



**Impact of Service Quality and Customer Perception: A Case Study
of Private Clinics in Myanmar**

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Abstract

Myanmar health care systems and policies have faced even more challenges and issues in the current consumer environment, and the clinic's medical environment has played an important role in the global environment. Currently, studies investigate service quality and customer perceptions in private clinics. This study focused on examining the impact of service quality factors in private clinics and also explored determinants and consequences of service quality. A documentary research format has been used. This study showed that service quality is affected by customer perception and its impact on customer satisfaction and word of mouth. It also presented that the service quality of private clinics is influenced by reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness, as well as showed that customer satisfaction and word of mouth impact on customer perception. Good service quality and customer perception also has positive direct effects on both customer satisfaction and word of mouth. The results showed that customer satisfaction creates positive word of mouth, after that, both customer satisfaction and positive word of mouth have direct positive effects on loyalty and good image on the private clinic. Thus, good service quality plays a vital role in creating customer satisfaction and positive word of mouth, as suggested by many authors. This paper first presents the background of the research and a short review of this research, followed by the evidence and produces the main results of the study. Next, the theoretical consequences of the findings and then recommendations for the improvement of the private clinics in Myanmar. The study also recommends that private clinics should improve the quality of service by focusing their strategies on satisfaction, reducing waiting time, and improve good communication with patients. The study also recommends they

should possess improved tangibility, such as convenience and cleanliness of the clinic.

Keywords: service quality, customer perception, private clinic, Myanmar



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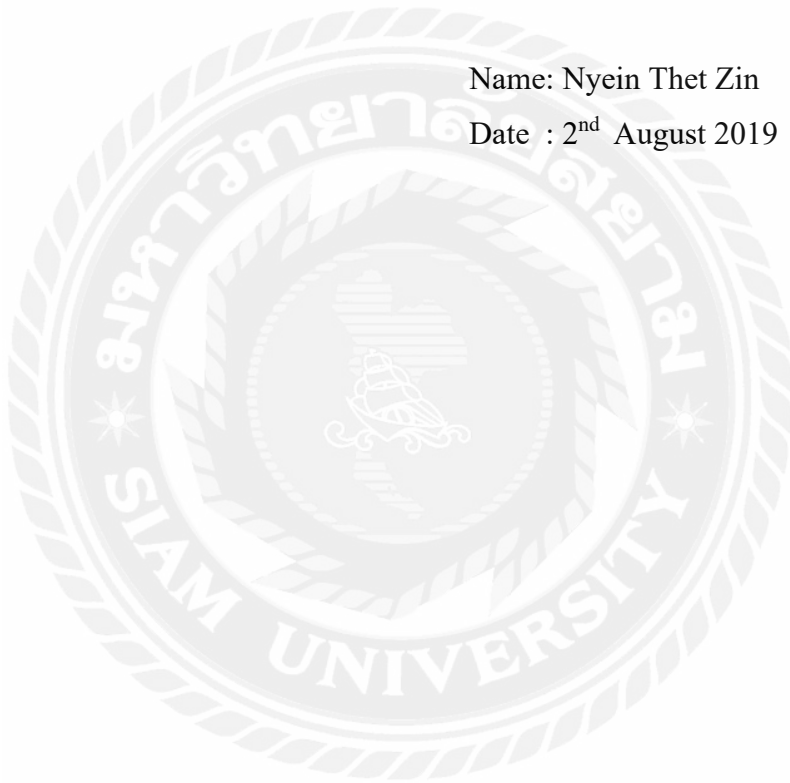


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Chapter 1- Introduction

1.1-Background

Nowadays, the services sector is rapidly growing in the region of the global economy, and health care organizations are one of an essential role in that growth (Dang, 2016). Some of the developed countries are making money by publicizing medical tourism as well as improving the medical field for the public. Most of the countries can get the benefit of providing high-quality medical care at a low cost. So, the quality of service and patient satisfaction issues are becoming interested in researchers from around the world (Reddy, 2017). In Asia, such as Myanmar, Thailand and Singapore, health care will be a top priority; there also will be some issue such as giving the service quality of patient (Jayaraman, 2017).

In Myanmar, the health care system becomes developed as changes of the political and management system. But the major provider of general health care remained like the ministry of health care that has a mixture of the public and private system. The private sector and some of the health care has been developed in Mandalay, Yangon and in some major cities. The Myanmar Red Cross Society also emphasizes the importance of providing services in cooperation with national health policy NGOs such as the Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association as the cooperation in the health sector becomes more important (MOH, 2014). Nowadays, Healthcare Association becomes provides a chance to update and exchange knowledge by holding seminars, conferences for the practitioners, updating diagnoses and remedial measures in Myanmar. Private and specialist clinics have become a popular alternative venue for patients seeking immediate medical treatment. These facilities mainly provide outpatient care for patients, but some provide institutional care (KO, 2016).

