2018) OR LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR,2017) OR LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR,2016) OR LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR,2015) OR LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR,2014) OR LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR,2013) OR LIMIT-TO ( PUBYEAR,2012) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( PUBSTAGE,"final" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE,"ar" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA,"BUSI" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE,"English" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SRCTYPE,"j" ) )
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The following criteria were included to strengthen further the quality of articles selected for review:

1. Fully published research articles of scholarly nature were included in the final pool.
2. Healthcare service marketing covering different dimensions in one country or at least a single dimension across different countries was considered.
3. Studies having robust methodology and research design were taken for the study.

According to these criteria, there were 65 relevant papers that were included in the final data set and were reviewed using Callahan's 6 W framework (2014) in this study. The resultant pool of studies examined healthcare service marketing from different perspectives, including patient perspective, service quality, service innovation, e-healthcare, medical tourism, methodology and healthcare service providers' perspectives.

3. Data analysis and discussion

3.1 What do we know about healthcare services marketing from an academic perspective?

This section gives detail of what has been covered under healthcare service marketing in the last decade, i.e., from 2012 to 2021, in scholarly articles published worldwide. Table 1 gives details of the research objectives, findings, study limitations, future research and the number of citations that the paper has received since its publication. Here's how the papers are distributed based on the fields of research they are in: service quality (16), marketing (23 out of which three were on the online marketing of healthcare services), customer satisfaction (19) and medical tourism (12).

3.2 Where is the research happening?

Figure 1 shows the geographical spread of the research papers used in this study. Most of the papers in the healthcare services marketing area are observed to be published in the USA followed by India and Malaysia. Portugal, Taiwan, Ghana, Iran and Romania seemed to be the next regions with the most research.

Africa is an often-ignored continent for research in healthcare services. According to Figure 1, there has been no research in this continent regarding healthcare services in the past decade. At the same time, the penetration of

digital technology in medical care and the advances made in telemedicine indicate a positive trend towards affordable medical care for all. Hence research in the continent of Africa in terms of the need for healthcare services and current reach will help design global programs for healthcare management in the continent by bodies like the UN. Research in Denmark with respect to healthcare is also not appreciable. Global events like the recent pandemic call for the consolidation of healthcare information and assessment of the level of preparedness at the global level. Hence research in the sub-continent of Denmark also needs to take off. Research in healthcare services in Argentina, the second-largest economy in South America, will also help immensely plan international medical programs. Hence a lacuna in this area needs to be addressed by researchers in Argentina. Research in other parts of the world like Russia can be increased as far as healthcare service marketing is concerned to accelerate the diffusion of new-age technology in Medicare like online consultations and telemedicine.

3.3 How was the research in this area conducted?

The review papers were analysed on the methodology used by respective papers to understand how the research was conducted on healthcare services marketing in the last decade. Two major areas: focus on patients /consumers and focus on process and healthcare management, were identified. It shows how the articles were analyzed using different methodologies. Analysis revealed that qualitative survey and mathematical modelling (34) were the most popular methodology, followed by review (9), case study (8) and conceptual, qualitative articles (7), all clustered together. The least employed was the mixed-method study (5).

From the patient/consumer perspective, our review shows that different methodologies were applied, such as quantitative using survey method, mixed-method, model testing, and qualitative consisting of focus groups and interviews. The healthcare management and process-centric papers were predominantly case study based, followed by in-depth interviews and survey data.

3.4 Who conducted the research?

As can be seen in Table 2, three-author studies formed the largest studies (38%), followed by two-author (25%) and four-author studies (15%). Single author studies contribute to around 14% of the research.

3.5 When was the research conducted?

In this study, "when" refers to the year in which the research was published. In 2019, studies were maximum as far as healthcare services marketing is concerned, with the number of research articles standing at fourteen, followed by eight articles in 2020. The interest in healthcare service marketing is likely to increase as multiple domains like the insurance sector, collaborative research, and learning from the pandemic emerged. However, just before the actual impact of the pandemic was felt in the year 2020, the number of research papers seen in the area was maximum, indicating a latent interest in the field.

