A Study on Customer Satisfaction in Community Chain Pharmacies: A Case Study of K Pharmacy

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ABSTRACT: *With the continuous development of the pharmacy industry, the competitive pressure among pharmacies has been increasing. In today's market environment, improving customer satisfaction is essential for capturing customer resources and market share. Under these competitive conditions, pharmacies must strive to satisfy their customers to retain existing patrons and attract new ones. As customers directly contribute to a pharmacy's revenue, conducting a customer satisfaction survey for K Pharmacy is particularly significant. This study focuses on K Pharmacy, guided by theories and concepts related to customer satisfaction, and adopts a comprehensive evaluation framework comprising three dimensions and 18 indicators. By analyzing survey data, the feasibility of the questionnaire was tested, revealing critical issues in customer satisfaction and proposing corresponding improvement strategies. The findings of this study can enhance K Pharmacy's customer satisfaction and, to some extent, improve its economic performance.*

Keywords: *Customer satisfaction, Chain Pharmacies, Improvement strategies*

INTRODUCTION

As China's economic level continues to rise and public awareness of health has increased following the COVID-19 pandemic, the demand for healthcare products has grown significantly. This surge in demand has led to a rapid increase in the number of pharmacy outlets across the country.

In the current market environment, are the strategies implemented by major chain pharmacies effectively meeting consumer satisfaction? This study focuses on Kang Yisheng Pharmacy (hereinafter referred to as K Pharmacy) by conducting a customer satisfaction survey to gain a deeper understanding of consumers' perceptions of its services. This research aims to identify issues, improve service quality, enhance customer satisfaction, and strengthen the pharmacy's competitiveness. Additionally, the study offers valuable insights for developing offline drug purchase channels to meet the increasingly diverse needs of consumers.

Analyzing customer satisfaction at K Pharmacy not only provides an overall assessment of the operational status and future development of similar retail enterprises but also offers guidance for internal business optimization. From an organizational perspective, segmenting customers allows for a rational allocation of resources, cost savings, and profit maximization. Pharmacy operators can tailor improvements based on customer profiles, promoting the sustainable growth of the business. From the customers' perspective, a pharmacy that actively addresses their needs can significantly improve their shopping experience, enhance convenience, and foster customer loyalty, ultimately achieving a win-win situation for both parties.

In today's fiercely competitive service industry, the retail and traditional service sectors must adopt effective strategies to gain a competitive edge. This study aims to address the following research questions based on K Pharmacy's survey findings and proposed improvement measures:
What is the current level of customer satisfaction at K Pharmacy?
How can the areas of insufficient customer satisfaction at K Pharmacy be improved?
What market and sales strategies can K Pharmacy implement to align with its development goals and achieve its sales objectives?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the traditional retail pharmacy industry, product satisfaction, service satisfaction, and social satisfaction are critical indicators of business performance (Hu, Luo, & Xu, 2019). These indicators provide a clear reflection of customers' satisfaction levels with pharmacies.

2.1 Product Satisfaction
Traditional retail pharmacies offer a wide range of products, including medications, health supplements, and medical devices. Consumers generally recognize the quality, effectiveness, and safety of medications provided. However, as consumer demands evolve, higher expectations have emerged regarding product variety, brand selection, and pricing. To meet these needs, pharmacies must continuously innovate and diversify their product lines, enhance product quality, and maintain competitive pricing.

Differences exist across regions and pharmacies due to factors such as management practices, operational philosophies, and staff qualifications. Some pharmacies face challenges such as inconsistent product quality and inadequate service, leading to decreased customer satisfaction. To address these issues, pharmacies must strengthen internal management, improve employee skills and service quality, and ensure the stability and safety of product quality.

2.2 Service Satisfaction
Service satisfaction in traditional retail pharmacies encompasses pre-sale consultation, sales services, and post-sale support. Surveys and consumer feedback indicate that overall service satisfaction in traditional retail pharmacies is relatively high. Consumers value the service attitude, professionalism, and responsiveness of pharmacy staff. However, some consumers have reported issues such as unclear service processes and limited service offerings.

To enhance service satisfaction, pharmacies should optimize service processes and enrich service content. By adopting advanced customer service management systems, pharmacies can collect and analyze customer information in real-time to provide personalized and professional services. Additionally, comprehensive staff training is necessary to improve professional knowledge and service skills, ensuring that consumers receive satisfactory pre-sale consultation and post-sale support.