1.2-Problem to be investigated

In global, regional and national level, it is clear that service quality plays a major role in the survival and growth of those healthcare organizations. This is true for a business organization, including a private clinic, as it is important to make effective decisions on allocating its resources and not to incur the waste (Abrampah, 2018).

Recently, there have been tremendous changes in the political, economic, social and legal frameworks in Myanmar, and those changes have impacted various sectors of businesses in the country. One of those changes is the permission of private healthcare service providers both from domestic and from abroad, and it has created more competitive

pressures on the existing healthcare service providers (IFC, 2016). Most of the private clinic has been ignoring Customer perceptions in health care quality evaluation because; most health care professionals believe that the average patient has a poor judgment in the quality of health care services. Since patients are consumers of health care services, the health care provider is in the same situation as any other service provider. The poor service qualities and disregard of customer perception have an impact on customer satisfaction. For that reason, the main problem is to determine the determinants and consequences of service quality that can help to improve the knowledge of service quality (John, 2015).

.1.3-Objective

With the study of the backgrounds on the Myanmar healthcare industry and the purpose of solving the research problems, there is a need for getting the information on about what are the impacts of service quality on a private clinic. With this information, the management of a private clinic will be able to make effective decisions on allocating its resources for the improvement of the service quality and achieve positive outcomes (Pathak, 2017).

The objective is to explore the impact of service quality at a private clinic in Myanmar. Also, explore the determinants and consequences of service quality in private clinics.

1.4-Scope of the Research

This study focuses on the impact of service quality and customer perception in private clinics in Myanmar. This research shows how the service quality and customer perception are related, then to explore the determinant and consequences of service quality. Then, we decided to focus on the private clinic in Myanmar.

This research was done in the documentary research format. For this study, the researcher reviewed literature from research papers in website, e-library and EBSCO database, as references for a structure of my research document. These research papers have helped to get ideas for building up the research points, and conclusions.

1.5-Research Significant

Retaining the existing customers and attracting new customers are vital for the private clinic for achieving sustainable success through ever-improving competitive advantages (Basturescu, 2014). In the private clinic, they become more competitive with both private and public clinic institutions striving to perform better to attract new customers and retain old one by improving service quality. Therefore service climate must play an important role in understanding how to deliver excellent service quality. Service quality is generally a comparison of customer service expectations in relation to company performance (Cambra, 2014).

A private clinic with a high level of quality of service will not only meet your needs but also be economically competitive in your business. The successful private clinics, which remain competitive and proactively relevant in work, can obtain information from their current or potential customer base so they can ensure they are meeting their needs. If service quality is not good enough, it will become an impact not only on competitive advantages but also in a financial advantage. Delivering higher-quality at a lower cost is proving to be a competitive differentiator for health systems. So, the ability to provide a higher value of service quality becomes important (Al-Ibrahim, 2014). When a customer gets a great customer service, they will recommend their family and friends that leads to good word of mouth. Positive word of mouth is both create more exposure for the clinic and increases popularity around services. Also, when the customer is happy with excellent service, they will stick back with the clinic and will not shift to competitors. This in itself is a big plus point for the business as customer retention is far cheaper than customer acquisition (Harve, 2017).

Chapter 2-Literature Review

2.1-Service Quality

Service is the act or performance provided by one party to another. Even though the process is tied to the actual product, performance is intangible and generally does not result in ownership of the factor of production. A service is an economic activity that produces value and provides benefits to customers at specific times and places as a result of making preferred changes in or on behalf of the service recipient. Service quality can be well-defined as the perceived judgment, that customers evolve by comparing their expectation about services with they perceived the services to obtain (Awoke, 2015). Service quality is reliant on two variables, perceived services: service customer actually receives form the clinic and expected services: which comes from the customer's previous experience or overall perception of the service (Mmutle & Shonhe, 2017).

