

An Analysis of Media Crisis Affecting the Purchase Intention of Patient: The Case of Private Hospitals in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT:- Based on the survey on 143 patients who took their treatments at private hospital, the findings of this study aligns with the previous studies of medical incident, media crisis management, the solution of solving the problem, the role of understanding about the impact of media crisis for the management team and the importance of purchasing medical malpractice insurance. This study highlighted that the impact of media crisis on the tangible and the intangible asset is huge and its impact is noticeably different between the management team who gain strong experience from a professional hospital in comparison with another normal team. The findings is helpful for the decision makers to minimize the total cost, time to recover from damaging and propose hedging solution to mitigate the exposure of the risk on the both patient's trust and revenue. When the time was really crucial for media crisis management, an effective media crisis management will gain consensus from the stakeholders, help to minimize the opportunity cost and pull the revenue back to its normal trend.

Keywords: Patients, private hospital, Vietnam, media crisis

I. BACKGROUND

Vietnam private health sector was strongly encouraged to expand and reduce the overload of the public infrastructure by the government. The private network has been witnessed a rapid expansion, with the number of private hospitals increased duration of ten years. Despite such an increase, these private hospitals represent just around 4 percent of total hospital beds in Vietnam. Most private hospitals in Vietnam are mainly concentrated in the highly populated urban areas and small scale. Private healthcare facilities tend to be smaller than the public sector in terms of the number of beds, more than half of total private hospitals have the number of bed below 50.

The Vietnam healthcare system is facing a serious shortage of doctors, particularly the lack of qualified and skilled doctors. According to the latest World Bank statistics (2016), Vietnam had 8.21 doctors, 14.3 nurses and midwives per 10,000 people in full year 2016. The growth in the healthcare workforce is slow and unsteady. Despite the advantage of modern equipment, new facility, fast services and customer-oriented, private providers are struggling to attract skilled staff from the labour market. The current shortage of skilled doctors and trained nurses may cause a variety of problems for private hospitals such as false diagnosis, poor treatment and medical incidents. When medical problems occur, the impact of media risk on a private hospital is double, even triple compared to the last decade, thanks to the development of media communication.

In the era of booming mass communication through the use of newspapers, television, internet, social media, books and magazines, media crisis can happen in any sectors, especially the healthcare sector. Within the healthcare sector, there is a difference in media awareness between public and private healthcare sector. Comparing public and private sectors, the private firms have more attention and inquisition from social media and newspapers than that of the public hospitals. According to internal reports of the public hospital.

Due to the convenient, efficient and accessible of mass communication, most people depend on the media information to guide their trust and decision-making. According to the study conducted in Canada by NRC's health, they found that the majority of consumers (92.4%) use online reviews as a preference for most of their consumption decisions. Furthermore, there are six in 10 (59.9%) patients say they select medical provider based on positive reviews and also avoid those having negative reviews. Within the era of media booming, the patient is able to receive information much faster than ever; therefore, any unverified bad news will directly influence on the consumer behaviour toward the hospital services. As the consequence, the reduction in revenue is the result which could not avoid.

The media provides a communication platform for both the healthcare provider and the consumer to quickly spread information regarding the improvement of patient care, patient education and promote health programs. On the other hand, the media also exposes the organization to the potential risks of spreading inappropriate rumors, deterioration of hospital image and violation of patient confidentiality. Therefore, it is

necessary to perform a risk assessment to gain further knowledge concerning the priorities and the necessity of risk measurement.

Although healthcare risk assessment is the area that is researched and studied by many scholars throughout the globe under a variety of topics, it is difficult for the author to find a study that evaluates and quantifies the impact of media crisis on the operation of a hospital. Without the quantitative information about the number of capital loss from the media crisis, the management team would not have the same perception during the process of resolving the crisis.

Hospital face risks in their daily operation and each hospital in Vietnam have their own way to manage the media risk. A minority of hospitals hedge and manage for this risk in advance with a number of policies and procedures in a professional manner. The vast majority of hospitals in Vietnam will resolve the issue at the event of occurring without having any further plan to mitigate the media risk in the future. While an effective media crisis management should be prepared before any issue arises, most of the management team do not have the experience and relevant knowledge to resolve the media risk within a timely manner. Depending on the severity of the risk, the bad effect of media risk on the hospital can be corresponding. Therefore, the longer is the delay of

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to (Kapferer, 2008), a brand is a name with the power to greatly influence consumer's minds to purchase goods and services. A brand concept can be tangible as a name, a logo, and a slogan or intangible as mutual trust, cultural value and social meaning. According to (Van Den Bosch, De Jong, & Elving, 2006), both brand image and brand reputation are the cornerstone of an organization which can affect the way a firm communicates and behaves.

Brand image

A brand image defines how a brand is recalled in the memory of its consumers and it is developed through advertising campaigns over a period of time (Parmita, 2014). A positive brand image is a key to being remarkable to the market position and form a competitive advantage for the corporation. The consequence of having a positive brand image is the effect on the customer's intention to purchase a product or service. Those benefits are directly increasing customer loyalty, improving satisfaction, proving a chance to charge high prices and spreading the positive reference about the company's image (Wu, 2011). Accordingly, the hospital brand image is a set of trusts, perceptions and impressions that a patient experienced with a hospital. This concept is not absolute as it is depended on the brand images of the competitors in the same industry. A favorable hospital brand image helps to improve its competitive position as well as the patient's purchasing intention while selecting a medical organization. Therefore, the hospital brand image is becoming an important issue in the competitive health care industry.