2.3 Social Satisfaction
Social satisfaction refers to the public's overall evaluation and recognition of traditional retail pharmacies. Pharmacies actively contribute to society by participating in public welfare activities and creating employment opportunities, which positively impacts social satisfaction. However, some consumers have highlighted insufficient community engagement and investment by certain pharmacies.

To improve social satisfaction, pharmacies should focus on community needs and increase their contributions. This could involve participating in charitable activities, making donations, and offering volunteer services. Pharmacies can also organize health seminars and promote medical knowledge to raise public health awareness and self-care capabilities.

2.4 Research Contributions and Scholarly Perspectives
Numerous scholars have conducted extensive research on issues within the traditional retail pharmacy industry. Zhang and Hu (2022) analyzed product satisfaction using data from online and offline channels, proposing targeted recommendations based on their findings. Sheng (2012) explored these issues from the perspective of consumer purchasing power. Shi (2022) used the actual situation of YX Pharmacy as a case study to analyze the impact of service satisfaction on store marketing using service marketing tools. Gao (2009) developed a customer satisfaction model to assess consumer satisfaction with current pharmaceutical distribution mechanisms. Xu (2020) collected pharmacy data through in-depth interviews and role-playing methods, offering solutions and insights on social satisfaction.

International scholars have also contributed significantly to this field. Mehrbakhsh and Ali (2023) studied the impact of various product dimensions such as comfort, material quality, ease of use, return policies, design, price, packaging, and size information on customer satisfaction. Čortoševa and Nečev (2016) investigated customer service satisfaction in private wholesale chain pharmacies, identifying gaps between expectations and perceptions to provide targeted recommendations for service improvement. Alshahrani (2023) conducted a systematic review of 25 studies to identify five key predictors of patient satisfaction in primary healthcare, formulating strategies to enhance healthcare service satisfaction. Shi and Jiang (2015) examined social satisfaction with doctor-patient relationships, exploring influencing factors and improvement strategies.

In summary, traditional retail pharmacies must enhance management and service quality to improve customer satisfaction. Policies promoting industry consolidation and raising operational standards also play a positive role. Through collective

efforts, the traditional retail pharmacy industry can continue to improve product and service quality, thereby increasing customer and social satisfaction and achieving sustainable development.

2.5 Definitions of Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction refers to the degree of consumers' feelings and evaluations regarding purchased products or services. It directly influences purchasing decisions and repeat purchase intentions. Satisfied consumers are more likely to become loyal customers and recommend the business to others (Liu, 2020). In essence, customer satisfaction is a measure of the comparison between a customer's expectations and their actual experience with a product or service. When actual experiences exceed expectations, consumers feel satisfied; otherwise, dissatisfaction occurs.

Customer satisfaction is critical for business success as it affects purchasing decisions, reputation, and word-of-mouth. Surveys often use quantitative evaluation methods to gather data on customer satisfaction and implement targeted improvements based on the results (Zhang, 2024).

In today's society, customer satisfaction has become a key factor for commercial success. It influences business growth across industries, making it an urgent issue for enterprises. Factors influencing customer satisfaction can be broadly categorized into product satisfaction, service satisfaction, social satisfaction, and customer loyalty. These factors are essential for businesses to address to meet consumer needs and gain competitive advantages (Zhang, 2023).

2.6 Product Satisfaction (I)

Product satisfaction refers to consumers' perceptions and evaluations of product quality, performance, reliability, delivery, and timeliness. It directly affects consumer evaluations and purchasing decisions. Businesses should prioritize improving product quality to meet consumer needs and expectations, thereby enhancing product satisfaction.

2.7 Social Satisfaction (II)

Social satisfaction evaluates consumer perceptions of a company's social responsibilities, such as environmental protection and employee welfare. It reflects the consumer's subjective sense of the company's contributions to social interests. Enterprises must actively fulfill their social responsibilities and prioritize societal benefits to gain consumer recognition and support while fostering societal progress.

