St. MARY'S UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

MARKETING MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN BUSINESS TO BUSINESS MARKETING: THE CASE OF RETAIL PHARMACIES AND THEIR SUPPLIERS

BY:

GELILA MEKONEN

DECEMBER, 2024

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE MARKETING MANAGEMENT PROGRAM, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MA DEGREE IN MARKETING MANAGEMENT

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DECEMBER, 2024

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, prepared under the guidance of ZemenuAynadis (Assi. Prof.). All sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged. I further confirm that the thesis has not been submitted either in part or in full to any other higher learning institutions for the purpose of earning any degree.

GelilaMekonen   _____

                          Name   Signature

St. Mary's University, Addis Ababa   **December, 2024**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank GOD who gave me strength and capability to go through all the difficult time in conducting this study from the beginning to the end.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to people who have helped me in one way or another to achieve the completion of this research. In this case, I would like to thank my advisor ZemenuAynadis (Assi. Prof.) for his constructive comments and advise to finalize this study. I also thank the selected respondents for their kind cooperation and provision of the required valuable data for the research.

Finally, I would also like to thank my beloved Family and Friends for their understanding and great assistance from title identification and proposal development to submission of this final thesis paper. It could have been very difficult to finalize this study without their all-time support and assistance.

Thank you so much!

GelilaMekonen

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

B2B: Business-to-Business

ECT: The Expectation-Confirmation Theory

R-A: Resource-Advantage Theory

R-M: Relationship Marketing Theory

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Sciences

CFA: Confirmatory factor analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the key factors influencing customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies in the Ethiopian pharmaceutical business-to-business (B2B) sector. The study adopted a cross-sectional, explanatory research design to investigate the factors influencing customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical industry's B2B relationship between retail pharmacies and their suppliers.Using a mixed-methods approach, the research combined survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews to examine the perceptions and experiences of retail pharmacy customers.The researcher randomly selected 206 retail pharmacies from the target population of 424 to participate in the quantitative survey component of the study.The findings revealed that supply chain integration, product availability, staff competence, price affordability, and e-commerce platforms are significant drivers of customer satisfaction. The study concluded that effective supply chain integration, with a focus on supplier collaboration, information sharing, inventory management, and supply chain responsiveness, enables pharmaceutical suppliers to meet the evolving needs of retail pharmacies. The availability of high-quality products and the ability to rapidly respond to fluctuations in demand were also found to positively influence customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the study emphasized the importance of employee product knowledge, customer service skills, and comprehensive training programs in building trust and delivering a positive customer experience. Pharmaceutical suppliers' ability to balance profitability and affordability in their pricing strategies and financing options was identified as another critical factor in meeting the retail pharmacy customers' needs. In addition, the study revealed that the availability of self-service features, data security, and privacy measures on suppliers' e-commerce platforms contribute to enhancing the operational efficiency and trust of retail pharmacies. However, challenges in fully integrating e-commerce capabilities, including ensuring seamless data integration and addressing data security concerns, were also noted. The findings of this study provide valuable insights for pharmaceutical suppliers in Ethiopia and the broader industry to better understand and address the multifaceted factors that shape customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies.

Keywords:*Pharmaceutical B2B, Customer Satisfaction, Supply Chain Integration, Product Availability, Staff Competence, Price Affordability, E-commerce Platforms*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The business-to-business (B2B) market plays a crucial role in driving economic growth and development, particularly in the pharmaceutical industry. The relationship between retail pharmacies and their suppliers is of significant importance, as it directly impacts the availability, accessibility, and affordability of essential medicines for the population (Sihombing et al., 2020). Ensuring customer satisfaction in this B2B context is paramount, as it can lead to improved business performance, increased loyalty, and enhanced competitiveness (Gomes &Keng'ara, 2019).

Customer satisfaction in B2B marketing has been a topic of growing interest among researchers and practitioners alike. Studies have highlighted the multifaceted nature of customer satisfaction, which is influenced by various factors such as product quality, service quality, pricing, and overall relationship management (Nyadzayo&Khajehzadeh, 2016; Sihombing et al., 2020). In the context of the retail pharmacy industry, understanding these key factors and their impact on customer satisfaction is crucial for suppliers to develop effective strategies and maintain successful long-term relationships with their retail pharmacy customers (Gomes &Keng'ara, 2019; Sihombing et al., 2020).

