

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Demographic profile of respondents

Gender

Figure 12 illustrates the gender of respondents of this research. The analysis revealed that 60% (15) of the respondents were female and the rest were male which was 40 % (10).

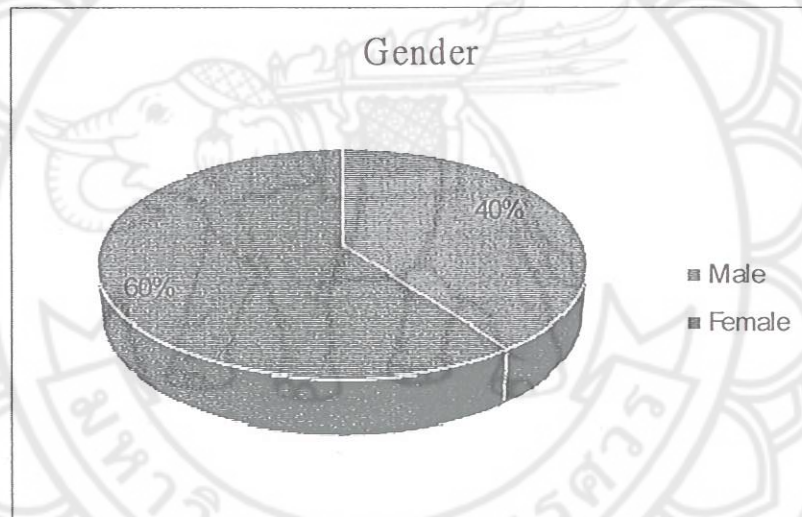


Figure 12 Gender

Age category

Figure 13 illustrates age category of respondents of this research. More than half of the respondents were between the ages 20-30 years which is 15 respondents (60%). Only 7 of the respondents (28%) were between the age 31-40 years and the age between 41-50 years were only 2 respondents (8%). The least respondents were from the age group between 51-60 years which was only 1 respondent (4%).

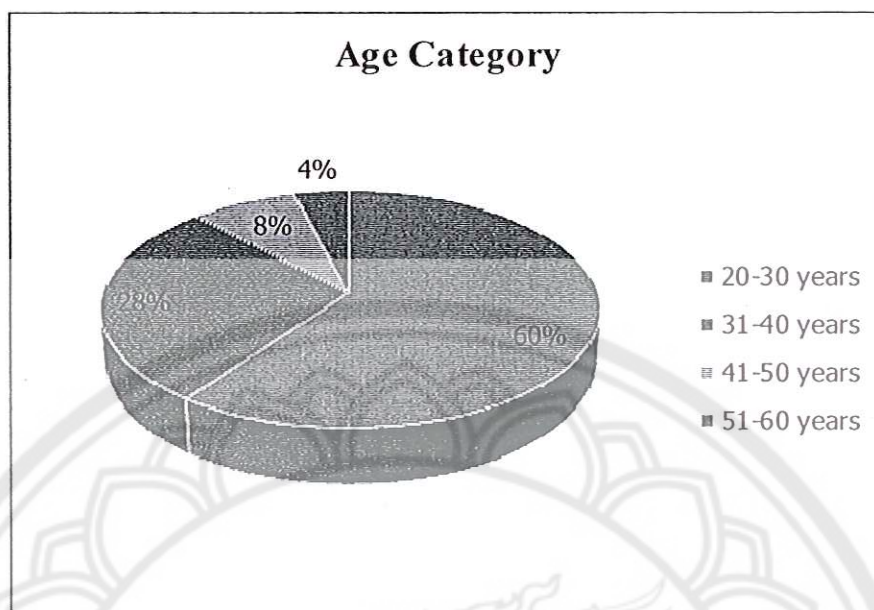


Figure 13 Age Category

Salary per month

Figure 14 illustrates salary per month of respondents of this research. Nearly 52% (13) of the respondents had a monthly income between USD 301-600 while 8% (2) earned below USD 300, 28% (7) earned USD 601-900, 8% (2) earned USD 901-1,200 and 4% (1) earned above USD 12,000.