Brand reputation

A reputation is something that tells us about how a company is perceived by several stakeholders such as customers, employees, suppliers and the public (Sehgal, 2010). Reputation highlights the perception of corporate's characteristics and acts as a reference for customer evaluation. A hospital brand reputation also has a strong correlation with the perceptions of patients toward patient safety. Brand reputation refers to customer perceptions of services quality associated with the brand name (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). In the absence of reference information for selecting a health care provider, patients will depend on reputation to make decision (Dijs-Elsinga et al., 2010).

Many scholars believe that the company's success and profit rely on the positive reputation of brands (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). Good reputation and brand can attract more customers to the companies.

Therefore, a negative brand reputation cannot achieve the competitive position in the market and in customer's minds.

Various previous studies have proved that a positive brand reputation can protect companies against economic crises (Chailan, 2008). (Koh, Kim, Butler, & Bock, 2007) studied that brand reputation brings advantages for organizations during a commercial crisis. The high brand reputation companies accept less risk of releasing the negative news on their activities in the community.

A good reputation not only acts as a shield against a lawsuit, it also attracts and retains talented employees to the organization. Kapfere (2008) believes that companies use branding as a tool to achieve the desired goals in the markets, especially the financial market. Brand reputation differentiates one firm from others; it can be used as a trademark to create intangible value that other competitors cannot copy (Lin & Huang, 2012). Thus, brand reputation can lead to gain customer trust during the selection of services provider (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001).

Brand trust

(Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001) identify brand trust as “the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function”. Brand trust is the consequence after consumers’ perceive of company’s services. When companies commit with the belief of being safe, honest and reliable toward their brands, the brand trust will be developed and lead to customer loyalty.

Brand’s fundamental purpose is to promote confidence and trust in the customer. Trust is the positive belief on the reliability and trustiness of a person or an organization (Lassoued & Hobbs, 2015). Brand trust strengthens the long-term relationships between provider and receiver; it helps to reduce the uncertainty of business risk (Lien, Wen, Huang, & Wu, 2015). With the lack of trust, customers will postpone or stop using the services from the provider.

Relationship between brand trust and consumer purchase

Various studies conducted by researchers proved the strong relationship between brand image and the buying decision such as (Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015), (Watson, Lecki, & Lebcir, 2015) and (Alwi, Nguyen, Melewar, Loh, & Liu, 2016). Brand image has a strong positive relationship with consumer perceived value while perceived value has a high positive relationship with consumer purchase intention. For brand reputation, (Jung & Seock, 2016) found that a negative brand reputation can significantly damage customer’s attitudes and suspend purchase intention.

According to the above researches, both brand image and brand reputation have a positive relationship with consumer intention to purchase.

According to (Alwi et al., 2016), buying decision is positively influenced by the brand trust. They examined brand trust toward the buying decision of Malaysian air conditioning products. The result shows that significant positive influence between brand trust and consumer’s buying decision. (Chinomona, 2016) also tested the positive association between brand trust and car decision-making in South Africa. Therefore, there is a positive relationship between brand trust and customer purchase intention.

Media Crisis

A crisis is an unpredictable and massive occurrence which could potentially cause unfavourable outcome affecting the whole of an organization if it is not properly managed (Coombs, 2007), (2007). (Dutta & Pullig, 2011) defined media crises as unexpected occasions which threaten the brand’s ability to deliver expected benefits.

Each crisis produces different result depends on its specific causes, development cycle, duration and the un-expectation (Coombs, 2007). Media crises are among the worst nightmares for a firm; because it not only causes immediate sales lost, but also causes the long-term negative effects on consumer trust (Cleeren, Van Heerde, & Dekimpe, 2013). Although uncertainty and the missing of information or knowledge form a crisis event, an organization should always be prepared for the risk of exposing to crisis at all times (Coombs, 2007).

The impact of media crisis on both brand image and reputation

Crisis management is often known as a proactive practice which suggests the efficient responses for different crisis situational factors and prevents a negative event (Li & Wei, 2016). There are several literatures have extensively studied the impact of crisis on a firm’s image and reputation. According to (du Plessis, 2018), a firm’s image is normally damaged or collapse when an undesirable event happens. A crisis can negatively affect the relationship between brands and consumers, which deteriorates the brand image and its brand equity.

On the other hand, unlike the concept of image, reputation is affected within a long term period. As time goes by, the aggregate evaluations made by the public in response to the crisis could influence an organisation’s overall reputation. According to (Borba Salvador & Akemi Ikeda, 2018), there is a direct effect on brand reputation regarding a long-term perspective during a crisis. Restore consumer’s trust is the main key challenge for companies during crisis. If consumers receive negative news about the product of company can cause harm, they are likely to find the competing brand to switch over. Without handling the crisis effectively, it creates a great opportunity for competitors to seduce customers and steal away from the affected brand.