2.8 Service Satisfaction (III)

Service satisfaction encompasses consumers' subjective experiences at every stage of the sales process, from pre-sales to post-sales and throughout the product lifecycle. It requires businesses to consistently prioritize customer needs, ensuring convenience and value for clients at all times (Fu, Han, & Feng, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Subject

K Pharmacy, established in 2014 in Huizhou, Guangdong, is a small chain pharmacy that integrates procurement, operations, and sales. It features a professional team of physicians and sales staff, with its business comprising traditional Chinese medicine and Western medicine sections. Dedicated to serving the community with convenience and health services, K Pharmacy currently employs three general sales personnel, one assistant manager, and one store manager. Its advantageous location and high-quality service have earned it significant customer loyalty. However, with the emergence of more pharmacies in the area, including acquisitions of smaller pharmacies by large chains like Laobaixing Pharmacy and Dashenlin Pharmacy, K Pharmacy faces increasing market competition. To maintain a stable market share under current conditions, the pharmacy needs to identify its unique strengths. This necessitates conducting customer satisfaction surveys to uncover deficiencies and areas for improvement based on market data, enabling targeted enhancements to attract and retain better customer resources.

3.2 Questionnaire Survey

The questionnaire survey method involves the development of targeted questions by researchers based on relevant literature and materials. These questionnaires are distributed to the target audience through various channels (e.g., online and offline) to guide responses. Once the answers are collected, the data are analyzed and summarized to derive fundamental conclusions. In this study, the questionnaire survey serves as the primary basis for qualitative research. To ensure effective data collection, both online (via Questionnaire Star) and offline distribution at the entrance of K Pharmacy were employed for data gathering.

3.2.1 Questionnaire Design

The design of this study's questionnaire was informed by prior research on customer satisfaction (Hu, Luo, & Xu, 2019) and tailored to K Pharmacy's specific context. The questionnaire comprises three main sections: (1) Basic Information (6 items), (2) Customer Satisfaction Scores, which are further divided into three dimensions: Product Satisfaction (6 items), Social Satisfaction (6 items), and Service Satisfaction (6 items). The questionnaire was distributed both online via Questionnaire Star and offline in paper form at K Pharmacy's location. Responses were collected and statistically analyzed.

3.2.2 Construction of the Customer Satisfaction Indicator System

Customer satisfaction is influenced by numerous factors. Key indicators of organizational performance are typically assessed across three dimensions: Product Satisfaction, Social Satisfaction, and Service Satisfaction (Hu, Luo, & Xu, 2019). Drawing on these dimensions and K Pharmacy's specific circumstances, this study designed the questionnaire with 18 factors for analysis. These factors formed the foundation for constructing a customer satisfaction indicator system(As shown in Table 1).

Table 1 Customer Satisfaction Indicator System

Primary Indicator	Secondary Indicator	Code
Product Satisfaction (I)	Secondary Indicator	A1
	Drug Quality	A2
	Variety and Brand of Drugs	A3
	Drug Packaging	A4
	Health Product Quality	A5
	Drug Pricing	A6
Social Satisfaction (II)	After-Sales Service	B1
	Sanitation Status	B2
	Fulfillment of Social Responsibilities	B3
	Consumer Rights	B4
	Participation in Public Welfare Activities	B5
	Status and Image	B6
Service Satisfaction (III)	Health Culture Promotion and Development	C1
	Service Attitude	C2
	Business Convenience	C3
	Location	C4
	Discounts and Points Redemption Services	C5
	Medication Purchase Process	C6

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

4.1.1 Questionnaire Collection

In this survey, 50 paper questionnaires were distributed at K Pharmacy, with 40 valid responses collected. Additionally, online questionnaires were distributed to K Pharmacy's customers via its WeChat platform, yielding 200 valid responses. In total, 250 questionnaires were distributed, with 240 valid responses collected, resulting in an effective response rate of 96%.

4.1.2 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Conducting reliability and validity tests on the questionnaire data enhances the scientific rigor and reliability of the research.

Reliability Analysis: Reliability analysis evaluates the consistency of respondents' answers and their willingness to participate. High reliability indicates that the questionnaire effectively captures users' true perceptions and has significant research value. Conversely, low reliability suggests that the questionnaire may not accurately reflect users' perspectives, reducing its value. There are four primary methods for reliability analysis: parallel-forms reliability, test-retest reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and split-half reliability. Reliability can be classified as internal or external; the former is typically assessed using test-retest methods, while internal reliability is often measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The alpha coefficient ranges from 0 to 1. Generally, a Cronbach's alpha below 0.35 necessitates excluding the relevant factors, while values below 0.50 indicate unsuitability. A value above 0.70 signifies good reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). For this study, SPSS 27 was used for analysis. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Reliability Analysis Statistics

