Original Article

Examination of Corporate Websites of Private Hospitals: Example of Marmara Region

Özel Hastanelerin Kurumsal Web Sitelerinin İncelenmesi: Marmara Bölgesi Örneği

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Active use of information and communication technologies is getting more common in the field of health. Not only the private sector but also public hospitals can provide the users with high-quality and fast service using the internet for appointments, laboratory results, information, promotion, and many other issues.

Material and Methods: This study aimed to examine the content of corporate web pages of private hospitals in the Marmara region in terms of promotion and public relations. The research is in a qualitative base, and it is a content analysis study. Between May 2017 and July 2017, the corporate web pages of all 223 private hospitals in the Marmara region were evaluated on the basis of 18 different criteria, which were determined by the result of a literature review.

Results: It has been observed that 11.21% of the organization chart of the hospitals, 52.01% of the management staff, 20.62% of the quality staff, 28.3% of the manager's message and 7.71% of the self-evaluation. Another finding of the study is that options such as 360 * tour, live support, which have become popular recently and become a good public relations-marketing tool, are not available on many hospitals' websites. Another result reached in the study is that the foreign language option is found in 67.71% of the hospitals web pages. It should be noted that although this rate constitutes the majority, it is not sufficient today. In spite of these, 92.8% of the hospitals made the general promotion of the institution on their corporate web pages, 86.1% explained their mission and vision, 77.13% of the quality policies are announced and 77.13% has the option to receive feedback on satisfaction are positive results.

Conclusion: As a result of the research, although hospitals mostly had their promotion on their web pages, it was seen that they are quite weak in providing new practical and fast services on their pages. The number of websites with a photo/video gallery and a foreign language option were also lower than expected. In conclusion, the websites are not being used effectively in corporate marketing and public relations.

Keywords: Hospital corporate marketing, hospital web sites, public relations

ÖZ

Amaç: Bilgi ve iletişim teknolojilerinin aktif kullanımı sağlık alanında giderek yaygınlaşmaktadır. Yalnız özel sektör değil, kamu hastaneleri de randevu, laboratuvar sonuçları, bilgi, tanıtım ve diğer birçok konuda internet vasıtasıyla kullanıcılara kaliteli ve hızlı hizmet olanağı sunabilmektedir.

Gereç ve Yöntem: Çalışmada Marmara Bölgesindeki özel hastanelerin kurumsal web sayfalarının içeriklerini tanıtım ve halkla ilişkiler anlamında incelemek amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma, niteliksel olup içerik analizi çalışmasıdır. 2017 yılının Mayıs-Temmuz ayları arasında Marmara Bölgesindeki özel hastanelerindeki 223 özel hastanenin tamamının kurumsal web sayfaları literatür taraması sonucunda belirlenen 18 farklı kriterde değerlendirmeye alınmıştır.

Bulgular: Hastanelerin, organizasyon şeması %11,21'inin, yönetim kadrosunu %52,01'inin, kalite kadrosunu %20,62'sinin, yöneticinin mesajını %28,3'ünün, öz değerlendirmesini %7,71'inin paylaştığı görülmüştür. Çalışmanın bir diğer bulgusu yakın zamanda popüler olan ve iyi bir halkla ilişkiler-pazarlama aracı haline gelen 360* tur, canlı destek gibi seçeneklerin birçok hastanenin web sayfasında bulunmadığıdır. Çalışmada ulaşılan bir diğer sonuç yabancı dil seçeneğinin hastanelerin web sayfalarının %67,71'inde bulunmasıdır. Bu oranın çoğunluğu oluşturmasına karşın günümüzde yeterli olmadığını belirtmek gerekir. Bunlara rağmen hastanelerin, kurumsal web sayfalarında kurumun genel tanıtımını %92,8'inin yapması, misyon ve vizyonlarını %86,1'inin açıklaması, kalite politikalarını %77,13'ünün duyurması, memnuniyet konusunda geribildirim alma seçeneğini %77,13'ünün barındırması olumlu bir sonuç olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır.