3.6 Why should practitioners, academicians and policymakers know more about healthcare services marketing?

Research in the area of healthcare services marketing has been conducted mostly from patients' perspectives assessing various factors related to hospitals, namely: service quality (Alomari, 2021; Chang et al., 2021; Anabila, 2019), customer satisfaction (Chatterjee et al., 2021; Verma et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2013), customer loyalty (Chang et al., 2021), innovation in healthcare systems (Berry, 2019; Tuan, 2012), relationship marketing (Ndubisi, 2012), behaviour and attitudes (Swenson et al., 2018; Sreejesh et al., 2016; Jandavath and Byram, 2016), customer experience quality (Kashif et al., 2016), selection criteria while choosing a hospital (Mosadeghrad, 2014; Coe and Qian, 2013), consumer perceived value (Chahal and Kumari, 2012), and service brand equity (Chahal and Bala, 2012). However, these studies seem to have a limitation of generalization as some are limited to a single hospital, single country or specific geographic location, limited sample size, and convenience sampling method. Thus, more research is needed. Next, some of the studies explored the patients' enabling and inhibiting factors in the context of

medical tourism (Hyder et al., 2019; Na et al., 2017; Prajitmutita et al., 2016). These studies, too, are limited to a single country, local secondary data. Thus, there is a need for more research on healthcare services marketing.

Further, the popular frameworks used in some of these studies include the SERVQUAL tool to assess service quality (Alomari, 2021), the integrated Health Belief Model (HBM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology Model (UTAUT) to understand Gen Y and Gen Z's reaction to Covid-19 pandemic (Sabbir et al., 2021) and Zineldin's 5Qs model in context to e-healthcare services (Verma et al., 2020). The studies are few and dispersed, indicating a lack of a unified and robust theoretical framework related to the area of healthcare services. Therefore, the healthcare services marketing area requires more in-depth knowledge and scholarly research.

Moreover, few studies explored the perspectives of doctors, physicians, and senior managers of the hospitals in the context of healthcare services. However, these studies had limitations due to being qualitative, small sample size, data limited to a single hospital, and lack of quantitative or mixed-method research.

The extant literature on healthcare services marketing is less than the growth and gaining importance of this sector. The available literature has its limitations. Therefore, practitioners, academicians and policymakers need to know more about healthcare services marketing.

4. Directions for future research

The recommendations for future research are divided into seven thematic areas, namely: Patient/customer perspective, service quality, service innovation, e-healthcare, medical tourism, methodology and healthcare service providers' perspective. The proposed topics for future research are summarised in Table 3:

5. Conclusions, implications and limitations

The current study differs from the previous reviews on healthcare services that focus on factors influencing healthcare services marketing in Iran (Yaghoubi et al., 2017), medical tourism (Zarei and Maleki, 2019) and review based on citation analysis with articles published in 11 journals (Iqbal and Zohaib, 2019). This work extends the literature on healthcare services marketing by systematically reviewing articles from 2012 to 2022 with the support of the 6 W framework by Callahan (2014). From an academic perspective: marketing, service quality and customer satisfaction are highly studied areas in healthcare services marketing. The majority of research in this area comes from USA, India and Malaysia. Qualitative surveys and mathematical modelling are popular methodologies. Three-author studies contribute to the largest number of studies, and maximum articles are observed to be published in the year 2019. Research in healthcare services marketing is limited to either a single hospital, single country or specific geographic location, limited sample size, dispersed and scarce, thus highlighting a need for more research.

Healthcare services marketing in the last decade saw many research papers concentrating on service quality, medical tourism, and towards the end of the decade on online promotions of healthcare and a thrust on telemedicine. As the healthcare service providers were maturing and consolidating across the globe, research papers dedicated to new avenues of marketing and new healthcare processes like telemedicine started appearing in academia. The pandemic that shook the world has necessitated the need to research new frontiers in healthcare service marketing. Moving on from the research conducted on online healthcare marketing through the internet, further research on patient engagement and satisfaction in the new healthcare management processes, including telemedicine, needs to be the direction for future research. Also, research on how collaborating approaches to treatment regimens allowed healthcare service providers to manage their patients during the pandemic will be of immense value to the domain.

Consumer Behaviour studies related to healthcare service marketing will always add value to the field. As the 21st-century customers /patients depend more on the digital platform for all their service requirements, more studies related to their perception, expectations, and dependence on online healthcare services will help design programs accordingly.

This study on the literature review of healthcare service marketing during a decade preceding the biggest revival of humankind ever seen in a century from a deadly health-related condition makes it an important milestone that can direct meaningful future research. The findings that some important parts of the world like South America, Denmark, parts of Russia, and the complete African continent have not seen any significant research in healthcare services marketing indicates the need to encourage research in these places consciously. This will contribute to global programs for the dissipation of essentials, both tangible and intangible, during the global healthcare crisis. Also, the advancements made in these countries and their needs in terms of healthcare (especially in Africa) need to be communicated to the Global community.

