



# RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH PUBLIC RELATIONS AND CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT MECHANISM IN THE SUPER SPECIALTY PRIVATE HOSPITALS OF GUWAHATI

Rituparna Baruah<sup>1</sup>, Prof. Dr. Monoj Kumar Chowdhury<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Gauhati University, Assistant Professor, Royal Global University

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Dept. of Business Administration, Gauhati University

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## ABSTRACT

*Relations are vital for human beings; be it a personal relation or relation at professional level. Relationships help us to grow and foster. Relationships are important needs of individuals as well as of businesses. In the age of global competition, relationship building has become an important aspect of business houses. Businesses that can form a relation with its customer can go a long way in the path of success. With increase in the level of competition, it has become essential for business houses to build customer relationships based on trust and confidence.*

*It is not possible to build a relationship with a customer overnight. It requires detailed understanding of the needs and expectations of the customers. Thus, the role of Public Relations (PR) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is of vital importance in the process of relationship building.*

*The importance of relationship building in service marketing cannot be overemphasized. Services, being intangible, are difficult to sell. The sale of service largely depends on the degree of trust the buyer has on the service provider. Hence, it is essential for the seller to listen and understand the needs of the customer and build a strong and long lasting relationship with him.*

*This paper highlights on the importance of relationship building in hospitals, with special focus on the status of Public Relation and Customer Relationship Management in the Super specialty private hospitals of Guwahati*

**KEYWORDS:** Relationship building, Public Relation (PR), Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

## I. INTRODUCTION

### RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Relations are an integral part of human life. Human existence stands on the foundation of different relationships. Relationship building is of equally important for a business to survive in a society. Businesses cannot stand alone without forming a strong relationship with the different stakeholders. The concept of “Relationship Marketing” has evolved years ago to help the businesses to enter into dynamic relations with the stakeholders. Business entities tries to build up long term relationships with their stakeholders; relationships based on mutual trust, commitments, understanding, empathy.

Relationship building is a continuous process and is dynamic in nature. Its impact can be felt in

various aspect of the business. Relationship building has a co-relation with Risk management. A strong relationship helps the business to correctly assess the risk and thereby help in risk management. Risk is always considered as a component associated with the financial factor. However, it is often overlooked that a business inherits risk if its relationship fall out with its customers. Thus, it indicates that managing a relationship and understanding the risk associated with it can bring stability and success to the business.

Relationship building requires a broad knowledge base for the business. A database of information of existing and potential customers and stakeholders help business to build a strong relationship. This indicates the requirement of a proper CRM model in every business.



For every business organization, the central idea behind relationship building is maximizing profit and wealth generation.

## RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND HOSPITALS

In this competitive world, Businesses have to strive hard to maintain their market share and make their presence feel. The most appropriate way of doing it is by establishing relationships with the stakeholders. With the emerging necessity of Relationship building, businesses have focused on implementing CRM policies, apart from active PR machinery.

As regard to healthcare and hospitals, the importance of relationship building cannot be overemphasized. Hospitals being a service industry component need to focus well on maintaining a continuous relationship with its customer. Since it is understandable that services are more difficult to sell because of its intangibility factor. The USP of a hospital needs to be its DOCTOR PATIENT relationship. The survival and profitability of a hospital largely depend on the Doctor Patients Relationship; doctors being the referral point for the patients, the Nurse-Patient Relationship followed by the behavior and response of the front desk personnel and various other staff members. Relationship building is not a onetime process for a hospital. A hospital needs to have the database of its customers to maintain the relationship and also to garner potential

Hospitals employ a professional PR staff and undertake various social welfare activities to promote their business and maintain a long term relationship with their customers. Many hospitals have implemented CRM models and are successfully running them.

The healthcare sector has grown tremendously in the recent years. The private players have entered the market and have involved in cut throat competition. In order to survive and expand the business, the business firms need to understand the customer psychology and accordingly design the goods and services. However, it is seen that the aim of customer satisfaction has somewhere been overshadowed by the motive of earning profit. It is often observe that the healthcare customers are dissatisfied with the service quality of the private hospitals. There is a lack of communication between the hospital management and the customers, which sometimes result in unfriendly activities like harming hospital properties, assaulting doctors and medical staff, negative word of mouth and so on. These problems can be addressed by adopting a planned Customer Relationship Management policy. Today, the business runs on the philosophy that The Customers are

the Kings. So the satisfaction of customer is of utmost importance for the growth and sustainability of the business. Customer Relationship Management can lead to customer loyalty and thus will prevent customers from going to the competitors. However, in the absence of proper CRM policies, the sustainability of business will be doubtful.