Service quality has a close relationship with customer satisfaction, customer retention, and positive word of mouth (Rahayu, 2018). Service quality is attainment in customer service and it reflects at each service encounter. The good quality of service will influentially client to repeat the demand for service. It shows customer behavioral towards the service provider. Customer satisfaction in service depends upon reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness. If providers get this determinant of service quality, customers will hand over the keys to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Panda, 2014). The quality of service that fulfills customer expectation will gain customer loyalty. This intention will make customers' favorable inclination a service relative to other firms offering the same service. Service quality is increasingly perceived as a tool to enhance consumer value. Then good service quality is positioning in a competitive environment to ensure customer satisfaction, retention and investment. Base on the above impact, it will be analyzed that the service quality should be good in a private clinic. Quality of service has become a critical differentiator and the most powerful competitive weapon in many major service organizations (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017).

2.1.1 Determinant and consequence of Service quality

- **The determinant of Service quality**

Tangibles

Tangible encompasses the appearance of the physical facilities and the convenience offered to the customer by the layout of the physical facilities. The literature suggests that appearance is important to customers. It also suggests that customers (patients) value the convenience offered during the treatment that physical aspects such as layout offer (Kalutharawithana & Jayawardena, 2017).

Reliability

Reliability is the determinant of service quality very important in healthcare industry such as in private clinics. Patients view reliability as a combination of doing it right and availability of all the information regarding treatment, and some criteria and offerings under this determinant include promises and information availability. It is believed that applying reliability principles to healthcare, such as in a private clinic, has the potential to help reduce defects in care or care processes, increase the consistency with which appropriate care is delivered, and improve patient outcomes such satisfaction and positive word of mouth. (Akdere, 2018)

Responsiveness

The responsiveness of a private clinic's healthcare service is a main factor in enhancing the service quality. This can be achieved by offering prompt and accurate services through health systems of private clinics by redesigning the system in such a way that they take account of and respond appropriately to the universally legitimate expectations of individuals. The offerings and provisions under this determinant is intended to increase the well-being of the patients and customers derived from having responsive health care services through the improvements efficient and effective treatments or health system processes that are more responsive (Mthethwa and Chabikuli, 2016).

Assurance

Assurance in healthcare industry refers to knowledge and courtesy of healthcare professionals and supporting employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence in the minds of the patients and customers. In the health care setting, assurance is reflected by competencies of diagnosis, skills to interpret laboratory report, provide appropriate

explanations to queries. Well-trained nurses and other support staffs also play vital roles in providing support to patients' feelings of assurance and safety (Mohsen, 2017).

Empathy

Healthcare Empathy involves ability to understand the patient's situation, perspective, and feelings and their attached meanings, to communicate that understanding and check its accuracy; and to act on that understanding with the patient in a helpful and therapeutic way. Research on the effect of empathy on health outcomes in primary care suggest it plays a key role in the enhancement of perceived service quality (Rai, 2018).

- **The consequence of Service quality**

Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a reflection of how a customer feels about interrelating with service. Customer satisfaction is a function of perceived performance and expectations. Perceived performance is the consumer's belief about the product or service experience. Customer's expectations, on the other hand, are influenced by the Performance of the service in the recent past Word of mouth and recommendations (Palací, 2019). Customer satisfaction plays an important role in a private clinic. It is not only a leading indicator of customer loyalty, reduce complaints and increase revenue but also a key differentiator that helps attract new customers in a competitive business environment (Copley, 2017). Customers get satisfaction from a product or a service based on whether their need is met easily, in a convenient way that makes them loyal to the business. If the clinic can provide for customers with incredible service, the clinic will gain competitive advantages and customer satisfaction. The importance of customer satisfaction should not be neglected in a private clinic. If private clinic worked actively to increase customer satisfaction, it is more likely to see an increase in revenue (Williams, 2018).

Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth seems to have a crucial impact on consumer responses for several reasons. Firstly, word-of-mouth communication may contain actual information based on vivid experience incidents. Second, it is originated by non-firm, non-marketing sources, and it is likely to be perceived as more credible than other communications from marketers. Third, word-of-mouth could have more damage since it is distributed to many others. An important determinant of word-of-mouth seems to be consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Tassiello, 2016). Thus, past researches examined that word-of-mouth as one of the consequences of service quality. Negative word-of-mouth arises by displeased consumers,

telling others about their unsatisfactory experience, and recognized variables that distinguish this response from others, such as changing products and making a complaint. The past results showed that negative word-of-mouth occurred when the problem was severe, and when the retailer's responsiveness to complaints was negatively perceived. It was also affected by the attributions of the dissatisfaction; more negative word-of-mouth was made when blame for the dissatisfaction was attributed to the clinic (William, 2017).