Most of the research papers in the past decade concentrated on understanding customer satisfaction and service quality both for regional and international patients. The expectations and profile of the patients seem to be changing. However, the basic requirements for appreciating good tangible and intangible service elements at affordable cost seem to remain the same. Also, gen Z and Y customers are comfortable with digital healthcare and expect a robust interactive hospital website that can deliver their medical reports online anytime, anywhere. Hence, healthcare service marketers need to build, maintain, and communicate their digital presence. Towards the end of last decade and early this decade, there were research papers on the online marketing of healthcare services which indicated that patients responded positively towards online healthcare service providers who offered discounts.

Figure 1. Geographical spread of number of studies on Healthcare Services Marketing from 2012 to 2021 (Source: Authors data)

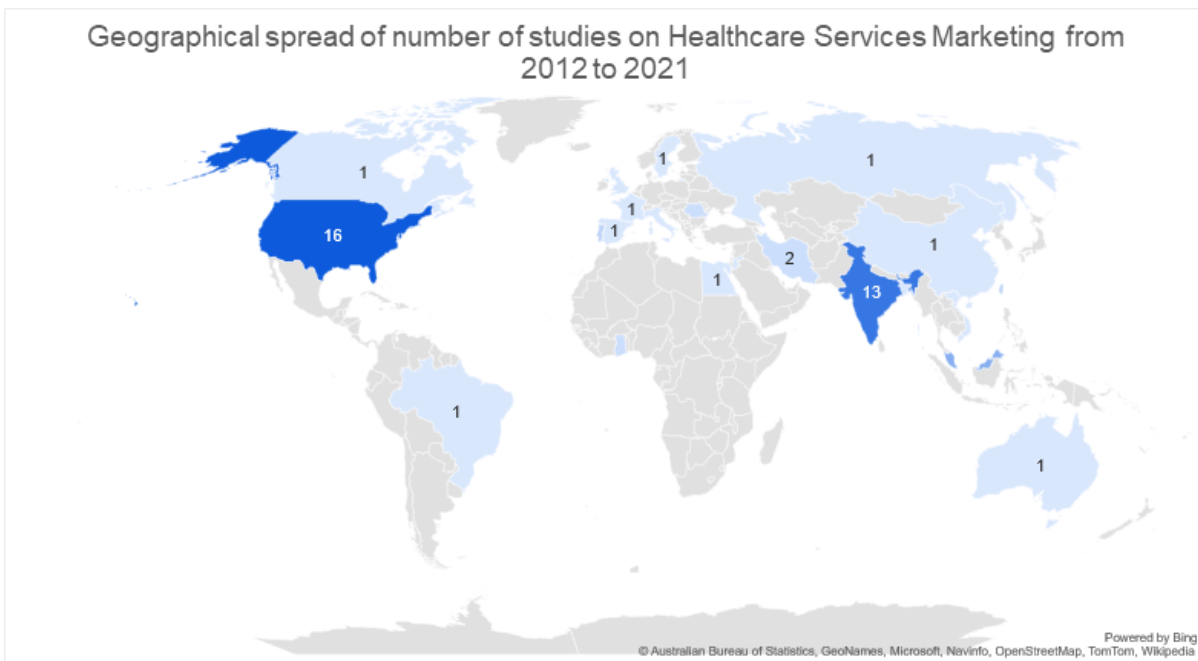


Table 1. Objectives, findings and future research

Authors	Research Objectives	Findings	Study Limitations	Future Research	Citations
Fregidou-Malama and Hyder (2021)	To study the influence of multilevel trust on healthcare service provider's international marketing strategies based on the understanding of the development of multilevel trust.	The study was able to give the academia a multilevel trust model for healthcare services covering the three domains of individuals, the performance of the company and the context of service delivery.	A qualitative method is a limitation. A quantitative or mixed-method study could throw better results.	Some of the dimensions left out in the current study may be studied in future research.	1
Alomari (2021)	To understand the patient's opinion on healthcare provided in 5 private hospitals in the city of Damascus.	The results relating to the service quality in the five private hospitals in Damascus once again validated the SERVQUAL tool. The only identifiable gap was in the tangible component.	Since only the patient's feedback was considered, other stakeholders like hospital staff were left out.	There is a need to conduct the study in other parts of the Syrian country before generalising the result can be done.	13
Joa and Park (2021)	To identify any relation between popular Instagram posts' characteristics and user comments and likes related to plastic surgery.	Self-promotion was identified as the primary reason behind Instagram's post on plastic surgery. Both celebrity patients and surgeons used it, and it was found that surgeons showcasing marketing skills had a better response.	Small sample size and data limited to Instagram posts affected the generalization of results.	Future studies can investigate consumers' risk perception and trust in doctors.	2