Sonuç: Araştırma sonucunda hastaneler web sayfalarında genel tanıtımını büyük oranda barındırmalarına karşın; sayfalarında yeni pratik ve hızlı hizmetler sunma konusunda oldukça zayıf oldukları görülmüştür. Fotoğraf/video galerisi, yabancı dil seçeneği bulunduranları sayısı da beklenenden az çıkmıştır. Bu durum kurumsal pazarlama ve halkla ilişkiler konusunda web siteleri yeterince etkili kullanılmadığı sonucunu ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hastane web siteleri, hastane kurumsal pazarlama, halkla ilişkiler

Introduction

To satisfy human's wishes and needs in every field of life, the expectations of today's technology and human typology that it created are to be able to access information quickly and reach the result with practical solutions. Therefore, websites are used in the scope of marketing, corporate marketing, and public relations in almost every business from large to small scale (1).

When the internet usage statistics were examined, it was found to be 59.6% in Turkey in 2014 (2), which increased to 66.8% in 2016 (3). This situation created a new field for companies to benefit from the internet environment and surpass their competitors (4).

Most of the internet traffic (75%) is due to the entries and exits to the websites (5). Therefore, the websites have an important place in the public relations and marketing departments of businesses in terms of reaching the target group (6, 7).

This rapid and comprehensive change in information and communication technologies affects health services and their servers, as well as goods and other service businesses. This situation has revealed the need for hospitals to actively use and update their corporate websites (8).

It was determined that approximately 10 million people in the United States searched for health-related issues on the internet in 2006 (2). In the study, it was determined that 29% of these searches were carried out for the purpose of finding doctors and hospitals (9). It can be estimated that this situation is at higher rates today when the use of the internet is becoming more common (10).

It is important for the hospitals to focus on some points to sustain a business in the health sector, which is one of the sectors with an intense and gradually growing competition in our country, to be able to serve the purpose mentioned earlier. These points are listed as follows (2-11):

- The facilities of the hospital should be clearly shown, and promotional items such as videos and photographs that provide information about the interior and exterior environment as well as 360° photographs should be available.
- List of services in the hospital, along with the list of physicians, their professional backgrounds, and their working days should be available on the website.
- Organizational charts should be available in which the management and organization of the hospital should be shown within the scope of quality and openness.
- An activity report showing the various rates of the hospital's activities should be available on the website.
- Clear information regarding the visitors and companion rules should be included.

- Various press information, magazines, catalogs, and electronic resources should be available.
- In addition to the necessity of having transportation information and contact details of the hospital available, it should also ensure that there is a live support unit to provide practical and quick access.
- Information and presentation of social responsibility projects, events, and organizations should be provided.
- There should be sections on career opportunities and job applications.
- Clear access to the results of the tests and analysis should be available.
- The websites should be updated regularly, and ease of access and use should be ensured.

Material and Methods

This study was carried out to examine the content of corporate web pages of private hospitals in the Marmara region in terms of marketing, promotion, and public relations. The research is a qualitative descriptive study; the content analysis method was used. In this context, the study was carried out between May and July 2017. The corporate web pages of all private hospitals in the Marmara region were evaluated on the basis of 18 different criteria, which were determined as a result of the literature review. The study was also produced from the master's thesis.

The 18 criteria determined while evaluating the web content are as follows: "about us" section, head doctor/hospital manager/manager message, mission and vision, managerial staff, organizational chart, accreditation status, quality policy, quality department staff, photo/video gallery, 360° option, activity report, "suggestion and complaints" section, press, e-journal, job application option, foreign language option, and live support line.

The research is an evaluation study on the web pages of private hospitals. Since it does not involve human or animal experiments, it does not fall within the scope of the ethics committee. Therefore, there was no need for an ethics committee.

The universe of the research is the private sector hospitals in the Marmara region. There are 225 private sector hospitals in the region, including 204 private hospitals, 10 special branch hospitals, and 13 foundation university hospitals. Before sample selection, the corporate web pages of all these hospitals were researched; the websites of 2 hospitals could not be reached. Therefore, the corporate web pages of 223 hospitals were included in the evaluation.

