

The Influence of The Early Warning Health Strategies and Decisions at Intensive Care Unit

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ABSTRACT

In the era of BPJS Kesehatan (national health insurance), business competition among hospitals is intensifying, with hospitals striving to offer unique and excellent services while upholding the principles of healthcare ethics. Hospitals can optimize the existing infrastructure and tools to outperform their competitors. This study aims to determine the effect of the 7P marketing mix strategy (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence) on patient loyalty. This study is a quantitative analytic study with a cross-sectional design conducted at Royal Prima Medan Hospital (RPMH). This study enrolled 398 outpatients who completed valid and reliable questionnaires using an online application. Data were analyzed using binomial logistic regression tests to determine the factors most influencing patient loyalty. The Prima Indonesia University Health Research Ethics Committee has ethically cleared this study. This study found that over 70% of respondents had a good perspective on all aspects of the health decision for early warning, and RPMH successfully activated 73.12% of decisions. Bivariate analysis showed that all aspects of the 7P marketing mix were associated with patient loyalty ($p < 0.001$). The study concluded that the 7P marketing mix strategy has a significant and positive influence on patient loyalty, with the most influential factor being people or human resources ($p < 0.001$; OR: 33.628). It is highly recommended that hospitals emphasize training in their human resources to nurture patient loyalty to the hospital.



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INTRODUCTION

In the era of national health insurance, there has been a significant increase in the number of hospitals, especially in major cities, which has led to increased competition among hospitals (Budiman & Achmadi, 2023). Data from the 2020 Indonesian Health Profile shows that in 2020 there were 2,985 hospitals throughout Indonesia consisting of 2,449 general hospitals (RSU) and 536 specialized hospitals (RSK), consistently increasing from 2,877 hospitals (2,344 general hospitals and 533 specialized hospitals) in 2019, 2,813 hospitals (2,269 general hospitals and 544 specialized hospitals) in 2018, 2,776 hospitals (2,198 general hospitals and 578 specialized hospitals) in 2017, and 2,601 hospitals (2,045 general hospitals and 556 specialized hospitals) in 2016. Fundamentally, marketing is a key component of business practice that involves planning, promoting, pricing, and delivering customer-oriented services or products (Ravangard et al., 2020). Despite their social nature, as attributed to Act No. 17 of 2023 on Health (Government of Republic Indonesia, 2023), hospitals must generate revenue to sustain their operations and expand their service capacity.

Hospitals are continually improving their utilization rates to achieve this goal by leveraging their understanding of consumer and patient behavior (Sary et al., 2023). While the hospital sector differs from other sectors, no specific marketing strategy applies exclusively to it. Traditionally, one of the most common marketing strategies is the 4P marketing mix of product, price, place, and promotion (Berkowitz, 2022; Budiman & Achmadi, 2023). In addition to the 4P marketing

strategy mix, there are also 5P and 7P mixes, where the 5P mix consists of the 4P mix plus the fifth P component, namely people, while the 7P mix is a 5P mix plus process components and physical evidence (Edithia et al., 2020; Kotler et al., 2024). Various studies have found that these marketing mix components, individually or in groups, influence a patient's decision to choose or return to a hospital (Edithia et al., 2020; Ravangard et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the healthcare industry and hospitals must take comprehensive action to mitigate any patient risk early. The inconsistency in service and cost in the healthcare industry, including hospitals, has led to efforts to mitigate modifiable factors through marketing. In this research, the standard 4P analysis, encompassing product, price, place, and promotion decisions, was applied to determine the Influence of early warning health strategies and decisions in the intensive care unit. The findings are crucial for strengthening medical action in various hospital environments and can be used to support the health mitigation study.

METHOD

This study employs an analytical approach with a cross-sectional design. This study was conducted in the Royal Prima Hospital, Medan outpatient department, in May 2024. The population in this study consisted of all patients from the outpatient department during the data collection process, with an unknown size. The sample size in this study was calculated using the Lemeshow formula for an infinite-size population, which yields a minimal sample size of 384. The sample was chosen using an accidental sampling technique. Data in this study was collected using a valid and reliable questionnaire. Data in this study was analyzed using a binomial logistic regression test.

The Health Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Prima Indonesia deemed this study and its instruments ethically feasible. The ethical clearance number 018/KEPK/UNPRI/VIII/2024. Procedurally, participants were asked about their perception of each aspect of Royal Prima Hospital's early warning health and decision-making process, which included the 7Ps (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence). Generally, more than 70% of patients perceived Royal Prima Hospital as having excellent products, prices, places, promotions, people, processes, and physical evidence. Royal Prima Hospital, one of Medan's largest private hospitals, offers a comprehensive range of care, from general practice to specialist and subspecialist services. They also provide unique care, such as stem cell therapy and interventional radiology, which is delivered by well-respected professionals. Unlike some large private hospitals in Medan, which do not accept BPJS Kesehatan, Royal Prima Hospital accepts patients with BPJS Kesehatan in both inpatient and outpatient departments, contributing to its accessibility.