(Salvador, Ikeda, & Crescitelli, 2017) stated that consumers forget about the crisis and will not experience long term damage once the crisis is managed in a correct manner. Therefore, organizations that have a well-managed media issue suffer less and rebound faster during a crisis. But, in the short run, the brand reputation is still be directly affected by the crisis. Consumers’ responses to a brand crisis play a fundamental role in the detrimental nature of the crisis, with responses including consumer dissatisfaction, deterioration of purchase intention and loss of trust in the organization (Xie & Peng, 2009). Xie & Peng (2009) argue that brand crises present one of the biggest threats to organizations’ trustworthiness, due to its fragile nature and the nature of brand crisis to expose organizational vulnerabilities. Some scholars confirm that a violation of trust due to brand crisis leads to decreases of loyalty, retention and willingness to act (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). The recovery of trust is now organizations’ top priority post-crisis and has resulted in a growing association between trust and brand crises within literature (Xie & Peng, 2009).

III. DATA COLLECTION

Five private hospitals in Vietnam are concerned in this paper to concern, these hospitals are located in province, such as Nghe An, Da Nang, Da Lat City, Ho Chi Minh City, Binh Duong. Accordingly, the questionnaire used in the quantitative method is learned and developed from the exploratory findings of the qualitative method. Of which the qualitative research method via the in-depth interviews with experts in the industry. The interviewees are selected based on their experience and knowledge of handling several media risk in the healthcare industry. The invited experts are the manager of the hospital such as: Operation manager, Chief Operation Officer, Chief Finance Officer, Chief Executive Officer. While the quantitative method is based on face to face interviewing, respondents are patients who come to a private hospital to meet the doctor on his or her appointment.

A table of questionnaires was equally presented to each participant according to their experiences in hospital management, medical incident, media crisis and the impact on their hospital. The questions were mainly open-ended questions with a small number of closed questions, also demographic information of respondents are taken into account.

The criteria that the author selects interviewees based on their specialties, management levels, positions and working experience directly affected by a media crisis. The participants who are in charge of hospital management in higher level for at least 3 years in healthcare industry and 2 years in direct management position such as: operations, finance and marketing.

Appropriately, 9 participants who are interviewed are aged above thirty years old because at this age, they would have been dealing with crisis in their hospitals. Thus, those criteria are critical to identify the level of impact for a media crisis in the medical industry, especially the private sector.

Although there are case studies and lessons learned from the hospital's media crisis, none of the hospital or research quantifies the loss of revenue from the impact of the media crisis. The participants acknowledged that the impact of media crisis to the hospital has less damage since they focus on planning and controlling the risk via several risk management and crisis management programs.

In order to manage a media crisis, besides the financial matter, the experience of the management team who are dealing with media crisis play a critical role in reacting to a media crisis. They will help the hospital to mitigate the media crisis more efficient and effective. When a financial issue is a barrier to close a media crisis, the team with strong experience will be able to find a common solution to making decision, communication and dealing with patients. As the result, the hospital will overcome the media crisis faster and less impact on the revenue.

IV. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

As previously mentioned, 143 respondents are interviewed through the online, which the questionnaire was sent to individual email. The email contact of patients are provided by the hospitals. As mentioned in table 1, respondents who are patients, in which the sample distribution is not so different between two groups, married group (53.15%) and single group (53.15%), but different between male (32.17%) and female (67.83%).

Mostly patients' age are the range of 26 - <46 years old accounting for 87.4%, and their education level are popular for university/college and postgraduate, accounting for 86%. The monthly income of patients in the sample of the range of >10 – 30 million VND accounting for 54%. As a result, patients in the sample can be concluded, they have a certain knowledge and good income. This is convenient for the research, once respondents are asked for information related to the advertising or disease information, they will respond appropriately.

Table 1: Demographic information

Information	Frequency	Percent
Gender	143	100%
Male	46	32.17%
Female	97	67.83%
Married status	143	100%
Single	67	46.85%
Married	76	53.15%
Years old	143	100%
18 - < 26 years old	8	5.59%
26 - <36 years old	93	65.03%