Items	Cronbach Alpha	Standardized Cronbach Alpha	No
Total	0.968	0.969	18
I	0.915	0.916	6
II	0.927	0.925	6
III	0.931	0.932	6

To ensure the reliability of the evaluation system designed for this study, Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7 was adopted as the measurement criterion. Using SPSS27 software, the collected questionnaire data underwent reliability analysis. The standardized Cronbach's Alpha for the overall scale was found to be 0.969, indicating an exceptionally high reliability. This demonstrates that the scale aligns well with the research criteria and does not require further adjustments.

Validity Analysis: Validity analysis evaluates the effectiveness and feasibility of the questionnaire in accurately measuring the intended characteristics. Generally, validity analysis is categorized into internal validity and external validity. Internal validity can be assessed using statistical methods such as factor analysis or correlation analysis. It determines whether the measurement tool precisely evaluates the intended concepts or characteristics and examines the degree of correlation among the measurement items (Jia, 2021). External validity assesses the relationship between the measurement tool (e.g., the questionnaire) and other related variables.

As shown in Table 3, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of the overall scale was 0.961. The approximate Chi-square value was 3958.865, with degrees of freedom (df) equal to 153. Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded a significance probability of 0.000. These results indicate that the variables in the questionnaire are interrelated rather than independent. Therefore, the study's validity meets the required conditions.

Table 3 Validity Analysis Statistics

Item	KMO Sampling Adequacy Measure	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		
Dimension		Approximate Chi-Square	Degrees of Freedom	Significant
Total	0.961	3958.865	153	0 , 000
I	0.907	920.772	15	**< 0.01**
II	0.910	1124.292	15	**< 0.01**
III	0.910	1087.739	15	**< 0.01**

4.2 Demographic Analysis of Survey Respondents
A detailed analysis of the collected questionnaire data yielded the following insights:

4.2.1 Gender Distribution
The survey captured data on the gender distribution of the respondents. Among them, 103 participants (42.92%) identified as male, while 137 participants (57.08%) identified as female. The specifics are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Responses
Male	103	42.92%	103
Female	137	57.08%	137

4.2.2 Age Distribution
The age distribution of respondents indicates that the majority of customers are between 26 and 35 years old (33.75%), followed by those aged 36–45 (28.75%). Together, these two groups constitute the main consumer demographic of K Pharmacy. A breakdown is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Responses
16–25	51	21.25%	
26–35	81	33.75%	
36–45	69	28.75%	240
46–55	37	15.42%	
55+	2	0.83%	

4.2.3 Educational Attainment

An analysis of educational attainment reveals that the majority of respondents have attained a diploma or bachelor's degree (41.67%), followed by those with a high school or vocational school education (28.33%). Only a small fraction (2.5%) reported having a master's degree or higher. The details are shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Educational Attainment of Respondents

Education	TT	Percentage	Valid Responses
High School ↓	66	27.5%	
High School/Vocational	68	28.33%	
Bachelor's	100	41.67%	240
Master's Degree ↑	6	2.5%	

4.2.4 Employment Type

The employment type of respondents indicates that most consumers belong to the wage-earning class (30.42%), followed by students (25.42%) and public institution employees (16.67%). Entrepreneurs accounted for 11.67%, while senior corporate managers constituted the smallest group at 6.67%. The specifics are outlined in Table 7.

Table 7: Employment Type of Respondents

Employment	TT	Percentage	Valid Responses
Student	61	25.42%	
Wage-Earning Class	73	30.42%	
Public Institution	40	16.67%	
Senior Corporate Manager	16	6.67%	240
Entrepreneur	28	11.67%	
Other	22	9.17%	

4.2.5 Income Distribution

Respondents' monthly income data reveals that most fall within the 4,000–6,000 RMB range (28.33%), followed by those earning below 2,000 RMB (27.92%) and those in the 2,000–4,000 RMB range (25%). Respondents with an income above 6,000 RMB made up 18.75% of the sample. These findings are detailed in Table 8.