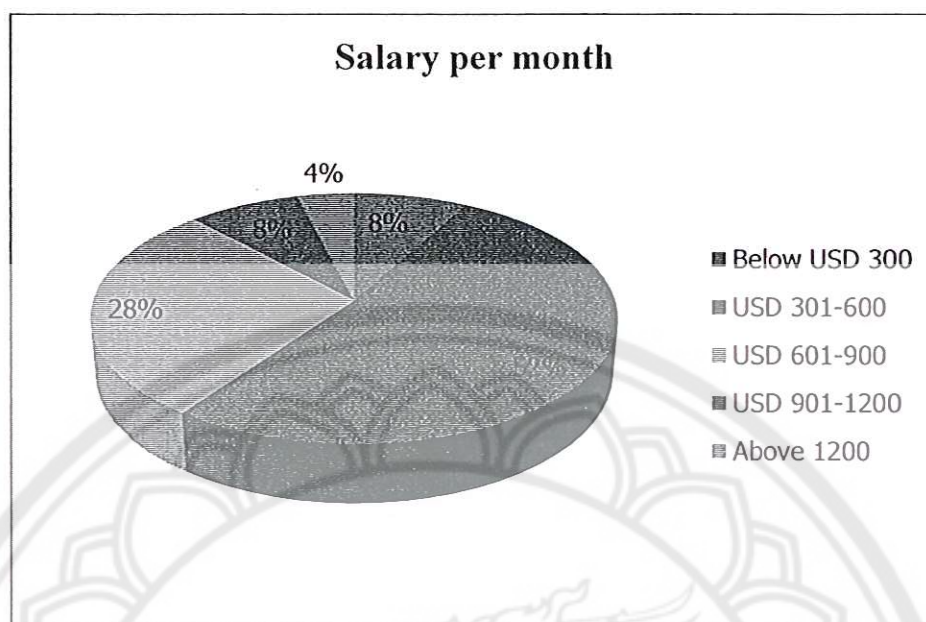


Figure 14 Salary per month

Profession

Figure 15 illustrates profession of respondents of this research. The analysis also showed that 76 % (19) of the respondents were employed and 16% (4) was students. The rest of the respondents were self employed which is 8% (2). None of the respondents of this research were either retired or unemployed.

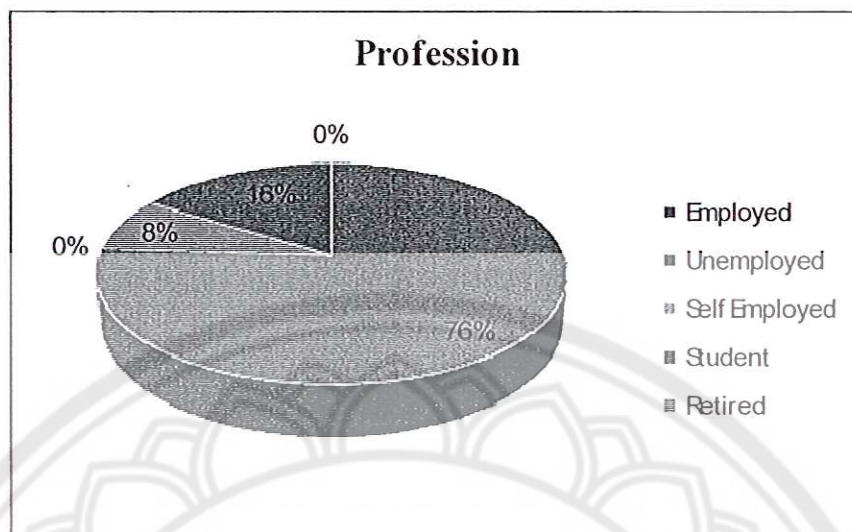


Figure 15 Profession

Marital Status

Figure 16 illustrates marital status of respondents of this research. The majority of the respondents were married which is 68% (17) and 32% (8) of the respondents were single.

