

Narrative Review: The Influence of Service Quality and Price on Pharmacy Patient Loyalty

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ABSTRACT

A total of 30,199 retail pharmaceutical services were recorded in Indonesia in 2022, distributed across the country. The significant number of retail pharmacies intensifies competition within the sector. To compete effectively, retail pharmacies must gain and retain customer loyalty. It is widely recognized that service quality and price are key determinants of customer loyalty in the pharmacy sector. Notably, delivering high-quality services requires substantial financial investment. On the other hand, reducing prices to gain a competitive advantage may risk the company's financial stability. This study aims to examine the comparative impact of service quality and price on customer loyalty in the pharmacy context. A narrative review methodology was employed, using the ScienceDirect, Summon, ProQuest, and Google Scholar databases to gather relevant literature. A total of 10 articles were analysed, examining the influence of service quality versus price on loyalty in pharmacies. Of these, eight articles concluded that service quality had a greater impact on customer loyalty, while two suggested that service quality and price had an equivalent influence. The findings of this study indicate that service quality has a more significant impact on customer loyalty in pharmacies.

Keywords: Patient Loyalty; Pharmacy; Price; Service Quality

INTRODUCTION

A pharmacy is a facility where pharmacists provide pharmaceutical services with the objective of improving health, preventing disease, and treating individual diseases in the community (Gül et al., 2023). In 2021, the Indonesian Ministry of Health reported that there were 49,511 pharmaceutical facilities distributed throughout Indonesia. This included 2,291 pharmaceutical wholesalers, 30,199 pharmacies, 9,752 drug stores, and 3,533 distributors (Kementrian Kesehatan RI, 2022). A review of the data on the number of pharmaceutical facilities distributed across Indonesia reveals that pharmacies represent the largest number of these facilities. This community-based pharmaceutical practice, or pharmacy, has a long history and continues to evolve as a leading component of the health system, offering patients one of the most accessible forms of care (F. and M., 2022; Shirdel et al., 2021).

The large number of pharmacies, patients' freedom to choose their preferred pharmacy, and patients' need for economic value or "best value for money" are increasing competition in the community pharmacy sector. (Gül et al., 2023; White and Klinner, 2012). As in other service industries, the community pharmacy sector recognizes the need for loyal customers in order to survive in this competitive business environment. (Gül et al., 2023; Pribadi et al., 2021; White and Klinner, 2012). Customer loyalty is one of the essential keys in the service business, representing a strong and positive relationship between customers and service providers, and is an indicator of business success (Pribadi et al., 2021). Loyalty provides long-term financial benefits at a relatively low cost. Loyal customers can serve as a source of revenue for the company, and they can influence those around them with positive recommendations and testimonials, which can lead to the acquisition of new customers and profits (Arslan, 2020). Consequently, it is crucial to identify the key factors that drive customer loyalty to pharmacies, as this will enable pharmacies to not only survive but also to compete effectively in an increasingly challenging market.

In the context of competition in the community pharmacy industry, competitive prices for patients may also be a consideration. Pharmacies may lose market share because they cannot