## II. OBJECTIVE

The objectives of the study are:

- 1) To understand the concept of relationship building and its importance for a hospital.
- 2) To understand the current status of the Super Specialty Private hospitals of Guwahati city in terms of Public Relations and Customer Relationship Management
- 3) To suggest measures to the hospitals on successful implementation of Public Relations (PR) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) activities.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Public Relations*

Tengilimoglu, Dilaver & Yeşiltaş, Mehmet & Kisa, Adnan & Dziegielewski, Sophia. (2007). The Role of Public Relations Activities in Hospital Choice. *Health marketing quarterly*. 24. 19-31. 10.1080/07359680802118993. Stated that the public relation activities are an important factor in determining the hospital choice by a consumer. The study reveals that the closeness of a hospital to the patients home and successful health and physician personnel are the major determinants in hospital choice. It states that rather than spending time and efforts on designing hospital logo and slogans, the hospitals should use PR activities to create a positive image of the hospital.

Bin Saeed KS. In Factors affecting patient's choice of hospitals. *Ann Saudi Med*. 1998;18(5):420-4. doi: 10.5144/0256-4947.1998.420. PMID: 17344716. "Factors Affecting patient's choice of hospital" stated five factors that determine patient's choice of hospital. They are easy administrative procedure, cost of treatment, hospital image, quality of services, health insurance coverage.

Kamra et al. in their study "Factors Affecting Hospital Choice Decisions: an exploratory study of healthcare consumers in Northern India" stated that there are ten major factors that affect the patient's decision of hospital choice. They are – basic amenities provided by the hospital, hospital's reputation and quality, infrastructure and building, the ease and affordability, personal experiences, responsiveness of services, recommendations and suggestions, privacy



and information sharing, clinical support and range of services provided.

Ghosh, Manimay. (2015). An empirical study on hospital selection in India. *International Journal of Health Care Quality Assurance*. 28. 27-39. 10.1108/IJHCQA-06-2013-0073. stated that the major factors determining the hospital selection by a patient are quality of treatment, cost, referral, transport convenience, safety.

Gohil DP, Gohil K. Public relations in hospital administration and planning. *Int J Health Sci Res*. 2016; 6(2):384-387. Stated that public relations activities are an important factor in determining patient's hospital choice. The behavior and attitude of hospital personnel act as the primary variable in the hospital choice decision.

David Jayasheelan, B in Public Relations in Hospitals <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/56345> stated that Communication is the life blood of a public relations department. A Public Relation Manager should focus in the following five areas: Employee Relations, Customer Relations, Community Relations, Government Relations, Press Relations.

Hilmi H, Emenyeonu Ogadimma in *The Role of Public Relations Department in Health Information Dissemination In Hospitals: Toward a Successful Health Care Delivery System in Oman* describes that the Public Relations system in Oman is not at par with the international standard. The PRDs are not professionally equipped. They act as Front Desk personnel in the hospitals. They have been unable to utilize the ICT tools for health information dissemination.

BÜYÜKDOĞAN Birol, GEDĐK Hasan, DERELĐ Yüksel, TANYEL Ömer in *THE IMPACT OF SERVICE QUALITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS ON PATIENT SATISFACTION IN HOSPITALS*, *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences* ISSN:1304-0278 Winter-2017 Volume:16 Issue:60 stated that Patient's satisfaction impacts Recommending a hospital. Patient's satisfaction is associated with employee satisfaction. Hence, it is important for the public relations department to increase the morale and motivation of the employees of the hospitals. Further, they should work on educating the healthcare personnel in the field of patient's psychology, body language, effective communication and empathy in order to build a effective network with the patients.

SÜTÇÜ Cem S., ERDAL Cengiz in *A RESEARCH ON EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PRACTICES OF HOSPITALS' PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENTS IN TURKEY 2014/14* 63-106 stated that though the respondents feel the

necessity of a PR department in the hospitals, most of them are not aware of whether the hospitals where they are getting treated have a PR department or not. The respondents reveal that the hospital PR department has been unable to utilize the social media opportunities efficiently.

KEZAABU SYLVIA (2012-M191-10015) *The Need for Public Relations Officers/Departments in Hospitals: A Case Study of Hospitals in Kampala Capital City Authority* reveals that there were no PROs and PR Departments in most of the hospitals. Though there were people to handle public relation activities in most of the hospitals. The job description of public relation officers across the hospitals was not uniform. Some of the factors associated with poor functionality of PROs were lack of resources, delay in decision making, inadequacy of top management, lack of PRO post in government hospital structure.