RESULTS

This study involved 398 patients from the outpatient department of Royal Prima Hospital. The majority of the participants belonged to 20-29 years old group (34.17%), were female (57.04%), finished high school (52.26%), currently employed (63.32%), and had monthly income above the regional standard (58.54%), which at the time of the data collection was IDR 3,111,250 (around USD 190).

Table 2 shows a large staff and a variety of specialists, Royal Prima Hospital can provide care to a wide range of patients. Hence, this is likely why most patients are loyal to Royal Prima Hospital (73.12%). A bivariate analysis of the data (Table 3) revealed that all seven aspects of the 7P marketing mix strategies implemented by Royal Prima Hospital are significantly associated with patients' loyalty ($p < 0.001$).

Table 1. Participants' basic characteristics as the respondent data in this research

Variable	n	%
Age		
10-19 Years	16	4.02
20-29 Years	136	34.17
30-39 Years	61	15.33
40-49 Years	72	18.09
50-59 Years	56	14.07
60-69 Years	57	14.32
Sex		
Male	171	42.96
Female	227	57.04
Education Level		
Did not finish any school	1	0.25
Elementary School	4	1.01
Highschool	208	52.26
College/Undergraduate/Graduate	185	46.48
Employment		
Employed	252	63.32
Unemployed	101	25.38
Retired	45	11.31
Income		
Did not have any income	99	24.87
Below regional standard	66	16.58
Above regional standard	233	58.54

Table 2. Participant's perception of Royal Prima Hospital's early warning health and decision

Type	n	%
Product		
Poor	101	25.38
Excellent	297	74.62
Price		
Poor	72	18.09
Excellent	326	81.91
Place		
Poor	48	12.06
Excellent	350	87.94
Promotion		
Poor	53	13.32
Excellent	345	86.68
People		
Poor	41	10.30
Excellent	357	89.70
Process		
Poor	108	27.14
Excellent	290	72.86
Physical Evidence		
Poor	42	10.55
Excellent	356	89.45
Loyalty		
Less loyal	107	26.88
Loyal	291	73.12

Table 3. Loyalty for health services and decision-based on patient loyalty

Loyalty for Health Services and Decision							
	Less Loyal		Loyal		Total		p-value
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Product							
Poor	41	40.59	60	59.41	101	100.00	0.000
Excellent	66	22.22	231	77.78	297	100.00	
Price							
Poor	38	52.78	34	47.22	72	100.00	0.000
Excellent	69	21.17	257	78.83	326	100.00	
Place							
Poor	27	56.25	21	43.75	48	100.00	0.000
Excellent	80	22.86	270	77.14	350	100.00	
Promotion							
Poor	35	66.04	18	33.96	53	100.00	0.000
Excellent	72	20.87	273	79.13	345	100.00	
People							
Poor	29	70.73	12	29.27	41	100.00	0.000
Excellent	78	21.85	279	78.15	357	100.00	
Process							
Poor	57	52.78	51	47.22	108	100.00	0.000
Excellent	50	17.24	240	82.76	290	100.00	
Physical evidence							
Poor	28	66.67	14	33.33	42	100.00	0.000
Excellent	79	22.19	277	77.81	356	100.00	

Further analysis using binomial logistic regression also found that all aspects of the 7P marketing mix strategies collectively influence patient loyalty to Royal Prima Hospital ($p < 0.005$), with the people aspects being the most influential factor (OR: 33.628)

Table 4. The Influence of the early warning health and decision for the marketing mix strategies on patient loyalty Intensive Care Unit Royal Prima Hospital Medan

Type	β	p-value	OR	CI 95% OR	
				Lower	Upper
Product	1.274	0.001	3.577	1.721	7.434
Price	1.415	0.001	4.117	1.830	9.263
Place	1.869	0.000	6.483	2.597	16.182
Promotion	2.705	0.000	14.950	6.072	36.807
People	3.515	0.000	33.628	11.249	100.530
Process	2.638	0.000	13.984	6.546	29.876
Physical Evidence	2.901	0.000	18.193	6.662	49.682
Constant	-12.076	0.000	0.000	-	-

DISCUSSION

Royal Prima Hospital is one of Medan's 11 Class B general hospitals, facing relatively fierce competition. In marketing practice, the hospital service has all seven aspects of the 7P marketing mix strategy. In this study, most patients seeking treatment at Royal Prima Medan Hospital have a good perception of the seven components of the 7P marketing mix strategy and have a sense of loyalty to Royal Prima Medan Hospital. In bivariate and multivariate analysis, it was found that all aspects of the 7P marketing mix strategy are related and influence patient loyalty to Royal Prima Hospital. This finding is supported by the findings in several other studies, which found that patients' positive perceptions of the seven aspects of the 7P marketing mix strategy positively influence the patient's decision to choose a hospital and impact the patient's desire to use the same hospital in the future, in other words, loyalty to the hospital (Liana & Hasyim, 2024).