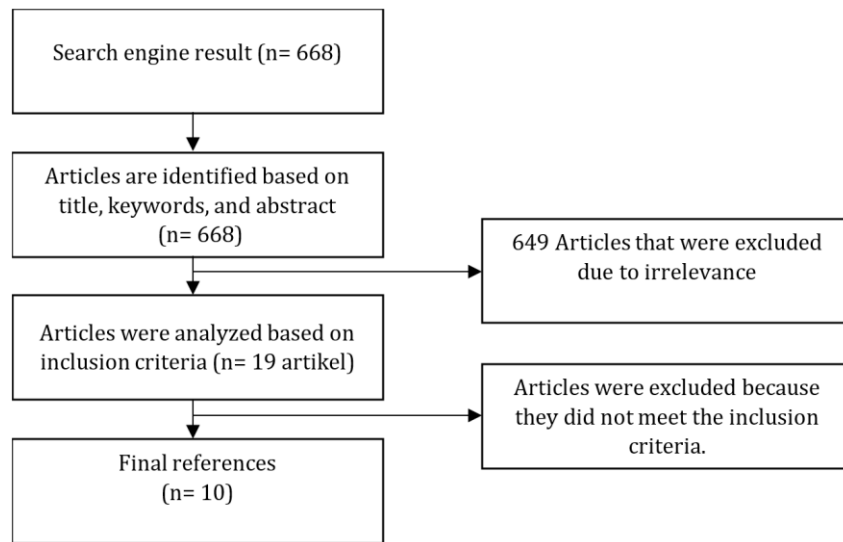


Figure 1. Flowchart of the literature searching process

compete with discounted or low-priced pharmacies. Therefore, the selling price of drugs is an important thing to consider (Rabbane et al., 2015). However, other findings state that customers tend to exchange perceptions of competitive prices if there are good service quality variables. The exchange of price perceptions with service quality can provide value to consumers that creates satisfaction, ultimately encouraging loyalty to the company. But on the other hand, providing quality services will also require high cost investments, such as adequate quality facilities, employee wages, employee training costs and investment in pharmacy infrastructure (Carter et al., 2023), so the availability of good service quality is also a consideration.

Based on the evidence summarized above, there has been no narrative review analyzing the comparative impact of service quality and price on customer loyalty in a pharmacy context. Thus, the objective of this study is to capture the comparative impact of service quality and price on customer loyalty in a pharmacy context.

METHODOLOGY

This study conducted a narrative review to gain a deeper comprehension of the influence of price and quality on customer loyalty to pharmacy services. The article selection process was conducted through electronic data searches on ScienceDirect, ProQuest, and Summon databases, utilizing the keywords "price" or "service quality" and "loyalty to pharmacy". Articles utilized in this study were selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria set in this study are: 1) articles published between 2015-2024; 2) the research subject is a pharmacy; 3) articles in English or Indonesian. Furthermore, the exclusion criteria set are: 1) irrelevant research; 2) The article cannot be accessed in full. The data extraction process begins with identifying articles based on keywords and/or titles and abstracts, until the full content of the article is studied to obtain information in accordance with the objectives of this study. After selection based on keywords, titles and abstracts at the initial stage, articles were then screened based on inclusion and exclusion criteria.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Study selection

The results of the literature search obtained 668 articles, 305 obtained from science direct, 42 articles from summon and 279 from Proquest, and 42 from google scholar. Figure one shows the literature search and screening process. A total of 607 articles were excluded based on keywords, and abstracts because they were not relevant, and a total of 15 articles were excluded because they

did not fit the inclusion criteria. Only 10 articles were used as the final reference and discussed in this study (Table I).

Study characteristic

Researchers obtained 10 articles that were used as final references, namely articles that compared the effect of price versus quality on customer loyalty in pharmacies. Study publication dates range from 2015-2024. Two articles were conducted in Thailand (Chetthamrongchai and Saengchai, 2019; Nitadpakorn et al., 2017), two in Indonesia (Ariesta et al., 2023; Heksiana and Husda, 2024), one in Australia (Carter et al., 2023), one in Turkey (Gül et al., 2023), one in Vietnam (Vo et al., 2024), one in Bulgaria (Nikolova et al., 2017), one in Jordan (Alhuwitat and Salem, 2017). Eight articles utilized quantitative methodologies to examine the influence of service quality and price on customer loyalty in the context of pharmacies. Subsequently, one article employed a scoping review approach in conjunction with a non-experimental descriptive design.

Customer Loyalty

Health care sector requires loyal customers to survive in challenging and competitive business environment. Many factors affected the company's success in maintaining customers' loyalty, which include: service quality, trust and satisfaction (Pribadi et al., 2021). Loyalty can be defined as the positive perceptions and/or biased behavioral responses (e.g., a tendency to revisit a particular store) expressed by customers consistently over time with regard to a specific business. These perceptions and responses are the result of cognitive and affective processes. (Rabbanee et al., 2015). In other studies, loyalty is also defined as the frequency of being a customer of a product or service, constantly choosing the same goods and services or company. Loyalty includes the attitude of repurchasing the product or service in the future, renewing the agreement and choosing the same product or service provider (Arslan, 2020)

Loyalty is a deeply held commitment to rebuy or patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior. Most researchers conceptualize loyalty in terms of two dimensions attitudinal loyalty and behavioral loyalty (or loyalty behavior). Attitudinal loyalty represents the cognitive, affective and evaluative factors that result in behavioral loyalty. Behavioral loyalty (or loyalty behavior), which is the focus of this paper, represents actual or intended repeat purchasing/patronizing behavior (Athavale et al., 2015).