Few studies listed that negative information on consumers examines negative word-of-mouth. Consumers seem to give more loads to negative information and non-marketing sources of information in evaluations than to positive information and marketing information (López, 2014). The private clinic provided higher service quality and got the patient's satisfaction that will make positive WOM and leads to a good image of the business. Customer satisfaction can provide benefits such as positive WOM and competitive advantages. Quality of service and customer satisfaction can affect customer loyalty that will form recommendations from mouth to mouth as a positive WOM (Sanjaya, 2018).

2.2-Customer perception

Perception is an organism which describes an individual's perceived image which customer expect from any product or service. Customer Perception is a marketing concept that tells about what customers think about a brand or a clinic or its offerings. It can be positive or negative feelings or behaviour, perceptions, expectations or experiences that a customer has (Devcic, 2017). Customer perception can provide increases awareness of the great power of the company, and increases expectations about how business should care for the customer. Customers' perception to service heavily depends on service quality" that customers evaluate service quality based on perceptions of service quality concept, a technical quality or outcome of the service act (what is delivered) or how well the service performs as expected and as promised or what the customer receives in the end or what is delivered (Mmutle & Shonhe, 2017).

Understanding the concept of customer perception is the most important. Customer perception is influenced by a variety of factors. Besides the actual outcome that is the product or service deliver the expected function and did it fulfill the customers need – the whole process of consumption and all interactions involved are of crucial importance (Recklies, 2015). If we desire to attract high-end customers, then make a play on such things as quality,

cleanliness and hygiene, lighting, and general details in the way to present the services. When we make an effort to improve consumer perception of the service quality, it will quickly reflect on hard-won effort. We will also make our customers feel as if they are part of the family - and there is no better recipe for brand loyalty than family (Durden, 2018). Business who wants to have a strong and stable relationship with their customers should provide high rate service to customer. Value is a consumer perception about final worth of a service quality with respect to its benefits. According to the above theories, customer perception is most important in receive service quality of private clinic. The success or failure of a business to a great extent is influences by customer perception. Though a customer's perception about a service to some extent is said to be based on customer's actual experience obtained from the use of specific good or service, it is also to a great extent influenced by a factor of service quality (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017)

2.3-Private clinic in Myanmar

In Myanmar, a nongovernmental organization that works to improve the health of poor communities through research and private health, said there were many challenges for the health care system moving forward. These include the harmonization and integration of subsystems, such as the ministry of defense and industry, workforce capacity and leadership challenges (Cousins, 2016). The private sector contains diverse individuals and institutions, including international and local NGOs, private general practitioners, private hospitals, private pharmacies, small stationery and basic supply store stocking drugs and traditional practitioners. Personal GPs are generally diverse groups that have been trained as general doctors or family medical doctors. They contain physicians who are working in government services but who treat private patients outside work hours and doctors who are engaged only in private care. They also include GPs who work with personal abilities, but they are also part of the International NGO (INGO), Population Services International (PSI) (Sagili, 2015).

The private sector, though still underdeveloped, has greater access to resources than the public sector. The Department of Medical Services reported 193 private hospitals and 4,112 private clinics nationwide, staffed with a total of 18,443 medical doctors. In comparison, the public healthcare system comprised 1,072 hospitals (including 16 that practice primarily traditional medicine) and 2,199 general clinics, staffed with only 13,099 doctors in total (Fertig, Park, & Toth, 2019). The World Health Organization also recognizes that the work of private health care providers needs to be streamlined and aligned with

national health policies and objectives. The economic results that drive private sector engagement shall need to be contextualized with regards to the social values and results that underline the objective of achieving United Health Care (UHC) in Myanmar (Cousins, 2016). The possibility to improve service care through better compliance with standardized guidelines, private clinical will have a competitive advantage. The reforming the service and perceptive customer needs must be regularly improved to maintain the good relationship of the service quality and patients overall satisfaction. Many researchers identified patient satisfaction as their psychological or cognitive perceptions from the service that are provided form the health care center (Gothenburg, 2016).