Table 8: Income Distribution of Respondents

Income/RMB	Subtotal	Percentage	Valid Responses
Below 2,000	67	27.92%	
2,000–4,000	60	25%	
4,000–6,000	68	28.33%	240
Above 6,000	45	18.75%	

4.2.6 Purchase Frequency

Analysis of purchase frequency shows that nearly half of the respondents (47.08%) reported irregular purchasing patterns, likely driven by need-based buying behavior. Meanwhile, 22.92% purchase medications 1–2 times per month, and 20.42% reported purchasing five or more times every six months. The details are provided in Table 9.

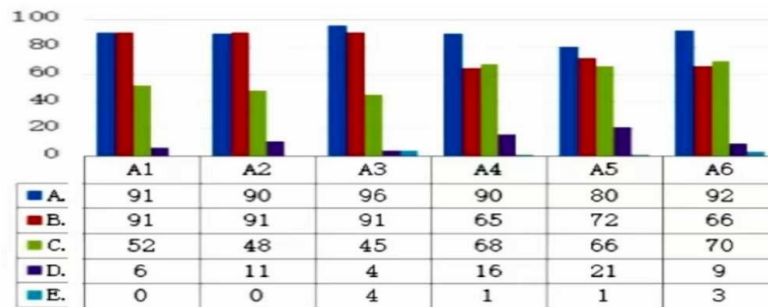**Table 9: Purchase Frequency of Respondents**

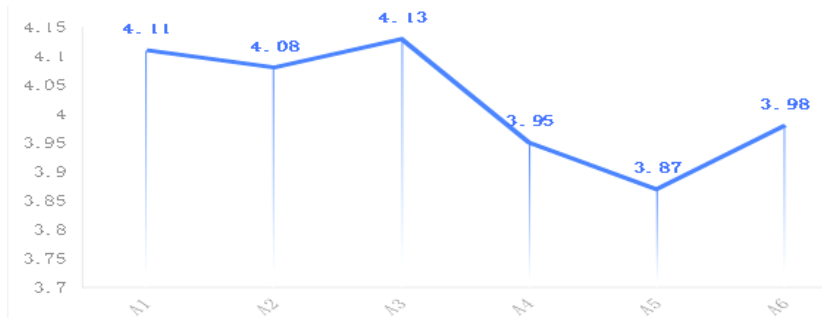| Purchase Frequency	Subtotal	Percentage	Valid Responses
1–2 times / week	23	9.58%	
1–2 times /month	55	22.92%	
5+ times/six months	49	20 , 42%	240
Other	113	47.08%	

4.3 Results

The survey employed a closed-ended questionnaire format, facilitating the analysis of users' responses across different dimensions and factors. The findings are discussed in terms of product satisfaction, social satisfaction, and service satisfaction.

4.3.1 Product Satisfaction

As shown in Figures 1 and Figures 2, the average satisfaction scores for pharmaceutical packaging and product quality (4.13) were relatively high. This indicates that respondents largely approved of these aspects (A3). Similarly, dimensions A1 and A2 received high satisfaction ratings, exceeding 4. However, the scores for A4, A5, and A6 were notably lower, with A5 scoring the lowest at 3.87. This suggests deficiencies in dietary supplement quality, pricing, and after-sales services, which require improvement.(A. Very satisfied; B. Satisfied; C. General; D. Unsatisfied; E. Very dissatisfied)
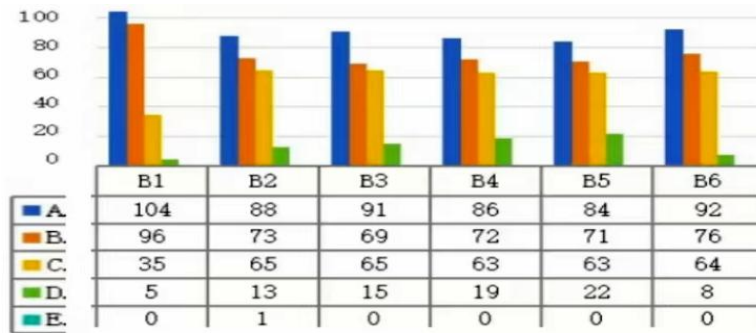
	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6
A.	91	90	96	90	80	92
B.	91	91	91	65	72	66
C.	52	48	45	68	66	70
D.	6	11	4	16	21	9
E.	0	0	4	1	1	3

Figure 1. Product Satisfaction Survey Responses

Figure 2. Product Satisfaction Scores

|	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6
A.	104	88	91	86	84	92
B.	96	73	69	72	71	76
C.	35	65	65	63	63	64
D.	5	13	15	19	22	8
E.	0	1	0	0	0	0