The Influence of service quality versus price on pharmacy loyalty

When a consumer engages in any form of purchase or store visit, there is always an inherent consideration of quality, cost and value which influences their purchase decisions. (Grew et al., 2020). This statement is supported by research conducted by Vo et al (2024), which explores the factors that influence customer loyalty in a pharmacy. The results show that the factors that influence loyalty are price, convenience of facilities, employee knowledge. While in another study it was stated, several factors can influence customer loyalty to pharmacies including service quality, customer satisfaction and customer trust in pharmacies. (Pribadi et al., 2021).

Price refers to the monetary amount paid for a product or service, representing the overall value that consumers exchange to gain the benefits of owning or using it. When prices align with customer expectations and the service provided meets their needs, it enhances customer satisfaction, encourages purchases, and fosters repeat buying behavior (Larasati and Meilina, 2024).

The impact of price on patient loyalty to pharmacies can be understood from various perspectives. One key aspect is price in terms of convenience, which encompasses factors such as location, distance, time, and effort. Patients often choose pharmacies that are conveniently located and easily accessible. Additionally, the speed of service, including the waiting time for obtaining medications, is commonly highlighted as a critical factor influencing their preferences (Grew et al., 2020). Convenience is one of the factors that encourage patients to choose a pharmacy, and vice versa, inconvenience can cause a patient to change their choice of pharmacy. The second perspective defines price as the monetary value of a given currency. The majority of pharmacy customers are inclined to prioritize affordability when selecting a pharmacy, with price being a significant

Table I. Summary of characteristics of included study

Author	Year	Location	Objective	Sample number	Approach	Outcome
(Carter et al., 2023)	2023	Australia	To explore the relative effects of consumers' perceptions of service quality and price competitiveness on patronage loyalty	303 participants	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Perceived service quality had a strong effect on loyalty intention and patronage. Meanwhile, the effect of perceived cost on loyalty has a lower effect when compared to service quality.
(Gül et al., 2023)	2023	Turkey	To propose certain model to evaluate the impact of different service factors on the level of satisfaction and to reveal the relationship between satisfaction and loyalty.	402 participants	Quantitative, cross-sectional	Service quality affects patient loyalty in community pharmacy mediated by patient satisfaction. Patient satisfaction strongly affects patient loyalty in community pharmacy. Communication and attitude, medicine supply and pharmacy environment positively affected patient satisfaction. and the most effective service factor was medicine supply.
(Chetthamrongchai and Saengchai, 2019)	2019	Thailand	To observe the factors which best enhance the customer devotion and loyalty	265 participants	Quantitative	From the three factors studied, perceived service quality of the pharmacy structure, drug pricing strategy, customer perception of pharmacists, it shows that customer loyalty increases with perceived service quality of the pharmacy structure. customers have better loyalty provided at the pharmacy structure of Thailand he/she becomes devoted and loyal. The price factor shows a positive correlation with loyalty.

e I. (Continued)

Author	Year	Location	Objective	Sample number	Approach	Outcome
(Nitadpakorn et al., 2017)	2017	Thailand	To asses a conceptual model depicting the relationship among customer perceptions about pharmacist, pharmacy quality structure, medication price, customer engagement and customer devotion	253 participants	Quantitative	The study confirmed the indirect positive influence of customer perceptions about pharmacist on pharmacy customer devotion in providing pharmacy services and pharmacy engagement. Meanwhile, other factors such as pharmacy quality structure and medication price do not show an influence on loyalty to a pharmacy.
(Grew et al., 2020)	2019	--	To explore what is known about customers' perception of cost and value, and how these influence patronage patterns in community pharmacy	26 studies	Scoping review	Both cost and value were found to be factors influencing pharmacy choice. Pharmacy customers were found to perceive costs in terms of monetary, psychological, emotional and convenience related sacrifices. Value was perceived as relating to the worth or utility of a good or service, or in terms of a trade-off relationship between what was received and given up by the consumer.
(Ariesta et al., 2023)	2023	Indonesia	To analyze the quality of service and price that can affect customer satisfaction and loyalty	300 participants	Descriptive, non-experimental	Service quality has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction at community pharmacies. The higher the value of service quality, the more positive and significant impact will be. While the price factor, although it shows a positive positive, is not significant.
(Vo et al., 2024)	2024	Vietnam	To analyze factors affecting customer loyalty to pharmacy chains in can tho city	747 participants	quantitative	Price, facilities, convenience and employee knowledge had positive influence on loyalty.