Chapter 3- Finding

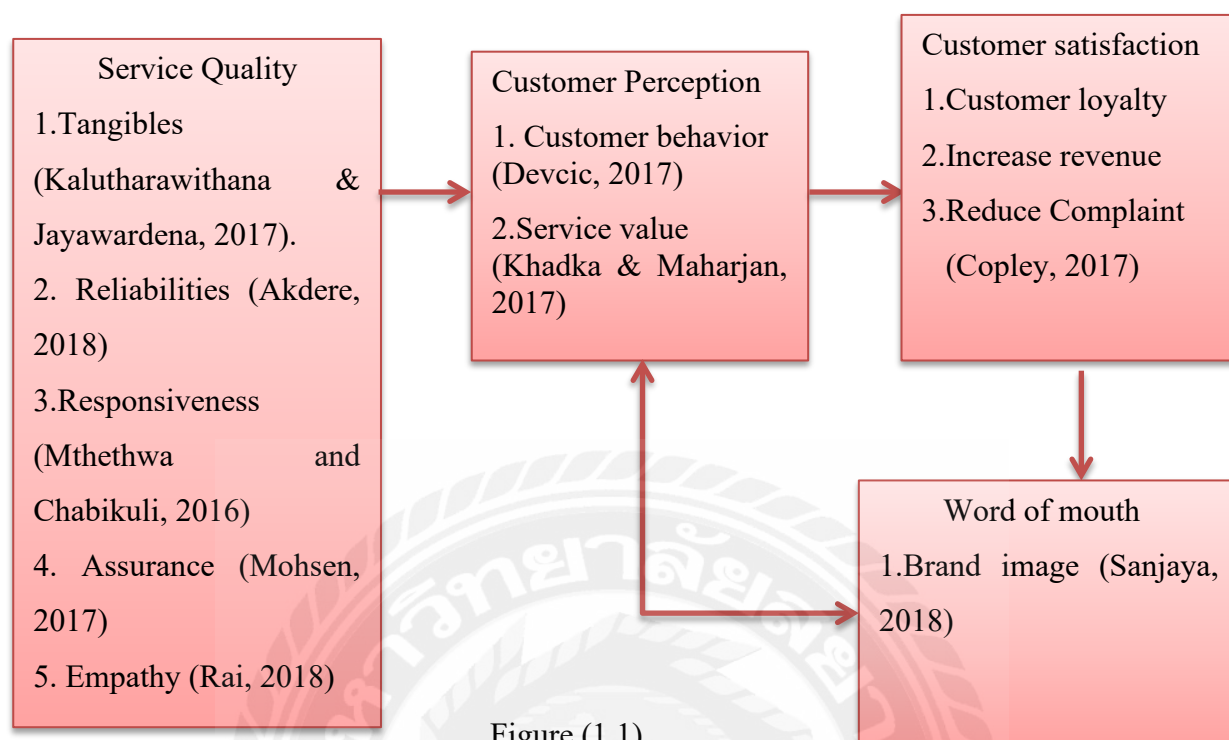


Figure (1.1)

(Panda, 2014) and (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017) stated that excellent service quality would provide conclusive repeat service. It displays customer behavioral headed for the service provider. Customer satisfaction in service quality is determined by reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy and responsiveness. If providers develop this determinant of service quality, customers will become the keys to customer satisfaction and loyalty. Quality of service is the most critical tool for consumers. As a competitive environment that ensures customer satisfaction, preservation and sponsorship. (Palací. 2019) identified that customer satisfaction is a function of perceived performance and expectations. Perceived performance is the consumer's belief in a product or service experience. Customer expectations, on the other hand, are affected by the performance of recent word of mouth and recommendations. (Copley, 2017) stated that customer satisfaction plays a vital role in private clinics. This is not only a leading pointer of customer loyalty; it is an important differentiator for attracting new customers in a competitive business environment as well as reducing complaint and increasing revenue.

(Sanjaya, 2019) proved that the higher the quality of service, the higher the patient's satisfaction with the private clinic service that leads the patient's positive WOM to the good image of the business. Service quality and customer satisfaction influence customer loyalty and form recommendations from mouth to mouth (positive WOM). (Devcic, 2017) identified

that customer perception is a marketing concept that tells customers what they think about a brand or a clinic or product. It can be positive or negative emotions or behaviors, perceptions, expectations, or experiences the customer has. (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017) showed that businesses that want to maintain a strong and stable relationship with their customers need to provide high value-added services to the customers. Value is the consumer's perception of the final value of service quality in relation to the advantage. The customer's perception of the service to some extent is based on the customer's experience gained through the use of a particular good or service, but this is strongly influenced by the quality of service factor.



Chapter 4- Recommendation

Service quality improvement is a strategy that obtains a competitive advantage in clinics and improves the reputation and profitability of health care organizations during that time. All private clinics have found that it is necessary to monitor and improve the quality of care to survive and achieve patient satisfaction. Operate a quality improvement service is also vital in achieving the goals of the private clinic. Quality of service is considered a success factor for a private clinic. Clinic management must continually improve service quality to get the best customer satisfaction and positive word of mouth (Erbay, 2017). Healthcare managers need a thorough understanding of the ways to increase the quality of service in practical terms. In this situation, managers try to recognize expectations and respond in an effective way to attract as many patients as possible and create loyal customers (Mohebifar, 2016).