Zhang et al. (2021)	To investigate the effect of the personal branding strategy adopted by a medical professional in online healthcare services.	The online healthcare service providing platform and all stakeholders associated with it can gain from the results of the study.	The number of interviews conducted to collect data for qualitative analysis is too small.	The study can be extended to other online healthcare service platforms and conducted with other theories.	4
Chatterjee et al. (2021)	To review the e-commerce service platform through the lens of a consumer using the different communication available like their text comments.	Contributes to generating consumer insights.	The consumer's psychological state is not taken into consideration.	The effect of psychological factors associated with healthcare product purchase and usage on an e-commerce platform can be the direction of future research.	20
Cham et al. (2021)	To understand the importance of branding a hospital to have a brand image in medical tourism.	The study brings home the importance of marketing, mainly social media marketing, for hospitals to succeed in the medical tourism domain.	The study is done only in Malaysia.	It can be explored in other developing countries like India.	39
Sabbir et al. (2021)	To test the health belief model with technology acceptance and usage model by generations Z and Y as a reaction to the pandemic.	The integration of the two models justifies the acceptance of telemedicine amongst the cohort.	The study was limited to specific age-cohorts, periods and metropolitan areas.	Future studies can consider different age groups, urban and rural populations, and geographic locations.	3
Palanisamy et al. (2021)	To correlate and test the selection criteria used by consumers for healthcare service provider selection.	Positively influencing selection criteria were identified.	Conducted only in India.	Can be studied in other emerging markets.	-

Chang et al. (2021)	To understand and validate the theoretical mechanism of relational bonds and competitive advantage.	Excellent service quality leads to customer satisfaction and positive WOM. This can be achieved by customer engagement leading to relational bonds.	A cross-sectional approach and a single hospital data do not allow the results to be generalized.	Multiple hospitals within and outside the country can be studied.	17
Kumar et al. (2020)	To study the effect of cause-related marketing on service innovation.	The relation between customer relationship management and service innovation is identified.	Only the top 10 healthcare firms were considered for the study.	The difference in attitude and perception of different causes supported by an organisation can be studied.	13
Vogus et al. (2020)	To identify the tensions developed on account of adopting the patient-centric approach.	Identifies the tensions, the theory behind the existence of the same and the organisational practices that help to overcome the same.	It is a conceptual paper that needs validation through data analysis.	The self-determination theory can be studied to develop methods to overcome tensions.	13
Mithas et al. (2020)	To review the key trends in healthcare to facilitate providing quality service at affordable price points.	The service management related questions are analyzed based on the trends identified.	It concludes with a proposal for future research on service management that does not provide the same.	Future research questions in marketing, technology and healthcare management were proposed.	4
Verma et al. (2020)	To use Zineldin's 5Qs to identify the determinants of service quality for consumers of e-healthcare services.	Important determinants of service quality were identified as interaction quality, atmosphere and object of a hospital.	E-healthcare is in the nascent stage of adoption, and hence the focus on such a sunrise industry may not lead to compelling results.	A large population, including urban and rural, can be studied to relate its demographic variables to their attitude towards e-healthcare.	6
Rodriguez et al. (2020)	To understand the past and present of sustainable development in	Social marketing initiatives for public sector healthcare were suggested. The	Can include social marketing of private healthcare set up also.	To identify best practices in the government sector to suggest a route for sustainable	5