Using the Microsoft Office Excel 2016 version, the criteria have been examined with the answers as "Yes" and "No" depending on the availability of the criteria on the web pages. The findings have been evaluated quantitatively by numbers and

percentages. In addition, it has been examined whether there is a statistically significant difference between these 18 criteria in the corporate web pages of private hospitals, special branch hospitals, and foundation university hospitals. As the parties have been categorical, the Chi-square test has been used for the examination of difference. The statistical evaluation has been conducted by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 22.0 program.

Results

When the distribution of private sector hospitals according to provinces in the Marmara region was analyzed, there were 225 hospitals: 161 (71.55%) in Istanbul, 17 (7.55%) in Bursa, 16 (7.11%) in Kocaeli, 9 (4.00%) in Tekirdag, 6 (2.66%) in Sakarya, 5 (2.22%) in Balıkesir, 3 (1.33%) in Edirne, 3 (1.33%) in Yalova, 3 (1.33%) in Kirklareli, and 2 (0.88%) in Canakkale (Table 1).

Considering the types of private sector hospitals in the Marmara region, there were 225 hospitals: 202 (89.77%) private hospitals, 13 (5.77%) foundation university hospitals, and 10 (4.44%) special branch hospitals (Table 2).

When we examined the corporate features of 225 hospitals, including private hospitals, special branch hospitals, and foundation university hospitals in the Marmara region of which websites could be reached, we observed that 92.8% of them advertised the hospital; 28.3% have a head doctor or manager message; 86.11% have mission, vision, or values sections; 52.01% have shared information about their managerial staff; 11.21% have an organizational chart; 34.97% have one or more accreditation certificates; 77.13% share their quality policy; 20.62% share the information on their quality department staff; 7.17% share their quality chart; 45.73% have photo/video gallery; 13.45% have 360° tour option; 7.17% share their activ-ity or self-assessment reports; 77.13% have form options, such as Suggestion/Complaint/Thanks/Satisfaction; 39.31% have "Press" section; 39.01% have e-Journal/television (TV) options; 90.58% have Job Application/Announcements sections; 67.71% have foreign language options, such as "For International Patients;" and 17.93% have Live Support/Message/WhatsApp Line (Table 3).

The corporate website of 2 out of 202 private hospitals in the Marmara region could not be reached. When we examined the corporate features of 200 (n=200) private hospitals of which website could be reached, we observed that 92% of them advertise the hospital; 28.5% have a head doctor or manager message; 85.5% have mission, vision or values sections; 53.5% share the information about their managerial staff; only 17% have organizational chart; 34% have one or more accreditation certificates; 76% share information about their quality policy clearly; 21% share information about their quality department staff; 6% share their quality chart; 47% have photo/video gallery; 14.5% have 360° tour option; 6% share their activity or self-assessment reports; 78% have form options, such as Suggestion/Complaint/Thanks/Satisfaction; 36.5% have "Press" section; 36.5% have e-Journal/TV options; 90% have Job Application/Announcements sections; 66% have foreign language options, such as For International Patients; and 17.5% have Live Support/Message/WhatsApp Line (Table 4).

When we examined the corporate features of websites of the special branch hospitals in the Marmara region, we observed

Table 1. Distribution of private sector hospitals in the Marmara region by provinces

Province	n	%
İstanbul	161	71.55
Bursa	17	7.55
Kocaeli	16	7.11
Tekirdağ	9	4
Sakarya	6	2.66
Balıkesir	5	2.22
Edirne	3	1.33
Kırklareli	3	1.33
Yalova	3	1.33
Çanakkale	2	0.88
Total	**225**	**100**

Table 2. Types of private sector hospitals in the Marmara region (n=225)

Type of hospital	n	%
Private hospital	202	89.77
Foundation university hospital	13	5.77
Special branch hospital	10	4.44
Total	**225**	**100**

Table 3. Findings regarding the contents of hospital web pages (n=223)