Hospitals are business units that primarily offer services but still offer physical products (Kotler et al., in Helmond, 2022). This study found that product is associated with patient loyalty ($p < 0.001$) and has a significant influence ($p < 0.005$; OR: 3.577). This positive relationship aligns with other studies, which have found that patients' positive perceptions of products or services offered and provided by hospitals have a positive effect on their intention to visit the same health facility in the future (Angraeni et al., 2019; Hapsa, 2019; Ginting et al., 2023). A study by Octivanny & Berlianto (2022) found that patients who have positive perceptions of the products or services provided by dental clinics are linked to patient satisfaction and then influence the patient's decision to use the same clinic in the future. Ginting et al. (2023) found that patients' positive perceptions of the products or services offered by the hospital directly affect patient loyalty without the intermediary of satisfaction, as in Octivanny and Berlianto's (2022) research. In addition, this study also found that products or services are the aspects that have the least Influence on patient loyalty (OR: 3.577), a finding similar to that in another study in Binjai, Indonesia (Tarihoran et al., 2021). This may be due to the limited knowledge of patients or potential patients about the products or services available at the hospitals they visit. This is because most patients in Indonesia visit hospitals not as elective measures.

Royal Prima Medan Hospital offers a range of unique products and services in Medan City, including stem cell services and interventional radiology. However, the low promotion and exposure of these services has resulted in the product aspect of Royal Prima Hospital not being dominant. In addition, this phenomenon can also be attributed to the majority of patients at Royal Prima Hospital, who are National Health Insurance (JKN) patients referred from first-level health facilities, such as Community Health Centers (Puskesmas) or private clinics. This results in patients generally using services at Royal Prima Hospital only because they are referred, without being aware of the various products and services offered by Royal Prima Hospital. The price or cost required to access services at Royal Prima Hospital in this study was found to be associated with patient loyalty ($p < 0.001$) and had a significant effect ($p < 0.005$; OR: 4.117).

This finding is in line with the research of Bhuyan (2024) in Assam, India; Tarihoran et al. (2021) in Binjai, Indonesia; Hapsa (2019) in Palu, Indonesia; and Windarti et al. (2023) in Makassar, Indonesia, who found that affordable prices affect patient loyalty to a health facility (Hapsa, 2019; Bhuyan, 2024). Research by Bhuyan (2024) found that price or cost not only has a significant influence on patient loyalty but is the factor that most influences patient loyalty to a hospital ($p < 0.001$). This is because most Indians are economically disadvantaged, so the affordability of services plays a huge role (Bhuyan, 2024). In a case study in Singapore, where the government regulates hospital affordability for low-income individuals, increased hospital utilization for medical treatment was observed (Tan et al., 2021). In the United States, following the passage of the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, although there was no change in hospital mortality, there was an increase in hospital utilization among low-income Americans (Duggan et al., 2022).

However, contrary findings were reported in several studies in Indonesia, where it was found that the affordability of prices or costs to access health services did not influence patients' decisions in choosing a hospital or their loyalty (Jaya et al., 2024). These contradictory results may be due to the fact that most respondents in the study were JKN or BPJS Health patients, so the price or cost required to access services was not a factor considered by patients when choosing a health facility. Research by Angraeni et al. (2019) and Jaya et al. (2024) is conducted at government-owned health facilities, where the majority of patients are BPJS Health patients, while Octivanny & Berlianto (2022) study is conducted at a private dental clinic. In addition to hospital accessibility in terms of price (affordable), hospital accessibility in terms of geography or location also has a vital role in marketing strategy. Hospitals should have a strategic location, be easily accessible by vehicle, and offer both private and public facilities with good infrastructure. In this study, hospital location was found to be associated with patient loyalty ($p < 0.001$) and had a significant effect ($p < 0.001$; OR: 6.483). This result is not in line with the findings of Bhuyan (2024), Tarihoran et al. (2021), and Jaya et al. (2024), who found that marketing strategies in the location aspect did not affect patient loyalty either directly or through the intermediary of patient satisfaction (Tarihoran et al., 2021).