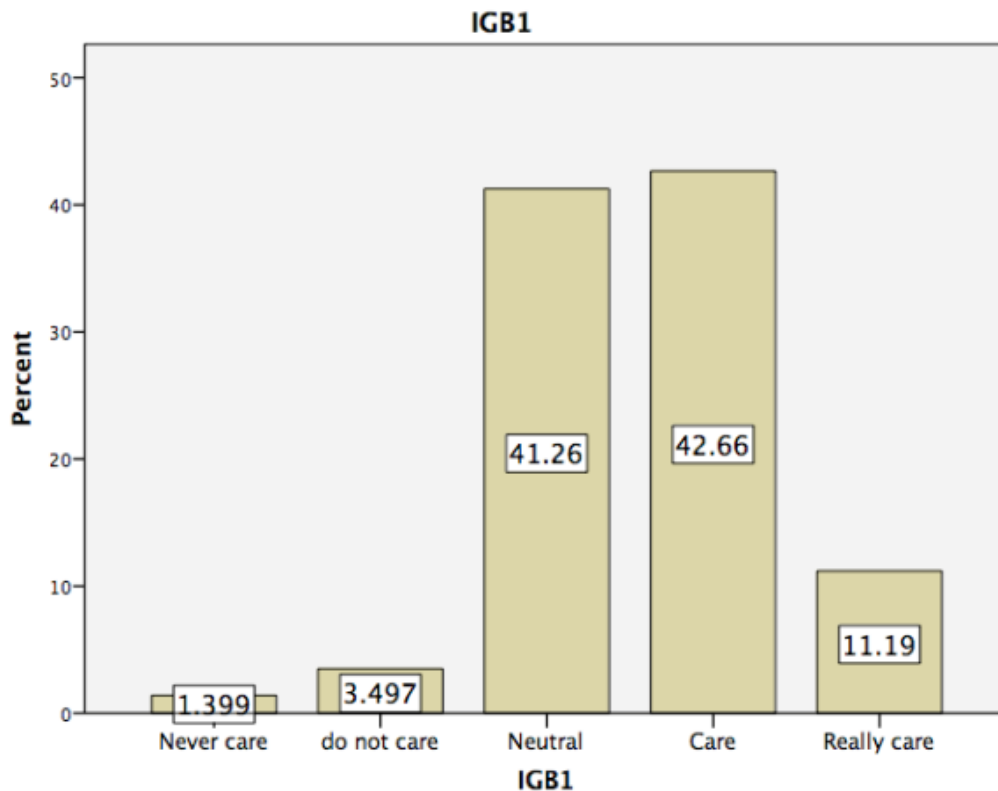
36 - <46 years old	32	22.38%
46 - <56 years old	7	4.90%
>= 56 years old	3	2.10%
Education	143	100%
High school	6	4.20%
Vocational school	4	2.80%
University and college	65	45.45%
Postgraduate	58	40.56%
Monthly Income	143	100%
10 Mil. VND and less	25	17.48%
>10 - 20 mill. VND	54	37.76%
>20 - 30 mill. VND	24	16.78%
>30 - 40 mill.VND	13	9.10%
>40 mill. VND	27	18.88%

Source: Own survey

Analysing patients' evaluation on media crisis

When asked by the question of “have you ever heard the good news from the medical services of a private hospital?” There are 42.66% and 11.19% of patients who care and really care the good news from the medical services (figure 1). While when asked by the question of “have you ever heard the bad news from the medical services of a private hospital?” the answer of care and really care information of patient is 32.87% and 9.79% respectively (figure 2).

