

Hospital System Improvement Qualitative Research Among Hospital Customers

Case History

Category: *Hospital Research*

Methods: *Customer Research, Qualitative Research*

Summary

A hospital system was interested in conducting exploratory qualitative research among past-5-year customers and potential new customers to understand their hospital-selection process, perceptions of each hospital, and associations and gaps among 3 hospitals within their system and competitor hospitals in the area.

Strategic Issues

In order to attract new customers and keep existing customers (patients), a positive hospital perception is important. This research was used to understand the perception of each of 3 hospitals within the hospital system and to help devise strategies to improve/transform the hospitals' services and image within the community.

Research Objectives

The key objectives of this research were to:

- Explore current brand perceptions, associations, and gaps (both rational and emotional) for this hospital and for the other hospitals in the nearby area.
- Uncover the triggers that lead patients to choose one hospital over another and determine the impact of physician recommendations, social media comments and ratings, comments from friends and family, and any other sources.
- Assess changes in hospital reputation and/or actual customer experiences in the past 2 years.
- Understand the role of branding and determine if branding should be changed to improve or reinforce system-wide perceptions.



Research Design and Methods

A qualitative approach was used to better understand customer and non-customer perspectives of these hospitals. Approximately 70 individuals who had visited or been a patient at an area hospital in the last 5 years were interviewed individually, either in person or via webcam.

Each interview included discussion of the individual's perceptions of area hospitals along with their perceptions of the medical and non-medical services provided by the hospital system being researched. Projective techniques (such as Laddering and Emotional Journey) were used to understand each individual's needs and decision-making processes. These techniques also provided insight into the total decision-making process, reflecting on and identifying all of the key steps and the respondent's corresponding feelings and thoughts during each step. This was used to understand how the hospital system could better improve their processes (internally and externally) in order to better serve the needs of current and potential customers.

Results

The results led the hospital system to make changes in services being offered within each hospital. The research also provided insight into ways the hospital system could improve perceptions of their brand in each local area and how to have a positive impact on an individual's likelihood to select a hospital within their system.