	healthcare.	heterogeneous nature of sustainable ventures has been seen.		practices.	
Bejtkovský and Copca (2020)	To understand the influence of employee branding and HR marketing in employees selecting a particular healthcare marketing for job prospects.	The age and gender of the respondents influenced an employee's choice in selecting an employer in healthcare services.	The study is limited to one country.	The research sample may be extended, and implications of employer branding on the quality of service provided may be studied.	18
Vigolo et al. (2020)	To understand the influence of signage and emotions on the servicescape of a hospital.	Signage has a stimulating effect on the satisfaction level, and particularly positivity is spread through positive signage.	The size of a sample and the number of emotions studied, i.e., positive and negative, are the only restrictions.	A more comprehensive set of emotions could be analyzed.	9
Ivanova and Glukhova (2020)	To develop a methodological approach to Customer loyalty assessment.	An algorithm for evaluating the consumer loyalty analysis has been proposed.	Limited sample size.	Future research with a large sample size is recommended.	4
Butt et al. (2019)	To identify principal sources of knowledge in healthcare marketing.	The paper will act as a guide for future researchers in the field of healthcare marketing as it provides details of the most popular papers and their citations.	Only 11 journals were covered.	Other journals and more collaborative work can be done.	10
Anderson et al. (2019)	To understand how marketing can position itself to cater to the future healthcare service system. To use the futures studies	Patients wanted to participate in healthcare delivery, thus impacting caregivers' roles. Co-creation of value was also seen as a future	A more diverse sample would have added more insights since only healthcare professionals, academics, and patients were taken into consideration.	More research is recommended with correlation studies, experimentation and longitudinal studies.	36

	guidelines to position healthcare marketing.	component.			
Bhatt et al. (2019)	To develop a methodology to increase the operational performance of a hospital using scale development.	Measurement scales relevant to map IT adoption, care analytics, and operational performance were developed.	A scale was developed at a conceptual stage.	The conceptual framework can be converted into hypotheses and tested empirically.	13
Hyder et al. (2019)	To analyze how healthcare professionals in emerging markets meet the challenges posed by Medical tourism.	Individual hospitals promote medical tourism because of a lack of support from the government.	The study focuses on one country only.	Other emerging markets can be studied.	20
Patel et al. (2019)	To study the Return on investment on international programs run by US hospitals for foreign patients.	The study finds a good return on investment in the mentioned programs.	Not all hospitals in the USA were considered. Because of disclosure guidelines, not all critical information was obtained.	Further research needs to be carried out to analyze the cost at a macro level.	1
Berry (2019)	To understand the importance of innovation in healthcare system.	Innovation is imperative in healthcare system.	Studied only in one country.	The need for innovation in other healthcare settings and other geographical locations can be studied.	51
Anabila (2019)	To understand if service quality can be a differentiator in Ghana's healthcare system with particular reference to private hospitals.	The service quality and patients' loyalty relationship is mediated by patient satisfaction, according to the results of this study.	The study was conducted for private hospitals in one country; only outpatients through convenience sampling were considered.	A broader scope can be considered.	19

Al-Weshah (2019)	To understand the contribution of internal marketing to enhance job engagement in Jordan hospitals.	The study results pointed out that employees' motivation is the most important factor in increasing job engagement.	Only one country approach is used.	An integrative approach, including external marketing, can be considered.	9
Nobre et al. (2019)	To explore how dental clinic practitioners use social media, particularly Facebook, to reach out to customers.	Facebook marketing can be a helpful social media marketing strategy for the dental clinic.	Lack of empirical studies on the literature under study and small sample size are the limitations.	A bigger sample size can be used.	5
Salehzadeh et al. (2019)	To understand the effect of internal marketing mix on the performance of an organisation.	Factors that have a great positive effect on employee performance were identified.	NA	NA	4
Adomah et al. (2018)	To study the scope for practising relationship marketing (RM) in the health sector and understand policy, if any.	The lacuna of policy guidelines to implement relationship marketing in healthcare services was identified.	The number of policymakers, healthcare professionals and academicians covered under the study is small.	A broader scope will give better inputs.	4
Swenson et al. (2018)	To understand attitudes and behaviour of consumers in the healthcare sector.	Data mining techniques can be applied to large datasets leading to precision medicine.	Further accuracy in prediction can be achieved through more rigorous methods.	Data mining techniques can reveal better insights and needs to be used at the patient level.	13
Kumar et al. (2018)	To develop a conceptual framework for providing auxiliary flexibility services to the patients.	The relationship between auxiliary flexibility and patient satisfaction was identified using a framework.	Restricted to two hospitals in the Indian Healthcare sector.	More hospitals can be involved.	17