Figure 1: Patients interested in the good news



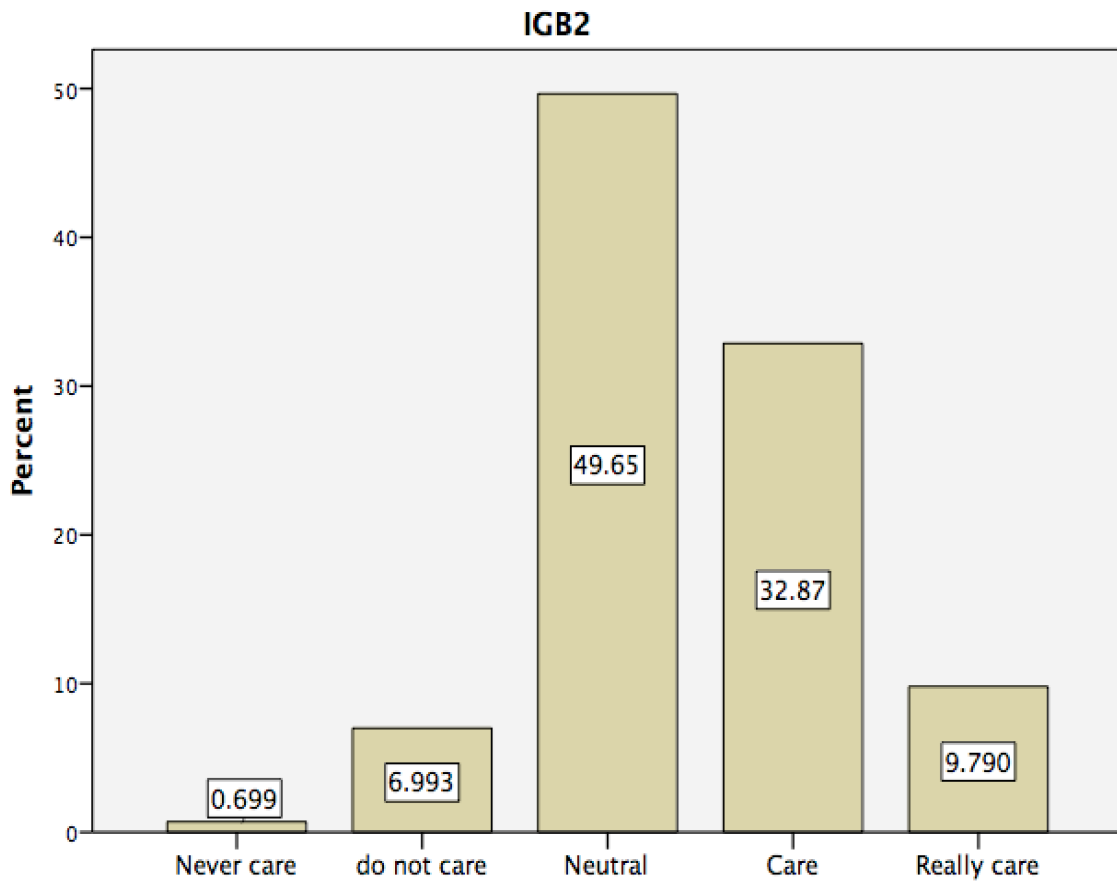


Figure 2: Patients interested in the bad news

Although there are many media channels, such as official media channel, unofficial media channel, forum, social group, friend and family, and others, the official news channel and the news from friends and family are the trusted most.

The reliable media channel

Based on the result, the official media channel and the news from friends and family are the trusted sources (figure 3).

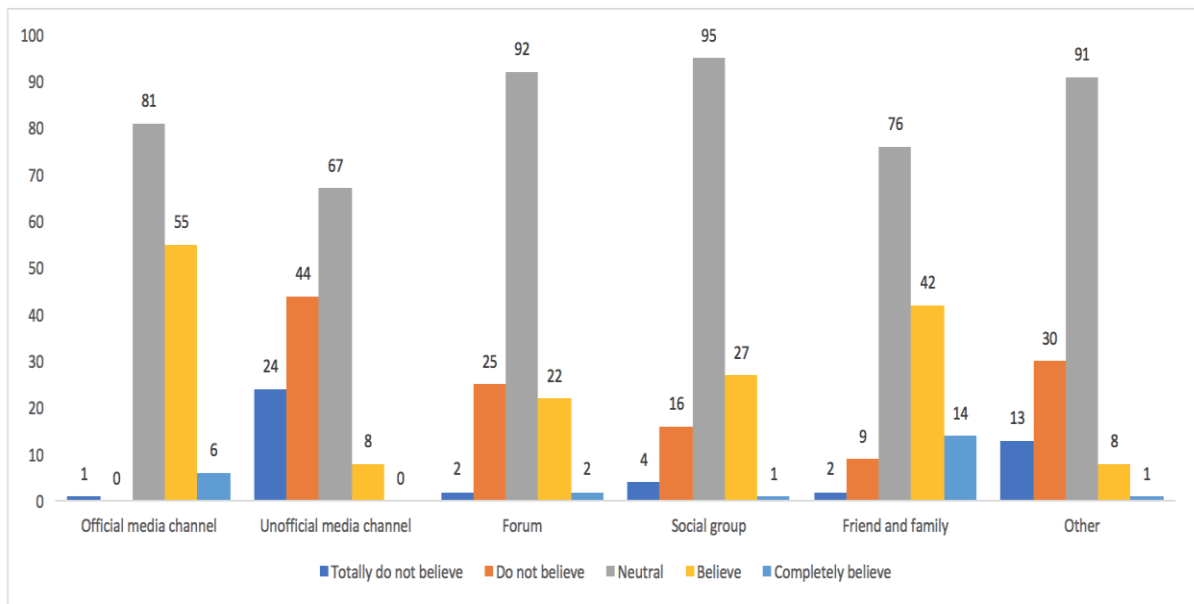


Figure 3: Media channel and its trust
Source: Own survey

With the question of “do you often share bad news to others?” the answer presented in figure 4 mentioned that once patients got the bad news, they regularly share those bad news to friends and family (31%), and just sometimes share those information to family and friend 43%. While patients don’t concern share the bad news to groups social and their private page.