Content features	Yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
Our Hospital/About Us/History/Promotion	207	92.8	18	7.2
Head Doctor/Manager Message	63	28.3	162	71.7
Mission Vision Values	192	86.1	33	13.9
Managerial Staff	116	52.01	109	47.99
Organization Chart	25	11.21	200	88.79
Accreditation Status	78	34.97	147	65.03
Quality Policy	172	77.13	53	22.87
Quality Staff	46	20.62	179	79.56
Quality Chart	16	7.17	209	92.83
Photo/Video Gallery	102	45.73	123	54.27
360° Tour	30	13.45	195	86.55
Activity Report/Self-assessment	16	7.71	209	92.83
Suggestion/Complaint/Thanks/Satisfaction Forms	172	77.13	53	22.87
Press	89	13.91	136	60.09
e-Journal/TV	87	39.01	138	60.99
Job Applications/Announcements	202	90.58	23	9.42
For International Patients	151	67.71	74	32.29
Live Support/Message/WhatsApp Line	40	17.93	185	82.07

Table 4. Findings regarding the contents of the web pages of private hospitals (n=200)

Content features	Yes n	Yes %	No n	No %
Our Hospital/About Us/History/Promotion	184	92	16	8
Head Doctor/Manager Message	57	28.5	143	71.5
Mission Vision Values	171	85.5	29	14.5
Managerial Staff	107	53.5	93	46.5
Organization Chart	34	17	166	83
Accreditation Status	68	34	132	66
Quality Policy	152	76	48	24
Quality Staff	42	21	158	79
Quality Chart	12	6	188	94
Photo/Video Gallery	94	47	106	53
360° Tour	29	14.5	171	85.5
Activity Report/Self-assessment	12	6	188	94
Suggestion/Complaint/Thanks/Satisfaction Forms	156	78	44	22
Press	73	36.5	127	63.5
e-Journal/TV	73	36.5	127	63.5
Job Applications/Announcements	180	90	20	10
For International Patients	132	66	68	34
Live Support/Message/Whatsapp Line	35	17.5	165	82.5

that from a total of 10 hospitals, 10 of them advertise the hospital; 2 have a head doctor or manager message; 10 have mission, vision or values sections; 5 shared information about their managerial staff; only 1 has an organizational chart; 5 have one or more accreditation certificates; 10 share information about their quality policy; 3 share information about their quality department staff; 2 share their quality chart; 3 have photo/video gallery; none has 360° tour option; 3 share their activity or self-assessment reports; 7 have form options, such as Suggestion/Complaint/Thanks/Satisfaction; 8 have "Press" section; 8 have e-Journal/TV options; 10 have Job Application/Announcements sections; 9 have foreign language options, such as For International Patients; and 3 have Live Support/Message/WhatsApp Line (Table 5).

When we examined the corporate features of the websites of foundation university medical faculty hospitals, we observed that from a total of 13 hospitals, all 13 of them advertise the hospital; 4 have a head doctor or manager message; 12 have mission, vision or values sections; 4 share information about their managerial staff; only 1 has organizational chart; 6 have one or more accreditation certificates; 11 share information about their quality policy; only 1 of them share information about their quality department staff; 2 share their quality chart; 5 have photo/video gallery; only 1 has 360° tour option; 1 of them share their activity or self-assessment reports; 9 have form options, such as Suggestion/Complaint/Thanks/Satisfaction; 8 have "Press" section; 6 have e-Journal/TV options; 12 have Job Application/

Table 5. Findings regarding the contents of the web pages of special branch hospitals in the Marmara region (n=10)

Content features	Yes n	Yes %	No n	No %
Our Hospital/About Us/History/Promotion	10	100	0	0
Head Doctor/Manager Message	2	20	8	80
Mission Vision Values	10	100	0	0
Managerial Staff	5	50	5	50
Organization Chart	1	10	9	90
Accreditation Status	5	50	5	50
Quality Policy	10	100	0	0
Quality Staff	3	30	7	70
Quality Chart	2	20	8	80
Photo/Video Gallery	3	30	7	70
360° Tour	0	0	10	0
Activity Report/Self-assessment	3	30	7	70
Suggestion/Complaint/Thanks/Satisfaction Forms	7	70	3	30
Press	8	80	2	20
e-Journal/TV	8	80	2	20
Job Applications/Announcements	10	100	0	0
For International Patients	9	90	1	90
Live Support/Message/Whatsapp Line	3	30	7	70