Table I. (Continued)

Author	Year	Location	Objective	Sample number	Approach	Outcome
(Nikolova et al., 2017)	2017	Bulgaria	to investigate the main and supplementary factors of customer loyalty in the pharmaceutical retail market	433	Quantitative	The most influencing factor is the range of products, the second is competence and friendly personnel, and price is the third in influencing loyalty.
(Alhuwita t and Salem, 2017)	2017	Jordan	To investigate level of pharmaceutical services quality in Jordan and its effect on building strong relationship between pharmacist and their customer	105	quantitative	There is a statistically significant effect of pharmaceutical services quality on customers' perceived value, satisfaction and loyalty
Heksiana and Husda, 2024)	2024	Indonesia	To choose the impact of quality and price of the service on patient loyalty at the Cahaya Garden Pharmacy Batam	162	quantitative	Both factors of service quality and price show significant impact on customer loyalty.

determinant in their decision-making process. The price of a medication may influence a patient's decision to switch pharmacies. Some studies have indicated that (Grew et al., 2020), shows that price is a strong driver of patronage intention, as well as the reason for switching to another pharmacy. Among the types of prices above, research conducted by Grew et.al (2020) shows that price in the sense of ease of distance is the most significant influence on loyalty and reasons for choosing a pharmacy.

In a study conducted by Nikolova et al. (2017), the price of pharmaceuticals, defined as the value of currency, was found to influence customer loyalty to pharmacies. The findings of the study were shaped by the socio-economic circumstances of the participants, particularly those with limited financial resources. Conversely, patients are inclined to modify their perception of low prices if the Ftablequality of service is deemed satisfactory.

Community pharmacies are community health hubs, especially for patients living with chronic health problems. In order to optimize care, the pharmacy should be designed to operate with the goal of providing high quality services (Larasati and Meilina, 2024). It is important to note that companies must consider not only the quality of service from the company's perspective and in accordance with applicable regulations, but also the quality of service that patients expect. Previous research has identified six dimensions that determine service quality, namely: 1) Health medicine advice (HMA); communication with pharmacy staff about their medicines or health; 2) Non-prescription services (NPS): information and assistance provided in relation to non-prescription medicines; 3) Relationship quality; 4) Technical Quality, staff's technical competence; 5) Environmental Quality: atmosphere and physical environment of the pharmacy; 6) Health outcome: the pharmacy's impact on health outcomes (Carter et al., 2022).

The results of the article search, obtained 10 articles that analyze the factors that influence customer loyalty to a pharmacy, especially to service quality and price. (Alhuwitat and Salem, 2017; Ariesta et al., 2023; Carter et al., 2023; Chetthamrongchai and Saengchai, 2019; Grew et al., 2020; Gül et al., 2023; Heksiana and Husda, 2024; Nikolova et al., 2017; Nitadpakorn et al., 2017; Vo et al., 2024). Among the ten articles reviewed, there were 6 articles that compared the effect of quality versus price directly. Of these six articles, 4 articles clearly show that service quality has a greater influence on customer loyalty than price. (Ariesta et al., 2023; Carter et al., 2022; Chetthamrongchai and Saengchai, 2019; Nitadpakorn et al., 2017) , and 2 articles show that quality and price both have the same influence on affecting customer loyalty. (Grew et al., 2020; Heksiana and Husda, 2024). In addition, there are 2 articles that focus on looking at the effect of service quality on customer loyalty in pharmacies. (Alhuwitat and Salem, 2017; Gül et al., 2023). dan and there is one article comparing the effect of price versus product completeness and employee hospitality (Nikolova et al., 2017).

In a study conducted by Carter et al. (2023), the influence of customer perceptions of service quality, price and loyalty to pharmacies was investigated. The loyalty in question is both behavioural and intentional. The behavioural loyalty in question is the level of visit or frequency of repeat patronage, while the intentional loyalty is related to the intention to visit the same pharmacy in the future. The results demonstrated that perceived service quality exerted a more pronounced influence on loyalty (both behavioural and intentional), whereas perceived competitive prices exhibited a limited impact, not exceeding that of service quality. The findings of Carter et al. (2023) indicate that although the impact of perceived price is unavoidable due to its positive correlation with loyalty, reducing prices or offering discounts to compete can have adverse consequences for profitability and business sustainability.