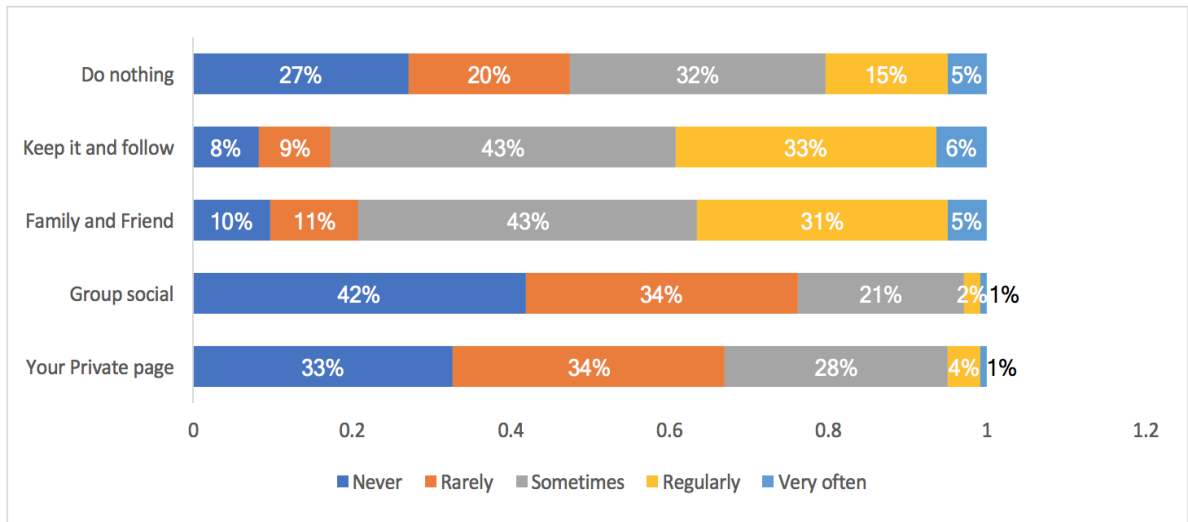


Figure 4: Frequency table of sharing news
Source: Own survey

As resulted in figure 5, the information brings how trust consumers think of hospital and the brand of hospital once the bad news occurred on the media. Accordingly, 85% of the patients do not believe the hospital even that hospital has a good brand name before the crisis.

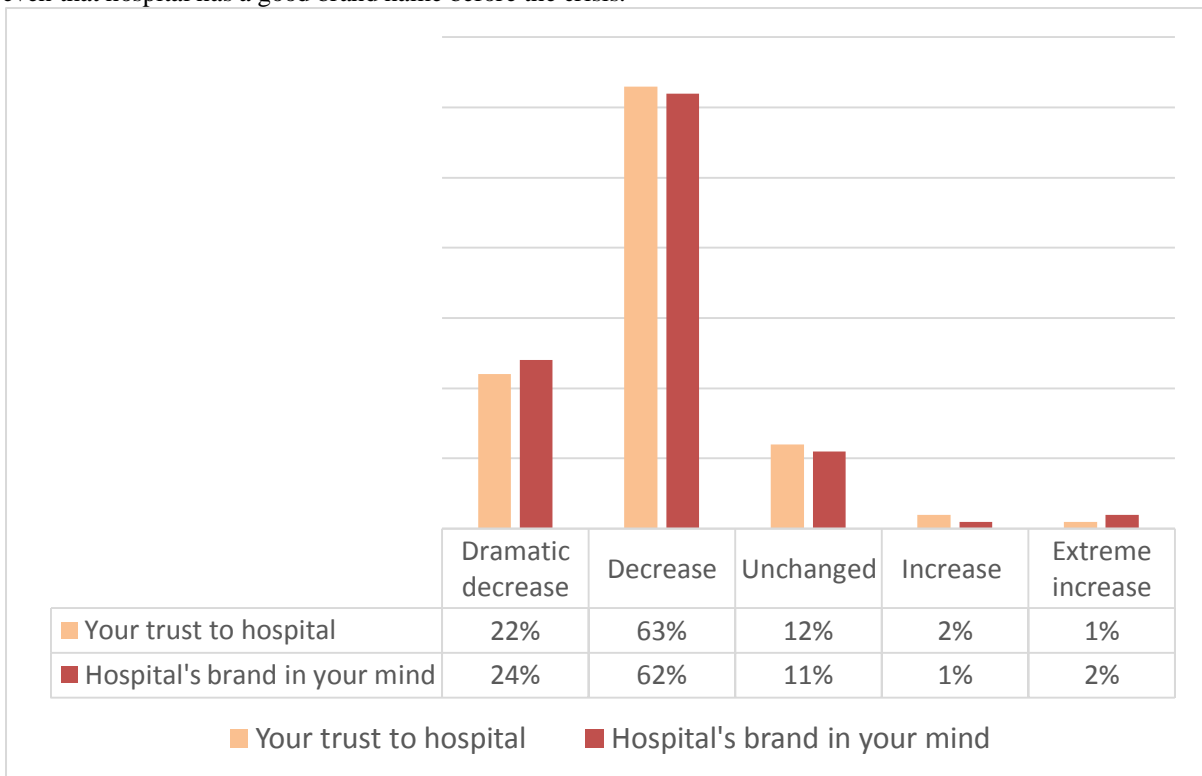


Figure 5: The impact of media crisis on brand
Source: Own survey

Consumer purchase intention after media crisis

With the question of “do you intend to buy medical services after media crisis?” the answer of patients is resulted in figure 6. Accordingly, the patients are not interested much in the purchase intension of medical

services for the hospitals where they usually use and have never used, in which they do not trust more on the hospital never used previously.