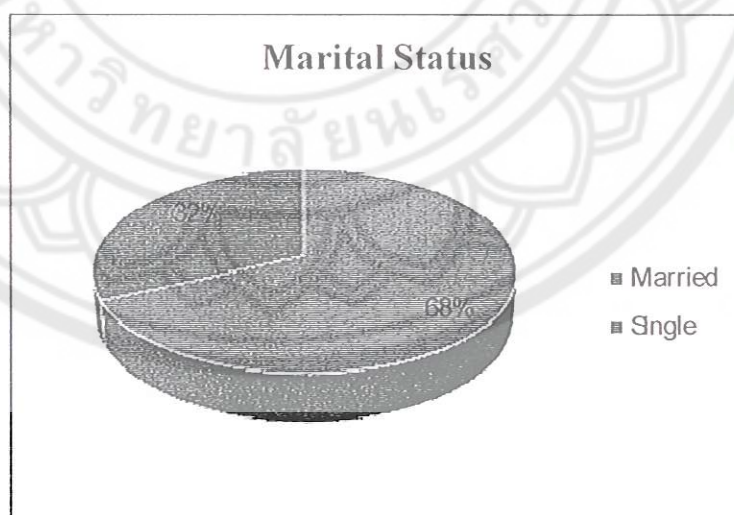


Figure 16 Marital Status

Number of visits to Lanka Hospitals

Figure 17 illustrates the number of visits of respondents to Lanka hospitals within the last two years. The analysis showed that almost half of the respondents visited Lanka hospitals more than 2-4 times within the last two years. The percentage of respondents that visited 2-4 times is 52% (13). 32 % (8) of the respondents visited Lanka Hospitals less than 2 times and 16% (4) of the respondents visited more than four times within the last two years.

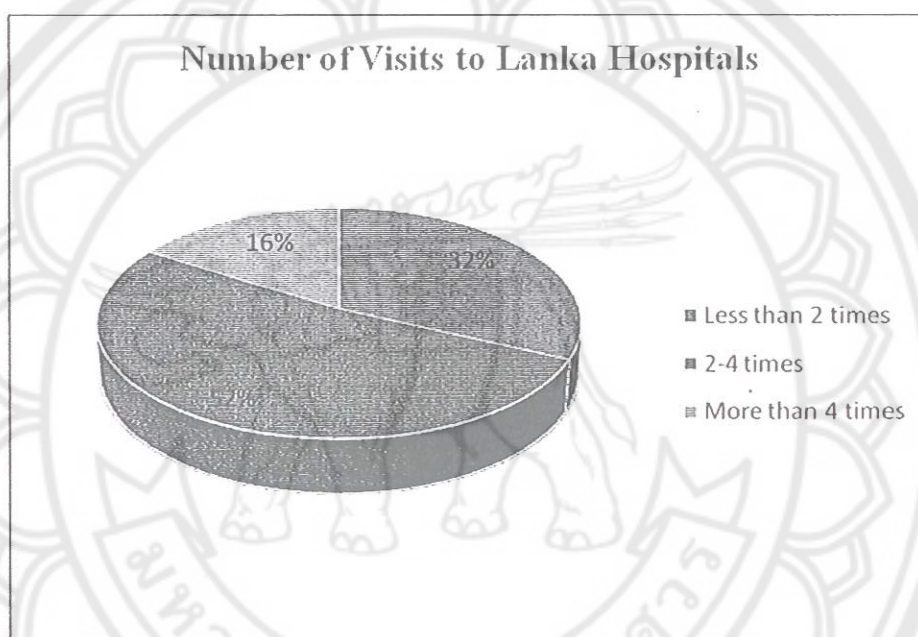


Figure 17 Number of visits to Lanka Hospitals

It is obvious from the results that the respondents in the age category 20-30 and who are married travelled most to Lanka Hospitals to seek medical care. Therefore, an ideal marketing strategy for Lanka Hospitals may be to target Maldivians within the age category of 20-30 who are married. It is common for Maldivians to start a family in their early twenties. Thus, targeting this group by offering family medical checkup packages may be an idyllic marketing strategy. A summary table of demographic profile of respondents can be found in annex 2.

Main influence in choosing Lanka hospitals

The study found that almost 70 percent of the respondents chose Lanka Hospitals for medical care due to the recommendations from relatives and friends. Maldivians have been travelling to Lanka Hospitals for many years and it is common among Maldivians to share the experience among relatives and friends. The rest of the respondents had few other reasons for choosing Lanka hospitals such as Sri Lanka being closer to home and the cheaper prices of services provided by the hospitals in Sri Lanka as well as those in neighboring countries.