Mohammadreza Amiresmaili, Shole Rostami, Parvaneh Isfahani in *Measuring level of public relations in hospitals*, The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between patient's knowledge about their right and their satisfaction. Therefore, the hospitals should inform the patient's about their rights and disseminate the information clearly.

#### **CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT**

Gandhi Priyanka, Tandon Neelam in *Impact of CRM on Hospitals: A Study conducted to gain view of the Practitioners working in various Private and Govt. Hospitals in Delhi (2018 IJRAR November 2018, Volume 5, Issue 4 www.ijrar.org (E-ISSN 2348-1269, P-ISSN 2349-5138)* stated that the CRM implementation has proved beneficial to the hospitals under study. CRM enables right allocation of doctor to the right patients, reduces the patients pain of running from counter to counter, provides better management for patient handling.

Bilkis, A., Miah, K., Sultana, A., Parvin, M. S., Mitra, C., & Saha, A. (2020). Customer relationship management in a tertiary level hospital. *Asian Journal of Medical and Biological Research*, 6(3), 599-607. <https://doi.org/10.3329/ajmbr.v6i3.49814> in their study revealed that the majority of the respondents of the OPD of Khulna Medical College were not aware of CRM practices and its objectives. The study suggested regarding the implementation of CRM practices to improve healthcare facilities in the hospital.

Raisinghani S Mahesh, Untama Antonio Jose, Weiershaus Heidi in *CRM Systems in German Hospitals: Illustrations and Trends* <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/crm-systems-german-hospitals/6382> in the study revealed that the hospitals under study do not have an integrated CRM strategy.



The patient data are stored by separate organizational function. Technological barriers challenges the data sharing and data security of the hospitals.

Shahid Naveen 2019, in Implementation of an Integrated CRM System in Hospitals in Pakistan <https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/264882/Implementation> stated that the CRM system prevalent in the hospitals is termed as Health Management Information System (HMIS). However, the system is underdeveloped due to various obstacles such as lack of resources, high illiteracy rates, lack of awareness among high officials, no motivation to adopt new technologies, culture of non-cooperation among departments,

Choi, Wona & Park, Jiyun & Kim, Kwangjum & Choi, Inyoung. (2012). Successful use of customer relationship management system in hospital healthcare centers. *Journal of the Korean Medical Association*. 55. 748. 10.5124/jkma.2012.55.8.748. in the study proposes social CRM or CRM 2.0 model for healthcare organisations to provide better services to its customers.

Chahal, Hardeep. (2010). Two component customer relationship management model for healthcare services. *Managing Service Quality*. 20. 343-365. 10.1108/09604521011057487. In the paper tried to conceptualize and operationalized Operating CRM (OCRM) and Analytical CRM(ACRM). The four dimensions considered for ACRM were satisfaction, patronization, recommendation and organizational performance. The characteristics of physicians, nurses and support staff such as caring attitude, quick response to queries, helpfulness, effective treatment, friendliness

## V. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

### Public relations and its role in Relationship building of a hospital:

Public relation is defined as “the management of communication between an organization and its publics.”{Grunig and Hunt (1984), p. 4.}In 1982, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) adopted the following definition of public relations that helps identify its purpose: “Public relations help an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other.” Public Relations Society of America (2009b)\* Public Relation is a goal oriented process that helps both professional and non-professional organizations to establish a mutual relationship with the surrounding environment.

Public relation plays a significant role in establishing a relationship between an organization and its stakeholders.

are significant for ORCM and also impact the four dimensions of ACRM.

Gbadeyan, R. A. Customer Relationship Management and Hospital Service Quality in Nigeria (Pp. 168-184) -The study revealed that Personalisation, interactive management and relationship with patients are the major components of a CRM program. CRM implementation requires support from top level management. The Doctors and nurses are to be trained for successful implementation of CRM program.

## IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Research design: The study is descriptive and exploratory in nature.
- Population: The population of the study comprises the six super specialty hospitals of the city.
- Research Approach: The research is a combination of qualitative approach and literature study.
- Data collection: The source of data is both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected through personal interview method. Schedule was used to question the people concern. The data was collected from the hospital authorities comprising of Directors, PR managers. The schedule comprised of both open ended and closed ended questions. The hospital authority has been interviewed personally by the researcher. The secondary sources vary from internet, journals, articles and books

There are different models of Public Relations that are implemented by the organization to grow their business and establish relationship.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) has developed four models of public relations.( “*Four Models of PR*” by Michael Shiflet and Jasmine Roberts ) They are as under:

1. Press Agent or Publicity: it is a one way communication model. It uses persuasion, half-truth and manipulation to influence its target audience
2. Public Information Model: it is a one way communication model. Here, the Public Relation officer acts as an in-house journalist. The main tools use is press release
3. Two Way Asymmetrical model: This is a two way communication model. It is also referred to as Scientific Persuasion. Under this model, audience feedback and researches are conducted.
4. Two Way Symmetrical model: This is a two way communication model. This model seeks to solve conflicts and promote mutual trust and





benefit. Under this model, audience feedback and researches are conducted. They promote open and honest communication

#### **Public Relation's role in a hospital:**

Public Relation is needed in all types of organization to build a relationship with the key public. Public relation is a new concept in the hospitals. The need for Public Relations was felt by the hospitals because of the growing competitions and the problems associated with it.

A hospital have to deal with various public criticisms, growing government interference, increasing awareness among consumers, problems of delivering good quality service at reasonable rates, media pressure and so on. Public forms quick opinions on the basis of available information from all sources. A negative public opinion can hamper the business of a hospital Thus, it calls for the need of an Expertise Public Relation team to handle the public opinion.

The major responsibility of the Public Relation Department in a hospital is to build the brand and maintain its goodwill. The Public Relation Department is responsible for the advertising, marketing, promoting and communicating the brand name of the hospital. Thus, it necessitates that the Public Relation Team is fully equipped with the information regarding the hospital and also regarding the Government regulations and policies.

Public Relation components in a hospital can be summarized as under:

- Providing advices to management regarding policies and strategy formation.
- Conducting regular research to analyze public behavior.
- Maintaining a cordial relation with other hospital and working as a referral point
- Building investor confidence.
- Working with the mass media, exploring the different media platforms.
- Disseminating planned and well-structured message to the interest group.
- Maintaining a healthy relation within the organization, resolving conflicts of members.
- Plan and design activities for the community at large, conducting healthcare camps etc.
- Following government regulations and protocols
- Identifying and responding to issues of public concern that affect the hospital.

#### **Customer Relationship Management in Relationship Building of Hospitals:**

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is “ a revolving process during which companies interact with their customers, there by generating ,aggregating , and analyzing customer data, and employing the results for service and marketing activities”(Seybold,2001;Strauß and Schoder,2002)

Goldenberg has stated that CRM is a multitasking technology that can enable firms to maximize their relationships with their customers and the profits of the firm. (8 IJRAR November 2018, Volume 5, Issue 4 www.ijrar.org (E-ISSN 2348-1269, P- ISSN 2349-5138)

“Customer Relationship Management is a comprehensive strategy and process of acquiring , retaining and partnering with selective customers to create superior value for the company and the customer” (Conceptual Framework of Customer Relationship Management, Atul Parvatiyar, Jagadish n Sheth)

The above definitions of CRM can be summarized as CRM is a continuous process that aims at customer acquisition and retention and thereby helps an organization to maximize its profit.

#### **Role of CRM in Hospitals**

The need of CRM in increasing in every field and healthcare is not any exception. The healthcare service providers are striving hard to target their customers accurately and provide with specialized care. The role of CRM is significant in healthcare.

- 1) CRM provides detailed and precise patients information. This helps the hospitals to target their audience better.
- 2) The records of the patients can be digitalized through CRM. This helps the hospitals in keeping the patient's data safe for required numbers of years .( “The Medical Council of India guidelines also insist on preserving the inpatient records in a standard proforma for 3 years from the commencement of treatment”, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2779965/>, retrived on 21/6/21)
- 3) CRM helps in reduction of human errors, thereby increasing efficiency. (<https://cynoteck.com/blog-post/healthcare-and-the-role-of-crm/>, retrieved on 21/6/21)
- 4) According to Narsimha Rao and Siva Prasad as cited in CHAPTER TWO – CUSTOMERRELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND HEALTHCARE SERVICES. LITERATURE REVIEW, (<http://lib.unipune.ac.in:8080/xmlui/bitstream/ha>



ndle/123456789/7976/09\_chapter2.pdf?sequence=9&isAllowed=y) CRM offers various services in the healthcare sector such as strategic

planning, relationship with physician, database construction, communication and consulting