Islam (2018)	To describe patient-centred choices made in the healthcare sector.	Responsiveness has the highest predictive power of which hospital is selected.	Done only in one city of Bangladesh; hence results cannot be generalized.	Patients' behaviour and attitude toward healthcare service professionals can be studied in detail.	10
Estima et al. (2018)	To understand the project implementation of a tool called Customer-Friendly Service in a hospital in Portugal.	Correlation with tangible and intangible variables was established.	It is limited by being a case study.	Generalization can be achieved through further study.	-
Matthews et al. (2017)	To explore the marketing initiatives undertaken by the hospice organizations.	The results revealed that major hospice providers do not have dedicated marketing staff and budgets and are unaware of branding hospice services.	The study sample was small and limited to specific geographic locations.	Future research is required in this area with a larger sample size and different geographical locations.	6
Na et al. (2017)	To study the impact of risks and benefits as perceived and geographic location on tourist behavioural intentions.	Perceived value was identified as the key indicator of tourists' behavioural intention.	Respondent's personal characteristics were not studied.	In future studies, it is recommended to include personal characteristics.	4
Davis et al. (2017)	To identify factors that must be considered while developing and selling healthcare services to foreign consumers.	The results identified differences based on acculturation level and immigration status.	The study was conducted limited to one group of the immigrant.	Future studies are recommended using alternative immigrant groups.	23
Khodadad and Behboudi (2017)	To evaluate customer satisfaction in healthcare services based on brand trust and	Brand image, rapport with physicians and staff sincerity to patients were identified as	Data is limited to a single hospital.	Including more customers in the study for future research is suggested.	65

	image.	important factors influencing the customer satisfaction.			
Swaminathan and Viswanathan (2016)	To understand the effect of government healthcare insurance projects in the rural areas of Tamil Nadu.	The results revealed that the people who could not afford medical treatment in private hospitals were completely dependent upon this scheme.	Data is limited to rural areas of Tamil Nadu.	Future research is recommended in all other areas and districts.	1
Prajitmutita et al. (2016)	To understand the factors that influence medical tourist's attitude and behaviour.	Medical tourists' behaviour is indirectly affected, and the value they perceive is directly affected by the services provided by the hospital.	Data is limited to a single hospital.	Future research is recommended in different areas and hospitals.	42
Sreejesh et al. (2016)	To explore the link between customers' seen servicescape, congruence of image and attitude seen in the healthcare sector.	Findings revealed that hospital servicescape significantly impacts its image congruence and attitude.	The research data was collected from one hospital chain in an urban setting.	Future research is recommended in different hospitals and both urban and rural areas.	10
Jandavath and Byram (2016)	To understand how patient satisfaction and behavioural intention is affected by dimensions of quality in the context of corporate hospitals in India.	Satisfaction of patient and empathy received directly affects behaviour.	Data is limited to private corporate hospitals.	Future research is recommended with public healthcare services.	77
Kashif et al. (2016)	To test the customer experience quality scale (EXQ) by relating it to	The results revealed that the customers valued peace of mind and moments of truth.	Ethnic differences among the people of Kuala Lumpur were not accounted for in the study.	Qualitative research is recommended for future studies.	77

	loyalty, WOM and customer satisfaction.				
Clinebell and Taylor (2016)	To explore the attitude of employees, both part and full time in the service sector, with respect to the job.	No significant difference in job related attitudes was seen between part-time and full-time workers.	The small sample size is a limitation.	More such studies with large sample sizes are recommended in other sectors.	2
Sodhi and Singh (2016)	To chronicle the evolution of healthcare services in India.	Inadequacies in the Indian healthcare sector are identified through this research.	Conceptual paper.	More research, both qualitative and quantitative, is recommended.	5
Hamed et al. (2016)	To combine and examine the fields of evidence-based design and transformative service research.	Implementing the proposed framework would give hospitals an edge over their competition.	Conceptual paper.	Empirical testing of the proposed framework is recommended for future scope.	6
Mifsud et al. (2015)	To propose a comprehensive framework for an appropriation of service.	The results identified six factors of service appropriation.	Conceptual paper.	Empirical testing of the proposed framework is recommended for future scope.	29
Johnson et al. (2015)	To study influencing factors concerning medical tourism in the USA.	The study's findings revealed seven factors significantly related to outbound medical travellers to the USA.	Secondary data was obtained from data repositories available in the public domain.	More research is recommended in this area to predict high potential markets for medical tourism.	32
Soares and Farhangmehr (2015)	To understand the patients' satisfaction in the emergency department of a hospital.	According to the results amount of waiting time, the behaviour of personnel, and the quality of health care are the essential dimensions of service.	The sample size is very small.	Replication of this study on a larger scale is recommended in future research.	9