...My best friend recommended me Lanka Hospitals. She said it is affordable and the service is great there. After I sought medical care from Lanka Hospitals, now I do recommend my friends and family to go there.

(Respondent 4, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

...The ticket is cheaper to Sri Lanka and even the overall expenses of medical facilities are cheaper compared to hospitals in India.

(Respondent 16, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

Quality criteria considered in seeking medical care from Lanka Hospitals

The majority of the respondents which is 17 stated that one of the most important criteria in seeking medical care from a hospital is customer care. It was found out that no matter what service they seek from the hospital, respondents expect to receive prompt service and be treated with courtesy. The respondents believed that if the hospital cannot provide prompt service, there is no need to seek medical assistance from Lanka Hospitals as their main reason to visit Lanka Hospital was to seek prompt service. The second most important criteria were the ability of the hospital to provide consistent service or even better service with time. The respondents pointed out that the hospital should be able to provide consistent or even better service with time as they choose to seek medical assistance based on previous experience. Hence, their expectations are higher compared to the previous visits. If the hospital is unable to provide consistent service or better service with time, respondents said they might lose faith in the credibility of the hospital and find other alternatives for medical

assistance. In addition, a few respondents which are 3 respondents stated clean environment as a criteria they consider as well. According to the respondents, if the environment is not clean, more diseases are likely to spread among the people seeing medical assistance from Lanka Hospitals.

...For me it is customer service. I want to feel that I am being attended properly with empathy no matter what service I seek from the hospital.

(Respondent 18, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

...I think the hospital environment is the most important criteria. If the environment is not clean and hygienic, patients will never feel better.

(Respondent 1, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

According to the respondents' statements, the author presumes the criteria that the respondents consider in seeking medical care from Lanka Hospital or any other hospital depends on the type of service or the medical care they seek from the hospital. For instance, a patient who has to undergo a surgery will consider of the hospital has necessary facilities and technology to carry out the procedure whereas a patient who wants to see a specialist will consider to have specialized doctors of the field.

Experience with procedures

1. Registration and admission

According to all respondents, the procedures involved in registration and admission were very convenient as they only have to fill in a registration and admission form. Respondents stated that the forms could be filled on their own but there are staffs that were willing to fill in the forms for them. All the respondents also highlighted the information and registration counter for only Maldivians. 20 respondents were very satisfied with registration and admission process whereby 4 respondents were satisfied and only 1 respondent was dissatisfied.

...I was surprised to see a counter for Maldivians only. I think it is the only hospital that has one for us.

(Respondent 2, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

...A staff helped me with the registration process. All I had to do was sign the form.

(Respondent 17, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

2. Appointment:

All the respondents stated that it was very difficult to get an appointment through telephone. Respondents said that the telephone lines are busy most of the time or they had to wait on hold on the phone for a long time to make an appointment. However, all the respondents stated that it was easy to get appointment by directly going to the hospital but highlighted that it would be much convenient if they can make the appointment through phone. Respondents collectively also stated that they are always able to get appointment for doctors and specialist they would like an appointment for and 18 respondents were satisfied with appointments and 7 of them were very satisfied.

...I usually make an appointment through my relatives who live there. Otherwise I have to stay on hold on the phone for quite some time.

(Respondent 19, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

...It is convenient to get appointments to specialist. Not like in Male' that we have to wait for weeks to get one.

(Respondent 7, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

3. Clearing invoices and check out:

Almost half of the respondents which are 11 respondents stated that the procedure of clearing invoices and discharge procedure was very convenient. However, the other half of the respondents disagrees to the statement. These respondents stated that all payments had to be done in the cash counters on the ground

floor which has long queues and had to wait in line. 7 of the respondents stated that their satisfaction level with clearing invoices would have been higher if separate cash counters were provided at each department such as cardiology, neurology or on each floor. The author assumes this could have reduced the waiting time in line to clear the invoices. Also this could save time for the respondents as they do not have to go all the way to the ground floor cash counters from where the cash counters are.

...If they had cash counters at each floor, clearing invoices won't take much time.

(Respondent 22, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

...I have never encountered any problems with the bills. They have details of the payment on the bill.