## VI. DATA ANALYSIS

**Table 1: Showing the status of PR and CRM in the Super Specialty Hospitals in Guwahati**

HOSPITALS	PR Department	PR activities handled by	CRM Department	Feedback Forms	Follow-up with patients	Grievance Handling by	Internet presence
A	No	Marketing management team	No	Yes, only for IN-Patients	No	Director	Yes, website , facebook page
B	No	Marketing manager	No	Yes, only for IN-Patients	No	Management	yes
C	No	Doctor	No	Yes, only for IN-Patients	NO	Management	no
D	Yes	PR manager	Yes	Yes, only for IN-Patients	No	Grievance Handling Committee	Yes, website, facebook page,
E	No	PR manager	No	Yes, only for IN-Patients	Yes	Management	yes
F	No	Doctor	No	Yes, only for IN-Patients	No	Management	No website
G	YES	PR manager	No	Yes, In-patients	No	Management	Yes, website, facebook page
H	YES	PR manager	no	Yes, In-patients	no	Management	Yes, website, facebook, instagram page

**Table 2: Showing the status of hospitals regarding training and equipping its personnels**

HOSPITALS	TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR PERSONNELS	SEMINARS FOR DOCTORS & NURSES	IN HOUSE JOURNALS	SPECIAL EVENTS
A	YES	YES	NO	YES
B	YES	YES	NO	NO
C	YES,DURING JOINING	NO	NO	NO
D	YES	YES	NO	NO
E	YES	YES	NO	YES
F	YES	NO	NO	YES
G	Yes	No	no	No
H	Yes	yes	No	Yes

(NOTE: The hospitals were reluctant to disclose their name in publication. Hence , the hospitals have been coded alphabetically)



## VII. GENERAL FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

1. The Super Specialty Hospitals of Guwahati City is not equipped with proper Public Relations Department.
2. The Public Relation activities are handled mostly by people who are not specially trained in the field of public relations.
3. The concept of Customer Relationship Management is almost alien to the hospitals concern.
4. Due to lack of knowledge, skilled employees, the hospitals are not being able to tap the opportunities that can be generated from implementation of Public Relations and Customer Relationship Management.
5. The feedback system is not satisfactory as it concerns only the in- patient of the hospitals. The hospitals do not record the feedback of the OPD patients.
6. The Grievance Redressal mechanism is also not uniform, across the hospitals.
7. The major drawback of the hospitals in the city is that they have no follow up procedures for their patients.
8. Although majority of the hospitals have an internet presence in terms of website, Facebook account or Instagram pages, the frequency of social media activities by the hospitals are very poor.
9. The hospitals do not conduct regular seminars for their doctors.
10. They have no in house journals.

## VIII. SUGGESTIONS

- 1) The hospitals can strengthen its public relation activities by engaging professionally equipped personnel in the PR Department.
- 2) With the advent of internet, the hospitals should try to mark its presence in the social media by posting and sharing various events and news related to the hospitals on a frequent basis
- 3) Relationship building process can be improved when the hospitals focuses on keeping follow up with their patients, improving the behavior of all the working staff of the hospital( starting from doctors, nurses, front desk personnel, cleaners, canteen staff, pharmacy staff etc).
- 4) Regular training and motivation program should be arranged to amplify the behavior of the employees.
- 5) For conducting follow-ups, a hospital needs proper software to store customer data and

records, professionals to handle those data, proper use of ICT

- 6) These requirements call for the introduction of a CRM module for the hospitals. There are various software for CRM in healthcare such as HC1 Healthcare CRM, Salesforce Health Cloud, Veriomed, Influence Health, Sequence Health, Leadsquared, Betosys, PatientPop. (<https://whatfix.com/blog/10-healthcare-crm-softwares-deliver-smarter-customer-experience/>, retrieved on 20/06/2021)
- 7) Hospitals should introduce their in house journals. This will provide scope for research within the organization.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Public Relations and Customer Relationship Management are vital tools for relationship building of an organization. The role played by PR and CRM in healthcare cannot be overemphasized. With the rapid increase in competition, it has become difficult for the hospitals to maintain their market share. In order to attract and retain customers, adoption of CRM is inevitable. The study revealed that the Super Speciality private hospitals of Guwahati do not have a well define Public Relation System and are unknown to the concept of CRM. With the advent of technology, the hospitals have a scope to work upon the up gradation of PR and introduction of CRM. The hospitals shall be largely benefitted if they can successfully implement a CRM strategy.

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