Figure 3. Social Satisfaction Survey Responses
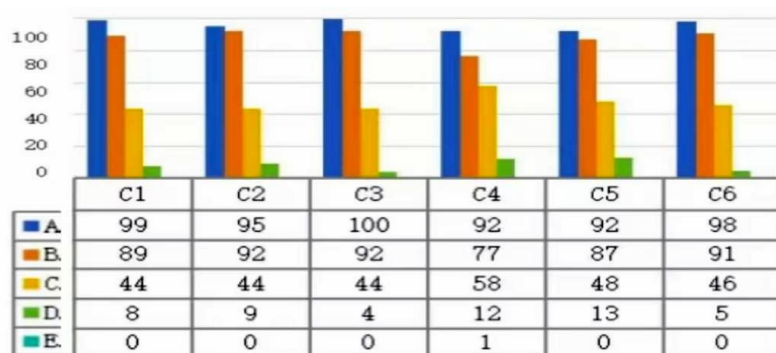
4.3.2 Social Satisfaction
Figures 3 and Figures 4 reveal significant shortcomings in social satisfaction. Among the six factors evaluated, four fell below the average score of 4. B1 achieved the highest satisfaction score, but B2, B3, B4, and B5 scored lower, with B5 receiving the lowest score of 3.9. This indicates that the pharmacy needs to enhance its performance in corporate social responsibility, consumer rights protection, community involvement, and its overall image and status in the community.(A. Very satisfied; B. Satisfied; C. General; D. Unsatisfied; E. Very dissatisfied).
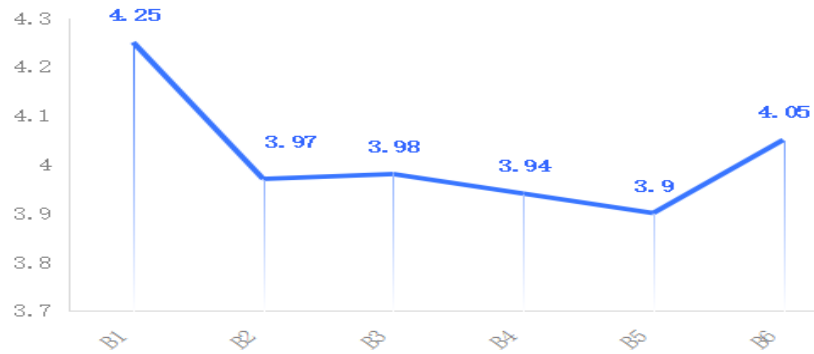
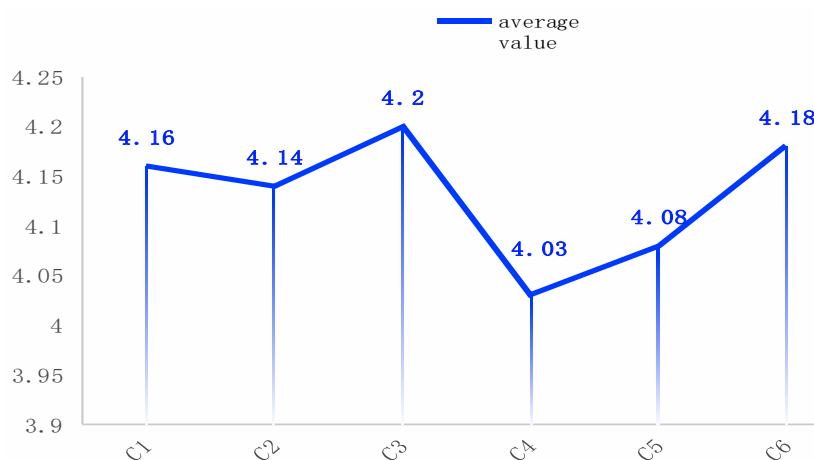

Figure 4. Social Satisfaction Scores

4.3.3 Service Satisfaction
Figures 5 and Figures 6 indicate that service satisfaction scored higher overall compared to product and social satisfaction. However, scores for C4 and C5 were relatively lower, just slightly above 4. Notably, C3 received the highest score of 4.2, followed by C6 (4.18) and C1 (4.16). These findings suggest areas for improvement while maintaining the high-scoring indicators to ensure sustained growth in a competitive market environment. (A. Very satisfied; B. Satisfied; C. General; D. Unsatisfied; E. Very dissatisfied)