The preference for high service quality compared to price, is also shown by the results of a study conducted by Gül et al., (2023). The results of the study show that service quality and satisfaction support loyalty to a pharmacy. Gül et al., (2023), evaluated the effect of service quality in the form of staff communication and attitude, service timeliness, drug stock and pharmacy environment, on loyalty mediated by customer satisfaction. Of the four factors, the results showed that only three factors had an influence on satisfaction, namely communication and staff attitudes, completeness of drug stock and the pharmacy environment. Then of the three influential factors, the completeness of drug stock is the factor that has the strongest influence on customer satisfaction, and customer satisfaction has a strong influence on loyalty (Gül et al., 2023).

Research conducted by Nitadpakorn et al (2017) in Thailand, which aims to assess a conceptual model illustrating the relationship among customer perceptions about pharmacists, pharmacy quality structure, medication price, customer engagement and customer devotion, was conducted on 253 participants. The study confirmed the indirect positive influence of customer perceptions about pharmacist on pharmacy customer devotion in providing pharmacy services via pharmacy engagement. Meanwhile, other factors such as pharmacy quality structure, medication price do not show an influence on loyalty to a pharmacy. Furthermore, similar research was conducted by Chetthamrongchai and Saengchai (2019), who observed the factors that increase loyalty the most from the three factors of customer perceptions about pharmacists, pharmacy quality structure, and medication price. Of the three factors studied, it shows that customer loyalty increases along with the perceived service quality of the pharmacy structure (PQPS). The customer has better PQPS provided in the pharmacy structure in Thailand, he becomes more loyal and faithful. The price factor demonstrates no correlation with loyalty. Despite an examination of the same variables, the results of the two studies are disparate. The similarity between the two studies is that both demonstrate that price has no effect on loyalty.

A study conducted at one of the pharmacies in Indonesia, with 300 participants, which analyzed the effects of service quality and price on customer satisfaction and loyalty. The results showed that service quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction and loyalty to the pharmacies studied. The higher the value of service quality, the more positive the impact. On the other hand, price also shows a positive influence on satisfaction and loyalty, however, it is not as significant as service quality (Ariesta et al., 2023). Lalu, ada studi yang sama dilakukan di Indonesia, oleh Heksiana and Husda, (2024). The results of his study show that both factors of service quality and drug prices have a strong effect on customer loyalty.

Another study conducted in Bulgaria by Nikolova et al (2017), to investigate the most important factors and supporting factors for customer loyalty to a pharmacy. The results showed that the most influencing factor was the wide range of products, the second was competent and friendly personnel, and price was third in influencing loyalty. The researcher concluded that the study conducted by Nikolova is consistent with the results of other studies discussed by this researcher, where price is not the main factor influencing customer loyalty.

There is research conducted in Vietnam recently supporting research conducted by previous researchers. Research conducted by Vo et al (2024) to analyze the factors that influence customer loyalty to network pharmacies, with a total of 747 participants. the results showed price, convenience of facilities, employee knowledge showed a positive influence on loyalty. The same results were obtained.

In addition to knowing the factors of service quality expected by patients. It is also necessary to know the factors that influence the realization of the quality of service provided to customers. The study conducted by White.L et al (2012), shows the factors that shape good service quality from the perceptions of pharmaceutical staff. Service quality in pharmacies is largely influenced by inadequate communication, control processes, role clarity and consequently, issues related to role clarity and role conflict among customer service staff. Therefore, companies need to know what customers want or expect.

CONCLUSION

The authors provide a summary of the impact of service quality and price on customer loyalty in pharmacies. Among the articles reviewed, eight articles show that service quality has a more significant positive influence on customer loyalty compared to price. The author highlights that in terms of quality, there are several factors that influence loyalty, including the availability of a complete drug supply, pharmacist friendliness, perceptions of pharmacists, and the overall environment of the pharmacy. Based on the results of the study, it shows that the effect of service quality is more dominant in influencing customer loyalty. However, the price factor cannot be ignored. Providing low prices will attract customers, but in the long run it will be risky for the sustainability of the company. on the other hand, providing quality services requires effort and budget. The author recommends, for the right decision, an in-depth approach and analysis of

customers is needed, about what they expect from a service provided. Therefore, the right pricing and service quality standards will be obtained.

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