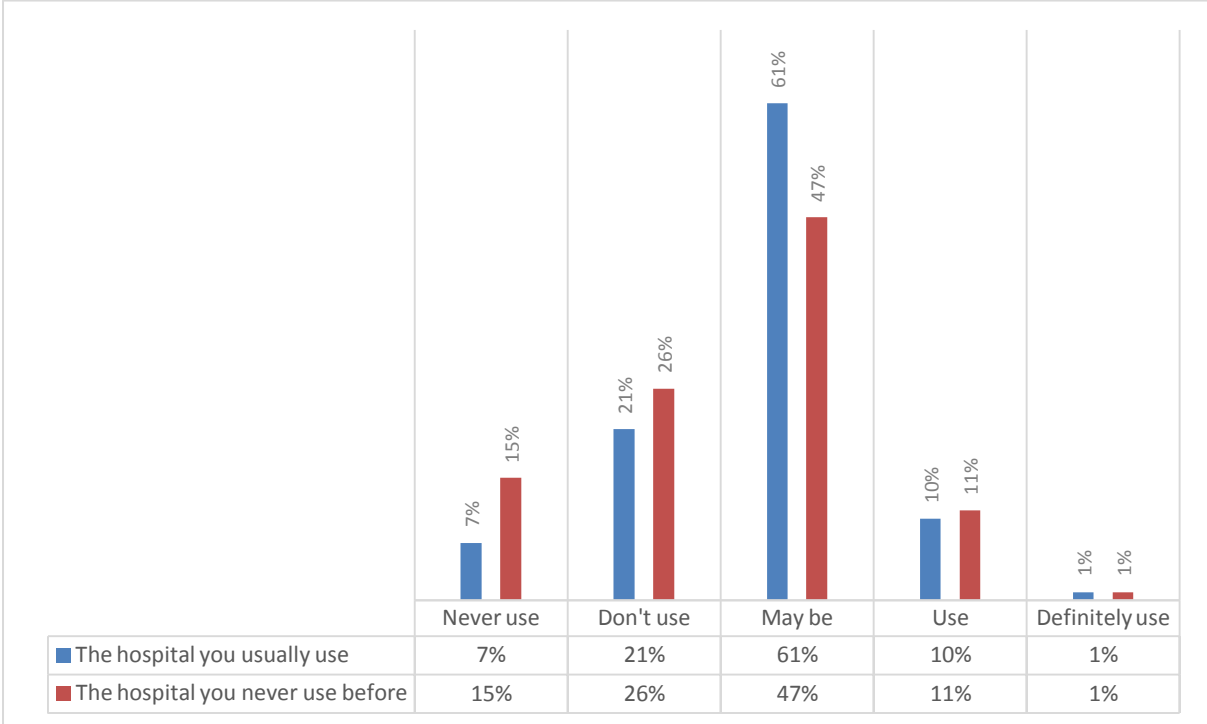


Figure 6: Purchase intension of patient during media crisis

The reaction of regular and loyal customer

The “Never use” and “Do not use” group take 46% of the interviewees who will stop using the medical services if the media crisis happened at the department that they are having treatment. On the other hand, only 21% of people will stop using the medical services if the media crisis strikes the other medical department (figure 6).

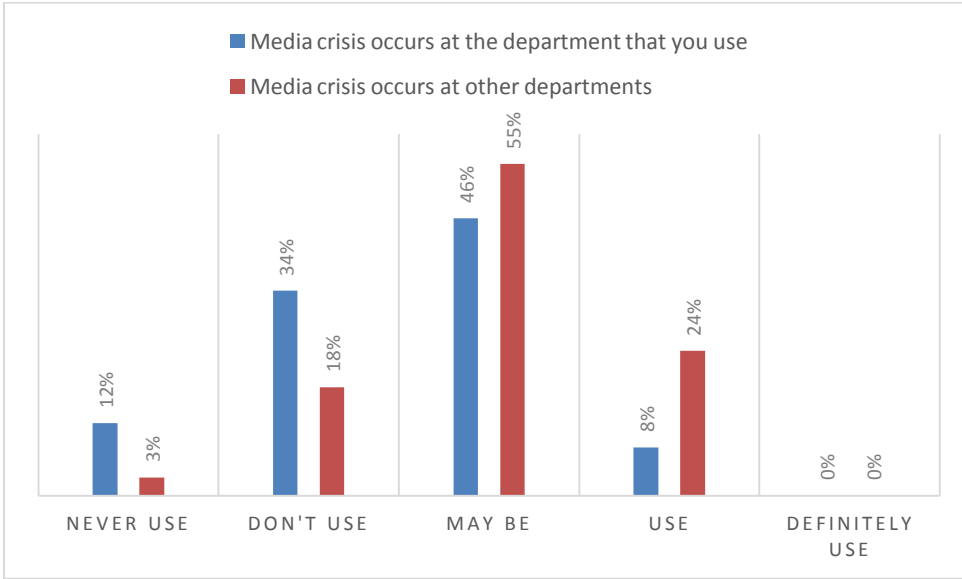


Figure 6: Customer behaviour during media crisis
Source: Own survey

The data analysis brings a message that the media crisis has a significant impact on the hospital and generate a decrease in the brand image of hospital and in the patient’s trust. Consequence, it causes a decrease in the purchasing intention of the patient, even they are whether or not are loyal of the private hospital. Based on

results, two concerns are taken into account of this study. Firstly, to the impact on the patient's behaviour during the crisis, if there is a bad news, patients will share this news with their friends and family while the others will wait for more information. On the other hand, any news that comes from friends and family channel is more reliable as well as having a greater influence on their behaviour. Secondly, to the media channel, this research also confirms that the patient does not care about the news in the unofficial media channel while all online platforms are more reliable for the customer. They can easily share the news on social group and forum.