(Respondent 10, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

Service Dimensions

Tangibility

1. Equipment and facilities

The majority of respondents which is 22 respondents out of 25 collectively agreed that almost all the facilities and equipment is available in the hospital and are of the latest technology. Respondents highlighted that all the equipment is in good condition. As per 5 respondents, medical equipments and facilities provided were one of the reasons for seeking medical care from Lanka Hospitals. This is especially important for respondents whose purpose was to seek medical facilities that were not available in Maldives. From this, the author presumes that latest technologies of medical care and facilities are not available in Maldives.

...The equipment is in excellent condition and they have almost all the latest technology. I have done two surgeries in Lanka hospitals as I couldn't do it in Male' since they did not have all the facilities required.

(Respondent 14, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

However, some of the respondents, perceived that Lanka Hospitals lacked some facilities and they hope those facilities would be available in the near future.

...My son was admitted and had to do an allergy test. It couldn't be done at Lanka Hospitals so they had to send the sample to another hospital to carry out the test.

(Respondent 1, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

2. Hospital environment and patient/client rooms

From the interviews, it was found that all of the respondents were very satisfied with the environment of the hospital. Respondents highlighted that the lobby area was quite huge which made the environment less crowded and noisy. Also, well groomed staff and furniture were used that blended in well with the environment. The author also found out that respondents were very satisfied with the rooms in the hospital as they described the rooms as spacious, clean and comfortable. When asked about the public ward, none of the respondents was admitted in the public ward. All respondents were admitted in private rooms as per their request. The author assumes that Maldivians prefer privacy.

...I prefer private rooms so that I can have privacy. But private rooms are so expensive.

(Respondent 15, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

...The hospital environment is actually very nice compared to a hospital. They have gardens all around the hospital and spacious reception areas which makes it less crowded with people. I like the environment of Lanka Hospitals better compared to other hospitals I have been.

(Respondent 3, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

3. Website

The author found out that 2 two respondents used the hospital website to seek information about the facilities and services available at the hospital. They

described the website as a very informative and a simple website to navigate. The rest of the respondents stated that they never used the website, but they were recommended by relatives and friends.

...I never used the website. My sister by heart seems to know the specialists working there and the facilities available at the hospital as well.

(Respondent 1, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

...I used the website only once to check the facilities available at the hospital because my wife had to do a surgery.

(Respondent 21, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

The author presumes that since the hospital is well known among Maldivians and is most of the time recommended by relatives and friends, all information required was gathered from relatives and friends through their experiences rather than browsing through the websites.

4. Signage

As regards to signs and notices, all the respondents agreed that the hospital had excellent signage that guided them to the respective departments. The usage of signage throughout the hospitals made it very convenient for even a first timer to find their way around the hospital. 23 of the respondents described the signage as clear and easy to read. Four respondents out of the 25 suggested signage in Dhivehi as many Maldivians seek medical assistance from Lanka Hospitals and as the hospital is always full of Maldivians.

...I wish they had signage in Dhivehi so that my mother can read them.

(Respondent 7, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

...The signages were very clear. I mean the font and size they used even was easy to see and read from a distance. They even used arrows with name of the departments to direct people to the departments they want to go.

(Respondent 11, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

Assurance

According to 8 respondents, Lanka Hospitals showed confidence delivering their services to patient/clients; they made the respondents feel secure and safe to seek services from the hospital. It was also found that the respondents had good knowledge of patient history and the ability to recommend doctors and specialists to the respondents were aspect of service that increased their satisfaction of the service quality of the hospital. These were seen by respondents to be essential aspects of service to be expected of a hospital. In addition, well known and excellent reputation of the doctors was able to inspire confidence in the medical assistance sought from the hospital. This service aspect is important to patient/clients who chose the hospital because they have heard of the reputation of the doctor for excellent treatment and service. This feedback from respondents affirmed the importance of the “assurance” dimension in seeking service from Lanka Hospitals.

...I was very scared to do my surgery but the staff assured me I was in good hands. They somehow convinced me to do the surgery.

(Respondent 22, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

...For me, reputation of doctors is very important. If there are well known doctors working in the hospital and I'm able to get appointment for the doctor I want, I feel secure to get medical assistant from there.