Jaya et al. (2024) found that although in the bivariate analysis, it was found that place was associated with inpatient loyalty ($p < 0.05$) (not related to outpatients, $p > 0.05$), in the multivariate analysis that assessed the Influence of the seven aspects of the marketing mix strategy, it was found that place did not affect patient loyalty (Jaya et al., 2024). Another study also found that location does not affect patient loyalty. A study in an area with a relatively small number of hospitals (four hospitals serving a population of more than 750,000) revealed that patients tend not to consider the location of the hospital (Ekowati et al., 2022). In Indonesia, there is generally no ambulance service for transportation from the patient's address to the hospital (certain private hospitals provide this service). Hence, the accessibility of the hospital location by personal and public transportation plays an essential role for patients. Additionally, hospitals situated in the midst of residential areas tend to have higher utilization rates within the surrounding community (Mah et al., 2022). In addition, keep in mind that in the modern world, location or place is not only limited to geographical positions and physical buildings but also includes cyberspace or the Internet (Kotler et al., 2024).

BPS Indonesia data shows that almost 80% of the Indonesian population has access to the Internet, and 67.29% own at least one mobile phone (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2023). This shows an excellent opportunity to develop health services via the Internet or telemedicine. In Indonesia, telemedicine services are still dominated by non-hospital companies such as HaloDoc, Alodokter, and Klik Dokter, among others, which connect patients directly with doctors (Wijaya et al., 2022). Hospitals can take advantage of this development by offering telemedicine for patients, especially patients with limited mobility or patients who only visit the hospital to take routine medications, thereby reducing congestion in the hospital and facilitating access for patients.

After having a good product that is affordable and easily accessible, hospitals need to promote their products or services through targeted marketing activities. These promotional activities can be implemented directly using traditional print media, such as flyers or billboards, and audio-visual media, including radio, television, or internet advertisements, or indirectly through community-based activities, such as charities, health checks, and other similar initiatives. The majority of patients who participated in this study considered Royal Prima Hospital to have excellent and attractive promotions (86.68%) and were found to be associated with an effect on patient loyalty to Royal Prima Hospital ($p < 0.001$; OR: 14.950). This finding is supported by various findings in previous studies, which found that excellent and attractive promotions contribute positively to patients' intention to use the same hospital in the future, in other words, to be loyal to the same hospital (Hapsa, 2019; Tarihoran et al., 2021; Ginting et al., 2023). The function of promotion causes this phenomenon as a communication medium between a business and its potential customers, where good and attractive promotions influence the psychology of potential customers to become consumers. Royal Prima Hospital proactively conducts promotional activities by displaying product and service offerings through posters, banners, and videos on television screens in patient waiting rooms. In addition, Royal Prima Hospital regularly conducts social and charitable activities for the community, thereby increasing brand awareness. However, not all studies have found that promotion affects patient loyalty (Bhuyan, 2024; Jaya et al., 2024).

Jaya et al. (2024) surmised that patients consider other factors, such as products and convenient processes when choosing healthcare services. In addition, Jaya et al. (2024) also found that Sandi Karsa Makassar Hospital still does not have adequate promotional efforts, so people do not know or have no opinion about the promotional activities of Sandi Karsa Makassar Hospital. One of the promotional strategies hospitals must employ is offering products and services through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. According to Statista data, the average Indonesian spends at least three hours and 14 minutes on social media daily. In a month, Facebook users in Indonesia use Facebook for 14 hours and 36 minutes. This suggests that promotional activities through social media have a broader reach compared to traditional ones. The people aspect of the marketing mix strategy refers to a group of individuals who interact with consumers or users of a service, as well as the interpersonal interactions between them. In healthcare, people can refer to medical staff, including doctors, nurses, medical technical personnel, and administrative staff. In this study, the majority of patients had a positive perception of the people strategy in the marketing mix implemented by Royal Prima Hospital, and this perception was found to be associated with and influence patient loyalty ($p < 0.001$; OR:

33.628). This finding reveals that the people aspect is the most influential factor in patient loyalty to Royal Prima Hospital. This study is based on other studies that have found that human resource factors, both directly and indirectly, influence patient loyalty to a healthcare facility.

In addition, friendly, knowledgeable, and empathetic medical and non-medical staff generally create a sense of satisfaction and comfort for patients, thereby fostering loyalty (Chew et al., 2023). In the digital era, where all patients have access to the Internet and social media, unpleasant behavior by health workers is often a source of controversy, leading to a perception in the community that hospitals are not treating BPJS Kesehatan patients with the expected empathy and friendliness. In addition, the perception that staff treats BPJS Kesehatan patients differently than private insurance patients or self-paying patients contributes to staff attitudes and perceptions. This phenomenon is likely why the people factor significantly influences patient loyalty to Royal Prima Hospital (OR: 33,628). One of the most frequent complaints patients experience when using hospital services is the complicated administrative process (Salsabila et al., 2023).