Terres et al. (2015)	To examine the role of different levels of the consequence of exchanges in the relationship between client's trust and antecedents in medical service providers.	Results revealed that affective aspects greatly influenced consumer's trust in high consequence exchanges, and cognitive aspects highly impacted consumer trust in a low consequence situation.	Survey data was limited to hospital in-patients.	Future research is recommended in this area using other healthcare settings.	34
Sciulli and Missien (2015)	To develop brand image and service-line positioning strategies conceptual framework for healthcare organizations.	Significant differences were observed in three factors related to service-line initiatives.	Data was limited to one hospital and one service line.	Future research is recommended with data from other hospitals from different geographic locations.	14
Paul and Nair (2014)	To study how value innovation can enhance medical tourism in India.	According to the article, India needs to look beyond developing countries in Asia and Africa in order to position itself as a destination for medical tourism.	The study was limited to a single country.	A similar study can be conducted targeting other countries and markets.	1
Luigi et al. (2014)	To study the demand for healthcare services in the private sector.	The results highlighted that the consumers did not know much about private healthcare services providers. These service providers should enhance their knowledge about their healthcare services through marketing communications.	Survey data were collected from a single city Sibiu.	Future research is recommended to repeat a similar study in other cities in Romania.	11
Kemp et al. (2014)	To examine emotional consumer-brand	Trust, corporate social responsibility and	Data collected was from one geographical region.	Future research is recommended in a similar area in other	179

	connections in health care organizations.	referent influence were identified as the critical variables in developing the affective based consumer-brand relationships.		countries or geographical regions.	
Mosadeghrad (2014)	To identify the factors influencing patients while choosing a hospital.	The respondents identified health insurance programmes and doctors' recommendations as the main reasons for choosing the hospital.	Data is limited to one country.	An additional sample of respondents from other countries is recommended for future research.	120
Fottler et al. (2014)	To study the potential of the USA as a medical tourism market.	Georgia, New York and Pennsylvania consumers were seen to be contributing to a significant chunk of patient load, While the United Kingdom, Canada and Brazil contributed to a small chunk.	Detailed data of the patients were not made available due to the privacy policies.	Further research is recommended to understand the real potential of the USA as a medical tourism market.	13
Lin et al. (2013)	To investigate foreign customers' perceptions about the local services.	The results identified 286 significant incidents under four main categories. Further, it also revealed that Western customers had a more negative perception of local services than Asian customers.	Data collected were for the five most used services, and the respondents, who were primarily students, may not have experienced some of these services in their daily lives.	More research work is recommended in this area in theory development and quantitative analysis.	18

Rajagopal et al. (2013)	In the context of medical tourism, this study investigates the factors which encourage and inhibit patients.	The results revealed various inhibiting factors of emotional discomfort in medical tourism services. Integrated social resources were identified as a factor that positively projected medical tourism services.	The sample size was minimal.	Future studies should consider more patents in the survey and more in-depth surveys.	11
Tsai (2013)	To study the relationship between the customer, market, and competitor orientation with technical and organizational innovation.	The results indicated that organizational innovation was positively influenced by market orientation, whereas technical innovation was positively influenced by customer orientation and competitor orientation.	Data were collected from high-level hospital managers, and the data collection rate was low.	Frontline health workers should be considered in future research in this area.	23
Coe and Qian (2013)	To examine how patients from a consumer behaviour perspective differ in their dentist selection process	It was concluded that the patients depending on the level of treatment, had significant differences in their characteristics and why and how they selected their dentist.	The study sample was new patients from dental school.	Future studies are recommended on how the dentist selection process varies by practice type.	4
Yeoh et al. (2013)	To conduct a demographic study of the medical tourists visiting Malaysia for treatment purposes.	Several demographic factors came out of the study, and there was a clear indication of an inflow of repeat patients from Indonesia.	Data is limited to one country.	An additional sample of respondents from other countries is recommended for future research.	238