(Respondent 5, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

Empathy

The respondents mentioned that the apprehension and personalized attention, the personal touches, the aptitude to anticipate the needs of the customer and the keenness to go the extra mile by the customer service staffs at the hospital were one of the reasons for their perceptions of high levels of service at the hospital. Some respondents highlighted that the special information and registration counter for only Maldivian added a personnel touch for them. Some customer staffs demonstrated concern and personalized attention by offering assistance in registration procedures when they sense that the respondent was not feeling well. The author assumes that all

patients/clients expect the staff to provide personalised attention and have the patients/clients best interest at their hearts. In addition, patients/clients expect staffs to be competent, helpful and to respect them as individuals, as well as to provide clear and comprehensible information.

...I just want the staff to be polite and helpful. I feel much better when they show us they care.

(Respondent 25, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

...It would feel good to know there are people who still can take care of me when I am not feeling better and is concern for my well being when I'm so far from home.

(Respondent 12, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

Responsiveness

According to the respondents, any establishment that aims to provide quality service has to provide prompt and a fast service. In this study, majority of the staffs were found to be always willing to help and guide the patients/clients to the desired medical department. However, a few respondents which is 6 perceived this differently. The author assumes that reason might be that the staff was busy being occupied with another task.

1. Attentiveness of staff towards emergencies and queries

When questioned about the responsiveness to complain and queries, 10 of the respondents said that they had to wait for some time for a reply or an action. The author found out from 2 of the respondents that the delay in the response was due to the fact the staff thoroughly examined the basis of the complaints to make sure no more complaints arise from the issue or query.

...I once had to wait for an hour for a response but that was because my situation was complicated. Other times, their response was quite prompt.

(Respondent 14, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

2. Staff awareness about your needs

In terms of staff awareness if the patients, it was perceived that the staffs were well aware of the respondents' needs. Respondents who sought medical care more than once said that the staffs had good knowledge about their previous medical treatment and were thoroughly aware of the respondents needs. Respondents who had sought medical treatment for the first time stated that the staffs were able to guide them to the right specialist and treatment and were aware of their needs as well.

...The nurse knew my medical history and she took care of everything for me.

(Respondent 20, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

...When I first went to Lanka Hospitals, I went alone. I had no idea how to get an appointment or even which doctor I wanted an appointment for. The staff at the registration counter helped me out with the registration and even made an appointment for the doctor after clarifying my symptoms. It was like she knew what I wanted.

(Respondent 8, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

Reliability

For the majority of the respondents which is 11 respondents, reliability was perceived as the most important dimension of service quality. For these respondents, the service provided by the hospital was very consistent. Respondents who have sought medical care from the hospital more than once highlights that they were able to get the same service they received the very first time. Indeed the same service became better with time. However, there was some disagreement with the respondents' answers to the timeliness of services.

1. Dealing with transactions

Except 1 respondent, all the other respondents stated they had never incurred any problems with transaction with the hospital. The respondents said that they fully trust the hospital with transactions and they have never heard of a fraud case. Thus, they completely trust the hospital with transactions.

...They once mixed up my invoice with another patient because we had same names. When I got the invoice, my home address was different and the treatments they billed were not what I got medical assistant for. So I showed to the cashier and I had to wait for an hour to resolve the bill because the staff at the counter had to check with her supervisor.

(Respondent 13, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

2. Providing the promised services

According to 10 respondents, a key factor to measure reliability is to measure the timeliness of the hospital procedures. Out of the 25 respondents, 4 of the respondents outlined that doctors do not come on time which delays their appointment. Sometimes, time given to surgeries even delays which wastes time for patient/client. The author assumes these kinds of delay may lead to dissatisfaction of the patient/clients.

...I get frustrated when doctors don't show up on time. It is a waste of time for me. I feel that what the hospital promises, it should be done in the time frame they promised.

(Respondent 3, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

Nevertheless, the author found out from the respondents that other than the delays in surgeries and appointment, the hospital does provide the promised services.

What respondents liked best about Lanka Hospitals

This study found out that the majority of the responses about Lanka Hospitals were positive comments. However, there were a very few negative comments as well. As per the positive responses, 90 percent of the respondents stated customer service provided by Lanka Hospitals was exceptional. Respondents stated that the staffs were very helpful and always ready to lend in a helping hand. Almost half of the respondents were very satisfied with the environment of the hospitals. Respondents stated that the spacious and clean environment gave a very composed feeling.