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
A.	99	95	100	92	92	98
B.	89	92	92	77	87	91
C.	44	44	44	58	48	46
D.	8	9	4	12	13	5
E.	0	0	0	1	0	0

Figure 5. Service Satisfaction Survey Responses

Figure 6. Service Satisfaction Scores

4.4 Key Issues in Customer Satisfaction
Based on the survey results, K Pharmacy's overall customer satisfaction is generally positive. However, several indicators scored below the average of 4.06, highlighting existing challenges. Average scores for product satisfaction (4.02), social satisfaction (4.015), and service satisfaction (4.132) indicate disparities across dimensions. Specifically, nine indicators scored below the overall average: dietary supplement quality, pricing, after-sales service, corporate social responsibility, consumer rights protection, community involvement, pharmacy image, health culture promotion, and loyalty programs. These factors constitute the primary issues in customer satisfaction.

4.4.1 Product Satisfaction
Low Recognition of Dietary Supplement Quality: K Pharmacy's limited promotion of dietary supplements and reliance on bundled sales near expiry dates undermine product quality and customer trust. Additionally, selecting substandard raw materials for higher profits further diminishes consumer approval.

Uncompetitive Pricing: The pharmacy employs market-standard pricing without adequately considering customer needs or perceived value, leading to a lack of price advantage compared to competitors.

Inadequate After-Sales Service: The pharmacy lacks a comprehensive after-sales service system, with no defined personnel or procedures to handle post-purchase issues. Customers often encounter uncooperative staff, resulting in poor satisfaction with after-sales services.

4.4.2 Social Satisfaction
Low Corporate Social Responsibility: K Pharmacy demonstrates limited engagement in social responsibility initiatives, failing to resonate with consumers in this regard.

Insufficient Consumer Rights Protection: The pharmacy lacks clear policies for safeguarding consumer rights, offering inadequate channels for resolution and limited awareness among customers.

Minimal Community Involvement: Participation in community outreach and volunteer programs is infrequent, diminishing public perception of the pharmacy's social contributions.

Weak Image and Status: Compared to competitors, K Pharmacy's local presence and recognition remain low due to minimal promotional efforts.

Limited Health Culture Promotion: The pharmacy rarely organizes health-awareness activities, leaving customers dissatisfied with its contributions to promoting health literacy.

4.4.3 Service Satisfaction
Limited Loyalty Programs: Few loyalty or discount programs are offered, and the lack of promotion diminishes their perceived value, reducing their impact on customer satisfaction.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

5.1 Enhancing Product Satisfaction
Ensuring Quality Control for Dietary Supplements: Partner with reputable suppliers to ensure high-quality products. Establish robust quality control measures across procurement, manufacturing, and distribution processes (Yan, 2019).

Flexible Pricing Strategies: Adopt demand-oriented pricing based on market conditions, competitor prices, and consumer affordability. Offer targeted discounts during holidays to boost sales (Fang & Ke, 2022).

Improving After-Sales Services: Develop a standardized after-sales system, assign dedicated personnel, and establish clear protocols to address customer concerns proactively (Zhao, 2023).

5.2 Addressing Social Satisfaction
Engaging in Community Activities: Actively participate in local initiatives to improve public perception and fulfill corporate social responsibilities (Zheng, 2015).

Strengthening Consumer Rights Protections: Enhance consumer protection mechanisms, reduce resolution costs, and foster trust through transparent processes (Hu, 2020).

Promoting Health Literacy: Organize health-awareness campaigns to educate the community on wellness practices, improving public recognition and satisfaction (Wu, 2023).

5.3 Improving Service Satisfaction
Expanding Loyalty Programs: Increase promotional efforts for loyalty programs, ensuring customers perceive tangible benefits. Improve service quality by focusing on pre- and post-purchase experiences (Xia & Shan, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study identifies key issues in K Pharmacy's customer satisfaction, including low recognition of dietary supplement quality, uncompetitive pricing, inadequate after-sales service, insufficient social responsibility, and limited health culture promotion. To address these, the proposed strategies aim to enhance product quality, pricing flexibility, service systems, and community engagement. By implementing these measures, K Pharmacy can strengthen its market position and foster long-term customer loyalty.

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