Table 6. Findings regarding the content of web pages of foundation university medical faculty hospitals (n=13)

Content features	Yes n	Yes %	No n	No %
Our Hospital/About Us/History/Promotion	13	100	0	0
Head Doctor/Manager Message	4	30.7	9	69.3
Mission Vision Values	12	92.3	1	7.7
Managerial Staff	4	30.7	9	69.3
Organization Chart	1	7.6	12	92.4
Accreditation Status	6	46.1	7	53.9
Quality Policy	11	84.6	2	15.4
Quality Staff	1	7.6	12	92.4
Quality Chart	2	15.3	11	84.7
Photo/Video Gallery	5	38.4	8	61.6
360° Tour	1	7.6	12	92.4
Activity Report/Self-assessment	1	7.6	12	92.4
Suggestion/Complaint/Thanks/Satisfaction Forms	9	69.2	4	30.8
Press	8	61.5	5	38.5
e-Journal/TV	6	46.1	7	53.9
Job Applications/Announcements	12	92.3	1	7.7
For International Patients	10	76.9	3	23.1
Live Support/Message/Whatsapp Line	2	15.3	11	84.7

Table 7. Evaluation of the content of corporate websites of private hospitals, special branch hospitals, and foundation university hospitals (n=223)

Type of content	Private hospital	Special branch hospital	Foundation university hospital	χ^2	P
		Type of hospital			
Our Hospital/About Us/History /Promotion					
Yes	184	10	13	1.982	0.371
No	16	0	0		
Head Doctor/Manager Message					
Yes	57	2	4	0.383	0.826
No	143	8	9		
Mission/Vision Values					
Yes	171	10	11	1.698	0.428
No	29	0	2		
Managerial Staff					
Yes	108	5	4	2.667	0.264
No	92	5	9		
Organization Chart					
Yes	23	1	1	0.193	0.908
No	177	9	12		
Accreditation					
Yes	67	5	6	1.898	0.387
No	133	5	7		
Quality Policy					
Yes	152	10	10	3.11	0.211
No	48	0	3		
Quality Staff					
Yes	43	3	1	1.9	0.387
No	157	7	12		
Quality Chart					
Yes	12	2	2	4.2	0.122
No	188	8	11		
Photo/Video Gallery					
Yes	92	3	5	1.213	0.545
No	108	7	8		
360° Tour					
Yes	30	0	1	2.235	0.327
No	170	10	12		
Activity Report/Self-Assessment					
Yes	12	3	1	8.242	0.016*
No	188	7	12		
Suggestion/Complaint /Satisfaction Forms					
Yes	157	7	9	0.949	0.662
No	43	3	4		
Press					
Yes	72	8	8	10.534	0.005
No	128	2	5		
e-Journal/TV					
Yes	74	7	6	4.665	0.98
No	126	3	7		
Job Application/Announcements					
Yes	181	10	12	1.080	0.583
No	19	0	1		
For International Patients					
Yes	132	9	10	3.045	0.218
No	68	1	3		
Live Support Line					
Yes	35	3	2	1.072	0.585
No	165	7	11		

Table 8. Private hospitals, special branch hospitals, and foundation university hospitals according to the accreditation status and quality documents shared on corporate websites

	n	Its rate in the hospitals that have accreditation and/or quality certificate (%, n=78)	Its rate in the whole sample (%, n=223)
JCI	44	56.41	19.73
ISO 9001	37	47.44	16.59
ISO 15189	10	12.82	4.48
ISO 14001	8	10.26	3.59
ISO 9000	7	8.97	3.14
OHSAS 18001	5	6.41	2.24
ISO 10002	3	3.85	1.35
ISO 27001	2	2.56	0.9
EQAS Certificate	2	2.56	0.9
ISO9004	1	1.28	0.45
ISO 9004	1	1.28	0.45
ISO 19011	1	1.28	0.45
ESPRM	1	1.28	0.45
ROC	1	1.28	0.45
IQ Net International Certificate	1	1.28	0.45
AOSPINE	1	1.28	0.45
Total of those having accreditation and/or quality certificate	78	-	34.98
Total of those nonaccredited and/or does not have any quality certificates	145	-	65.02

JCI: Joint Commission International, ISO: International Organization for Standardization, OHSAS: Occupational Health and Safety Assessment Series, EQAS: External Quality Control System, ESPRM: European Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine, ROC: Registrar of Companies, IQ: Industrial Organization Quality, AOSPINE: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Osteosynthesefragen (Association for the Study of Internal Fixation) AO Spine

Announcements sections; 10 have foreign language options, such as For International Patients; and 2 have Live Support/Message/WhatsApp Line (Table 6).