...What I liked best was the customer service. The staffs are very attentive.

(Respondent 17, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

What respondents liked least about Lanka Hospitals

According to the respondents, they least liked the fact that the hospital was sometimes unable to provide the services in the promised time frame. Delay in appointments and surgeries made respondents discontented. All the respondents do believe that an appointment or surgery may get delayed due to emergencies at the hospital but 4 of the respondents stated that sometimes they feel like the appointments get delays because doctors take their own time on coming to duties and take long breaks within the doctor's duty.

...Doctors do not come on time. Sometimes, we have to wait there for hours.

(Respondent 1, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

...Once I was waiting for my appointment and the doctor had to go for an emergency Caesarean. I had to wait three hours for the doctor. But I do understand. What if it was me who had to have the Caesarean? I do understand that doctors may be late for appointments due to emergency. I just have to put myself in the patients shoe who requires the emergency treatment and understand it.

(Respondent 4, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

Most important service quality dimension

According to the respondents, the most important service quality dimension was reliability. Almost 44% of the respondents stated reliability as the most important dimension followed by responsiveness (20%), empathy (16%), assurance (12%) and tangibility (8%).

According to the respondents who chose reliability as the most important dimension, they stated that if the hospital can't be trusted and depended upon, there is

no need to seek medical from Lanka Hospital. The main reason to seek medical assistance is to cure sickness and if the hospital cannot be relied on to do so, than there is no need to seek medical assistance. As for the respondents who chose responsiveness, they stated that it is important for the Hospital to quickly respond to patients medical needs as even a delay in seconds may change or affect the patient's health. According to Sachdev & Verma (2004), different customers are sensitive to various service attributes or dimensions. Thus the most important service quality dimension for one respondent may not be as important for the other respondent. A summary of the respondents is shown in annex iv.

...I would say reliability is the most important one for me. If I can't trust or rely upon the service I get from the hospital, I wouldn't go to get the service from there. I expect the hospital to provide consistent service every time I go there.

(Respondent 6, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

Relationship between service quality experience and patient satisfaction

The study found out that a relationship exists between the service quality experience (tangibility, reliability, responsive, empathy and assurance) and customer patient/client satisfaction. According to all the respondents, level of patient satisfaction increases with high levels of the service quality experience. Conversely, the level of patient satisfaction decrease with low levels of the service quality experience. Jajae & Ahmad (2012) states that when service quality decreases rapidly, customer satisfaction declines dramatically and if service quality increases radically, customer satisfaction inclines rapidly.

It was also found out from the respondents, patient/clients that have higher levels of satisfaction are most likely to recommend the hospital to others when compared to those with low levels of satisfaction. Highly satisfied patient/clients are more important than any other source of marketing promotion as word of mouth is a primary driver in patient health care decisions.

...If I am satisfied with the quality of service I received at the hospital, of course I will very satisfied and willing to come back to the next time. But If I am not satisfied with the quality of service I received, most probably I will be dissatisfied and I may find alternative hospitals for me and my family.

(Respondents 8, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

Overall satisfaction

An appealing discovery that emerged from the in-depth interviews with the respondents was that the respondents who were unbiased or not satisfied with one or two service dimensions were still contented on an overall basis. For example, respondents, who were not pleased with the service dimension of responsiveness but gave a high rating for the empathy dimension, still perceived the hospital as having high service quality and responded that they were very satisfied with the overall services provided by Lanka Hospitals. Thus, eighteen respondents agreed that they were overall very satisfied with the service quality of Lanka Hospitals and the rest stated that were satisfied with the service quality of Lanka Hospitals.

...I am overall very satisfied with the service I received at Lanka Hospitals. They had all medical facilities and technologies I needed, the staffs were so helpful and caring, the doctors were very experienced and I had no problem with any of the service I got from the Hospital.

(Respondent 9, personal communication, March 17, 2013)

...Even though I had problems with my invoices and I faced some rude staffs, looking at the overall service provided, I am very satisfied with it. I am all healthy now and other services I received at the hospital were superb compared to what I will get in Male'.

(Respondent 13, personal communication, March 17, 2013)