For BPJS Kesehatan patients who are referred from first-level healthcare facilities, such as clinics or Puskesmas, patients only need to register through BPJS Kesehatan's mobileJKN application and verify their fingerprints at the registration desk without the need to bring other referrals or other administrative files. This finding is supported by the results of this study, which indicate that 72.87% of patients perceived the service process at Royal Prima Hospital as relatively good. In addition, this study found that patient perceptions of the Royal Prima Hospital service process were associated with and influenced patient loyalty ($p < 0.001$; OR: 13.984). These results align with other studies (Tarihoran et al., 2021; Jaya et al., 2024). Jaya et al. (2024) found that the process of accessing services affected only the loyalty of outpatients ($p < 0.05$) but not inpatients ($p > 0.05$). The patient's care experience further explains this difference between the findings on inpatients and outpatients. In contrast, for outpatients, accessing services is more visible and tangible, while inpatients receive continuous services from nurses and doctors. Hence, the process is irrelevant for inpatients (Jaya et al., 2024). Jaya et al. (2024) also found that although the majority of patients have a positive perception of the process that the hospital has, there are still patients who have a negative perception of waiting time, just like in this study, where even though the patient's perception is positive towards the overall process, the waiting time to receive treatment and get medicine from the pharmacy is felt to be too long. Simbolon and Silalahi's study (2023) found that the waiting time to receive services at HKBP Balige Hospital can reach two to three hours, which is significantly longer than the standard waiting time set by the Ministry of Health, which is less than 60 minutes.

At Royal Prima Hospital, this confusion and error can happen due to the registration process being carried out in a different building from where outpatient services are delivered, at least for BPJS Health patients, where patients register on the second floor of building B, while the polyclinics where patients receive services are on the third and fourth floors of building A. However, this is mitigated by hospital management through the placement of signposts and security officers who can help direct patients. Physical evidence in this study includes various facilities and infrastructure possessed by Royal Prima Hospital and their physical conditions, such as the availability of parking lots, waiting rooms with adequate seats, availability of toilets, cleanliness of existing facilities and infrastructure, and other supporting aspects such as ATMs and ventilation/room temperature control. Nearly 90% of patients in this study felt that Royal Prima Hospital had good and high-quality physical evidence. These results show that physical evidence of Royal Prima Hospital is not only associated with patient loyalty ($p < 0.001$) but also has a significant influence ($p < 0.001$; OR: 18.193), ranking as the second most influential factor on patient loyalty. These results are based on various studies conducted in Indonesia and other countries (Jaya et al., 2024). Moreover, high-quality physical evidence can create a perception of exclusivity and provide a memorable experience for patients (Wathanakom et al., 2024).

Hapsa (2019) found that physical evidence significantly affects patient loyalty; however, most patients argue that the physical appearance of a hospital is not the primary factor influencing their hospital preferences. However, Ginting et al. (2023) argue that attractive physical evidence can attract consumer attention to choose a hospital. Research by Jaya et al. (2024) found that the majority of respondents felt that the physical facilities of Sandi Karsa Hospital were of poor

quality, characterized by a ward that felt too cramped and uncomfortable and toilets that were unclean and smelly, thus affecting patient loyalty not to use the same hospital in the future. This indicates that poor physical evidence conditions can harm patient loyalty. In general, the physical evidence at Royal Prima Hospital is of good quality and performance, characterized by elevators/lifts that function well, clean waiting rooms, clean and odorless toilets, and a spacious parking area. However, Bhuyan (2024) found different results, indicating that although physical evidence affects patient satisfaction with health services, it does not significantly influence future patient loyalty. This may be due to the limitation of the instrument used in Bhuyan's (2024) study, which was very narrow in defining physical evidence (only two questionnaire items), while in this study, physical evidence was described more broadly.

CONCLUSION

According to all the findings in this study, it can be concluded that the 7P marketing mix strategy has a significant association with patient loyalty and significantly influences patients' loyalty to use the hospital in the future, with people factors (staff, nurses, and doctors) as the most influential factor.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

Authors' contributions and responsibilities

DP: writing original draft, visualization, analysis, review, and editing; **EG:** conceptualization, supervision, review, and editing; **ANN:** Method, validation, review, and editing.

Availability of data and materials

All data are available from the authors.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interest.

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