Huang et al. (2012)	The various interactive e-health tools on hospitals' websites were evaluated from a patient's perspective	Access to lab results and the medical records on the website platform was a need identified by patients while evaluating the e-health tools on the hospital website.	Hospitals' efforts to implement online e-health have been way behind the patient/user's expectations.	The reasons for failure to meet patients' expectations in the said context can be studied.	45
Musa et al. (2012)	To understand the behaviour of medical tourists in Malaysia with respect to their travel.	Five main motivation factors were identified, along with some vital healthcare services.	Small sample size.	A similar study with large sample size is recommended.	137
Chahal and Kumari (2012)	To develop Consumer Perceived Value (CPV) scale.	The study identified a CPV scale with six dimensions consisting of 27 items.	The study sample was limited to indoor patients.	Future research is suggested on CPV with other factors of service marketing concepts.	93
Ndubisi (2012)	To understand the effect of mindfulness marketing on relationship quality in healthcare services.	Three factors influencing the context were identified.	The study sample was limited to the customers of small healthcare organisations in Malaysia.	Further research, including multiple countries and longitudinal studies, is recommended to advance the knowledge in healthcare services, quality and mindfulness.	38
Tuan (2012)	To analyse the business model's innovativeness in an eye hospital in Vietnam.	Six elements were identified that played an essential role in the hospital's high performance.	Small sample size.	Further research by undertaking quantitative analysis is suggested.	22
Chahal and Bala (2012)	In context to the healthcare service literature, the study examines the significant effect of service quality perception, brand loyalty, and brand image on	The results revealed that brand image indirectly affected brand equity, quality of service and brand loyalty had a strong positive influence on the brand	The study is carried out only in Jammu city in India.	Future research is suggested by including other antecedents and other health service environments.	161

	the brand equity of service.	equity of service.			
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Table 2. Articles as per the number of authors

Number of Authors	Articles	Articles %
1	9	14
2	16	25
3	25	38
4	10	15
5	3	5
6	1	2
7	1	2
Total	65	100

Table 3. Future research recommendations

Thematic area	Proposed topics for future research
1	<p><i>Patient / customer perspective:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factors considered by patients while choosing a healthcare service provider Effect of customer engagement on relational bonds Relationship marketing in healthcare Relationship between auxiliary services and patient satisfaction Patient centered choices in healthcare service Explore Customer Friendly Service tools To study the impact of brand image and trust on healthcare services customers Effect of government healthcare services in rural and urban areas Customers' seen servicescape in different chain of hospitals Patient satisfaction in the emergency department of the hospital Awareness and usage of healthcare service providers To study factors influencing affective based consumer brand relationships Factors influencing brand equity of healthcare service providers Co-creation of healthcare services Marketing of Hospice services - Telemedicine / tele healthcare services Study on tensions generated because of patient centric approach and solutions for the same Factors identified as important by patients in judging the quality of hospital emergency care
2	<p><i>Service quality:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To study service quality of private and government hospitals in different geographies To study implications of hospitals branding on quality of service provided Effect of service quality on patient's loyalty and satisfaction Impact of service quality on patient satisfaction and behavioral intention in public healthcare

services

Healthcare service quality and mindfulness marketing

The relationship between hospital servicescape on patients perceived service quality in a multicity or multi-country setting

3 ***Service innovation:***

Customer relationship management and service innovation

Innovation in healthcare services

Factors influencing service-line initiatives in context to healthcare services

Role and types of innovation in healthcare services organisations

Effect of business model's innovativeness on services providers high performance

4 ***E-healthcare:***

Customers attitude towards e-healthcare services

E-health services and patients' expectations

Effect of psychological factors related to purchase of healthcare services on e-commerce platform

Consumer attitude and behaviour towards online healthcare products and services

Service quality in e-healthcare

5 ***Medical tourism***

Importance of brand image of hospital, marketing and particularly social media marketing for hospitals in context to medical tourism

Medical tourism: Opportunities and challenges and how to overcome those challenges

Personal characteristics of medical tourists

Factors considered while planning and developing healthcare services to immigrant customers

Medical tourists' attitude and behavior in context to healthcare services

Factors influencing medical tourists to choose the country for healthcare services

Medical tourism - role of value innovation

Opportunities and challenges of medical tourism market in potential geographies

Medical tourism: encouraging and inhibiting factors

Demographic study of medical tourists

Factors motivating medical tourism in different countries

Foreign customers perception about local healthcare services

Identifying potential markets for medical tourism based on factors affecting it.

6 ***Methodology***

Empirical study on personal branding strategy adopted by medical professionals on online healthcare services platforms to gain patients

Quantitative studies to validate the scales developed namely: IT adoption, operational performance and care analytics

Empirical studies on usage of social media marketing by healthcare professionals to increase patients

Usage of datamining techniques to understand attitude and behavior of patients in healthcare sector

Empirical research on service appropriation

Quantitative research on multilevel trust model in healthcare services

Empirical testing of Customer Perceived Value (CPV) scale

Qualitative research on customer experience quality
Both Qualitative and quantitative researches in healthcare services

- 7 ***Healthcare service providers' perspective***
Internal marketing in healthcare organisations
Capability to expand resources to meet future contingencies
Digital integration with other medical establishments
Hybrid model of working
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