For health service management; Healthcare and health practitioners should always adopt practices consistent with providing internal standards and best practice health services. According to past research findings, the empathy has a great impact on the quality of service of the health care service, so the healthcare manager must make an endless effort to combine the personal and individual attention given to the patient. In performing professional duties, doctors and nurses should be aware that the patient is “the most important person” and therefore have an association with the patient's best interests and specific needs. Management also needs to operate a medical facility for services 24 hours a day to increase patient comfort. Therefore customer will become more satisfaction in service (Reynaldo, 2017). Then Patient perception of the reliability in service quality required improvements in some areas, such as medical billing and test reports. The perception that charges were a high could be that since the selected clinic was charitable, patients expect to receive a discount on tests and medicines. Healthcare management should take steps to confirm the accuracy of billing and test reports (Cunha & Suresh, 2015). In addition, private clinics should be reduce waiting times and improve the ability to provide speedy services, to train medical teams to proactively prepare for unexpected problems during prophylactic procedures. Therefore clinic should be provide clear information and guidelines on clinic procedures and rules, to a prominent place and to keep the charges process and procedures clear and simple to reduce the mistake of complex procedures. By following that, clinic can be increase in customer satisfaction and positive word of mouth (Ugarte, 2015).

The medical treatment is also involved in high technology, and the clinic must promote and advertise new technology investments to maintain competitive advantage and customer retention. A positive image of the clinic gives the customer to release in negative experiences. The clinic's positive image can produce a competitive advantage that the clinic cannot manage (Rokkas, 2015). Then the experience of a medical professional is an important area for patients to assess the best service quality of their private clinic and they are expecting for an excellent consultant. Private clinic need to have the right number of specialists because they affect the patient's perception and affect the overall evaluation of the clinic. As a strategy, the administration displays the name of the doctor along with the qualification. This will have a positive impact on the patient's perception of the physician's clinical competency (Falayi, 2018). To obtain an advantage over other competitors, the hospital management needs to pay individual attention to the patients. Staff should appropriately prepare in their dealing with the patients. Personal attentions to patients by the staff are also the areas for private clinic management to review upon (Shafiq, 2017).

At the doctor, nurse and staff level, communication is an essential part of the service. It contributes to meeting the treatment and health outcomes as well as knowledgeable and satisfying patients. It is the patient's right to have all relevant information about the patient's illness and treatment process. This should be constantly communicated to them by the doctor. Patients and their relatives are notified continuously of changes, new referrals, benefits, etc. and must be kept up-to-date on the services provided (Frampton, 2017). Past research has shown that tangibility which affects customer satisfaction more than other factors of service quality. Customers are more concerned to the clinic atmosphere. Therefore, clinics should add availability and cleanliness of the seats and toilets. Then clinic should provide sufficient services to the patients and to improve the quality of service. The clinic should focus on the care, response of nurses and staff in order to maintain the physical environment of the building with its modern decoration and clean appearance. Then nurse and staff need to be willing to help patients and to show a willingness respond to patient questions patiently. In addition, the clinic needs to improve the doctor's reliability, which is a prior improvement to increase customer satisfaction and positive word of mouth (Borneo, 2018).

In other service businesses, such as supermarkets and insurance services, service quality is also vitally important, and customer satisfaction and positive word of mouth are a challenge for marketers. Service business should develop high valued service quality in their business to get the customer satisfaction. Businesses could clearly profit from the customer satisfaction because it can help increase consumer preference over market share. Current

research provides visions into how managers should improve business services and to develop customer satisfaction and positive word of mouth (Yildiz, 2017).

4.1-Research Limitations

This research was to identify the impact of service quality in the healthcare industry, especially in private clinic. However, problems inherent in exploring determinant and consequences of intangible services continue to pose a challenge for health care administrators as well as academicians. It is critical, for successful implementation of quality initiatives, to have a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes quality in health care services. If health care providers understand what attributes consumers use to judge quality, steps can be taken to monitor and enhance performance on those attributes and remedy related problems. As per the documentary research, extract findings and knowledge only from the past researches, most of them are outside Myanmar, accordingly, the finding on the relationships between the service quality and customer perception needs to be confirmed by doing research in the Myanmar private clinic sector and analyze the primary data from the respondents.

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