V. DISCUSSION

Patients in the study stated that the media crisis can create a severe impact on revenue of hospital. However, the findings showed that the impact is variance among respondents where the impact leaves more serious effects for some participants compare to the others. In addition, the revenue decreases deeply or slightly depending on the level of medical incident, the level of a media crisis, the specialty, the professional management method of the hospital and the management team. The effect on the revenue is significant when the hospital specializes in one medical specialty such as the obstetrics department, the orthopaedic department, or the main medical specialty of a general hospital.

Besides, patients also described their concerns on the affected brand by this media crisis such as the bad brand image and bad brand reputation. If the hospital brand image is badly affected, the hospital cannot attract more patients and loss most of the medical check-up contracts with big companies. Meanwhile, a bad reputation directly affects the cost of the hospital's operations such as an increase in medical malpractice insurance, difficulty in recruiting good doctors and nurses, increase the recruitment cost to have a good team. In terms of marketing activities, the hospital must pay more money in branding activities such as corporate social responsibility programs, patient trust-building programs.

Another factor emerging from the study findings is that all participants are unsure about the customer purchase intention after a media crisis. They concern greatly about the brand trust in the patient. When the media crisis occurred, many patients expressed concern about the quality of the hospital's treatment, the quality of the doctors, customer service. Most of the patients express their suspicion in any advertising campaigns or communication after the crisis. The perceived qualitative factor of the brand in the customer's mind becomes worse and will greatly affect the decision of selecting a medical organization.

Two participants acknowledged that the delay in solving a media crisis that can lead to serious consequences, because some management team members do not have the same perspectives on how serious the impact of the crisis on the hospital due to the lack of experience. In some situation, the management team do not want to create a precedent of paying an excessive or a high compensation to settle down a media crisis at the early stage or the pre-crisis stage. As a result, the handling of the media crisis becomes more difficult to solve and costlier.

The findings of this study suggest that the financial loss from losing the brand image, brand reputation and brand trust is the critical factors associated with lower patient volume, higher operation cost in both short-term period and long-term period. In particular, the loss of hospital brand images is extremely important. Because in the healthcare sector, hospital brand images are built based on high-quality doctors, accurate diagnostic results, effective treatment quality, and a helpful medical team. These factors are the key drivers in choosing a hospital.

Besides, while hospital operation cost is based on the prestige and reputation of hospitals, the bad reputation caused a huge impact on operating costs. Hospital operating cost increases after a media crisis such as: (i) Recruitment costs will increase because it is difficult to recruit good doctors, good nurses, and good staff; (ii) The cost of purchasing will increase because the lower patient volume means the consumption of medical consumable items is lower than committed with the vendor; (iii) The increased cost of buying medical malpractice insurance.

The findings of this research study reflect the previous researches which proved the effects of media crisis to an organization. In another words, the personal experience of media crisis is similar to the attribution theory (Weiner, 1985). A customer can stop using the services, leave bad news about the organization and this is a worst scenario for any crisis. In this situation, the revenue has a negative impact. In the age of the internet, each individual can spread their comments or their sufferings from the bad hospital experiences on many online channels.

For the negative impact on the revenue, profit and brand, it is aligned to all studies by real companies that are professional in dealing with the media crisis for their clients. In this study, the author applies practical study and its information from the worldwide reputation in risk management enterprises - ICG group. During three decades of dealing with the media crises, ICG has developed the crisis escalation model to describe the decline in brand and volume loss if an organization cannot control the crisis. The results of this research align with ICG perspectives. The greater is the reduction in the brand, the greater the impact on hospital revenue.

VI. CONCLUSION

The findings of this research aligns with the previous studies of medical incident, media crisis management, the solution of solving the problem, the role of understanding about the impact of media crisis for the management team and the importance of purchasing medical malpractice insurance. This study highlighted that the impact of media crisis on the tangible and the intangible asset is huge and its impact is noticeably different between the management team who gain strong experience from a professional hospital in comparison with another normal team.

Within a hospital, there is a lack of consensus on the recognition of the impact of media risks on the hospital revenue among departments. The polarization among the perception of the finance department, the medical team and marketing team is a key issue. Without having the same understanding between departments, the process of resolving the media crisis requires longer period with the extra cost incurred and extending the period of recovering from the brand image's damaging. The loss of the hospital is not only the capital value but also the loss of potential customers as well as the sustainability of the hospital. In order to respond quickly and appropriately when a crisis strikes, the managers of each related departments within the hospital need to have the same perception on the estimated lost and inter-coordinate with each other to mitigate the exposure of media risk on patient's trust.

The findings can help the decision makers to minimize the total cost, time to recover from damaging and propose hedging solution to mitigate the exposure of the risk on the both patient's trust and revenue. When the time was really crucial for media crisis management, an effective media crisis management will gain consensus from the stakeholders, help to minimize the opportunity cost and pull the revenue back to its normal trend. The paper aims to point out the level of impact media risk on hospital revenue for both

In the healthcare sector, media crises often arise from a medical incident. Depending on the level of medical incident, the media crises will be created by the same level. Whether it was a subjective incident or objective incident, the media crisis can cause serious consequences to the revenue and the branding if the hospital management team does not have a plan for media crisis management and an effective medical risk management plan. The author recommends some solutions which follow strictly the crisis escalation model.

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