In Table 7, corporate websites of private hospitals, special branch hospitals, and foundation university hospitals other than public hospitals have been evaluated, and it has been seen that there is a significant relationship in the activity report/self-evaluation criteria (χ^2=8.242, P<0.05). However, this finding is not sufficient to show that the websites of special branch hospitals and foundation university hospitals are better than those of private hospitals. In other 17 criteria, there was no significant difference. Accordingly, it can be interpreted that the corporate websites of private hospitals, special branch hospitals, and foundation university hospitals are not very different from each other. However, the fact that the number of special branch hospitals and foundation university hospitals is very low is thought to be an impressive factor in making the difference statistically insignificant.

In Table 8, the information about what accreditation status the hospitals have and/or quality certificate that private hospitals, special branch hospitals, and foundation university hospitals share on their corporate web pages is given. According to this, it has been found that they mostly have Joint Commission International (n=44) accreditation. In Table 8, the number of hospitals of which websites do not have any information about the status of having accreditation and quality certificates is 145, and the ratio of this number among the private hospitals in the Marmara region (n=223) is 65.02%.

Discussion

With the findings obtained, it is concluded that 11.21% of the mentioned private hospitals share their organization chart, 52.01% share information about their management staff, 20.62% shared information about their quality staff, 28.3% share the manager's message, and 7.71% share their self-assessment. Publishing this information on a hospital's corporate website will help them to have a confident and transparent image. However, with the information presented in this study, it is shown that the number of hospitals sharing this information is quite low.

As another conclusion of the study, it has been seen that many options, such as 360° tour and live support, which have become popular and become a good public relation marketing tool, are not found on the web pages of many hospitals. Especially, for the patients who have not been to the hospital before, the 360° tour option, which gives the opportunity to learn about the hospital's internal environment and its appearance and location, will be effective on the hospitals to create a modern image. The live support option provides a very fast and practical solution for patients to learn what they would like to know about the hospital, to guide them, and to find answers to their various questions. However, although these options are widespread in many sectors today, only 13.45% of the hospitals have 360° tour option on their websites and only 17.93% of them have the live support option. This situation shows that the hospitals do not use their corporate web pages effectively.

Another conclusion of the study is that the foreign language option is found on 67.71% of hospital web pages. It should be noted that although this rate constitutes the majority, it is not sufficient today. When we consider the fact that the globalized world and Turkey have many advantages in several aspects, such as health tourism, sociocultural, and geographical structure, and well-trained specialists, this situation should not be accepted as an optimistic result.

Despite the fact that 92.8% of the hospitals have the general overview of their institution on their corporate web pages, 86.1% of them have their mission and visions announced, 77.13% have the quality policies announced, and 77.13% have the option to receive feedback on satisfaction are some positive results.

In the statistical analysis performed in this study, the lack of significant differences between the corporate websites of private hospitals, special branch hospitals, and foundation university hospitals other than public hospitals showed that they are similar in terms of corporate marketing and public relations. However, the fact that the number of special branch hospitals and foundation universities within the scope of private hospitals are very low can be interpreted as an impressive factor in making the difference statistically insignificant.

Another striking result is that the ratio of the number of institutions with the status of being accredited on the institutional web pages of the hospitals to the hospitals having at least 1 of the various quality certificates is 34.98%.

Conclusion

Patients would like to believe that they will be in a hospital environment where they can receive quality service and feel safe. Therefore, it will be significantly impressive for them to encounter an image that can meet the expectation of quality service when they visit the hospitals' corporate web pages. Because a web page that combines many content features with a good design is more effective than announcing the quality policy in writing or promoting the hospital.

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