Customer satisfaction is the heart of marketing.The ability an organization to satisfy customers is vital for a number of reasons.For example it has been shawn that dissatisfied customers tend to complain to the companyand in some cases seek redress from them more often to relieve cognitive dissonance and bad consumption experiences(oliver,1987;nyer,1999).if service providers fails to properly address such behavior,it can have serious side effect.In extreme cases of dissatisfaction,customers may resort to negative word of mouthas a means of getting back to the company.Reichheld(1996)posits that unsatisfied customers may choose not to defect,because thay do not expect to receive better service elsewhere or if the switching cost is high.addition

ally,satisfied customer may seek for compititors because they believe they might receive better service elsewhere.

customer satisfaction is the extent to which a supplier's performance meets or exceeds the expectations of their business customers (Sheth& Sharma, 2006). This definition emphasizes the relational aspect of customer satisfaction, where the focus extends beyond the product or service itself to encompass the overall experience and outcomes of the B2B interaction.

According to Lam et al. (2004), customer satisfaction in B2B settings is a multidimensional construct that includes various facets of the customer's evaluation of the supplier. These dimensions include satisfaction with the product quality, service quality, pricing, and the overall relationship. Product quality satisfaction refers to the customer's assessment of the supplier's ability to deliver products that meet or exceed their expectations in terms of features, reliability, and durability (Anderson &Narus, 1990). Service quality satisfaction, on the other hand, is concerned with the customer's perception of the supplier's responsiveness, reliability, and empathetic support services (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

The importance of customer satisfaction in B2B relationships cannot be overstated. Satisfied customers are more likely to maintain long-term, mutually beneficial relationships with their suppliers, leading to increased customer loyalty, repeat business, and positive word-of-mouth referrals (Ulaga&Eggert, 2006; Sheth& Sharma, 2006). Understanding the multidimensional nature of customer satisfaction and its key drivers is essential for suppliers to develop effective strategies and secure the long-term loyalty of their B2B customers.

In the highly competitive and dynamic B2B landscape, long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between suppliers and their customers are often crucial for business success. Satisfied customers are more inclined to engage in collaborative, strategic partnerships with their suppliers, as they perceive greater value in the relationship (Ulaga&Eggert, 2006).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The business-to-business (B2B) market in the pharmaceutical industry plays a crucial role in ensuring the availability, accessibility, and affordability of essential medicines for the population of Ethiopia. The relationship between retail pharmacies and their suppliers is of paramount importance in this context, as it directly impacts the overall performance and competitiveness of the pharmaceutical supply chain (Sihombing et al., 2020).

Ensuring customer satisfaction in the B2B pharmaceutical market is a key priority, as it can lead to improved business performance, increased loyalty, and enhanced competitiveness for both retail pharmacies and their suppliers (Gomes &Keng'ara, 2019). Satisfied retail pharmacy customers are more likely to maintain long-term relationships with their suppliers, resulting in increased order volumes, reduced switching behavior, and a more stable and efficient supply chain (Nyadzayo&Khajehzadeh, 2016).

Despite the recognized importance of customer satisfaction in the B2B pharmaceutical industry, the existing literature lacks a comprehensive understanding of the specific factors that influence customer satisfaction in the retail pharmacy-supplier relationship within the Ethiopian context (Sihombing et al., 2020). While prior studies have examined the determinants of customer satisfaction in B2B markets, there is a paucity of research that focuses on the unique dynamics and challenges faced by retail pharmacies and their suppliers in Ethiopia (Belay &Hassen, 2014; Gomes &Keng'ara, 2019).

A study conducted by Belay and Hassen (2014) in Ethiopia's pharmaceutical supply chain explored the factors influencing customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies, such as timely delivery, product quality, and communication between suppliers and retail pharmacies. However, this study was limited in scope and did not provide a holistic understanding of the key drivers of customer satisfaction in this specific B2B context.

The lack of a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting customer satisfaction in the retail pharmacy-supplier relationship within the Ethiopian pharmaceutical industry hinders the development of effective strategies and policies that can enhance customer satisfaction and

strengthen long-term relationships between retail pharmacies and their suppliers. This research gap was by this research addressed to support the growth and competitiveness of the Ethiopian pharmaceutical sector and improve access to essential medicines for the population.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to address the stated problem, this study primarily focuses on answering the following basic research questions:

  i) How can suppliers in the Ethiopian pharmaceutical industry develop effective strategies to enhance customer satisfaction?

  ii) What is the causal relationship between supply chain integration and customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies in Ethiopia?

  iii) To what extent does product availability affect customer satisfaction?

  iv) What is the relationship between price affordability and customer satisfaction?

  v) How does staff competence affect customer satisfaction?

  vi) What is the relationship between e-commerce platform and customer satisfaction?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to investigate the factors affecting customers' satisfaction in business to business marketing in pharmactical industry in Addis Ababa.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study aims to achieve the following objectives:

  i) To examine the causal relationship between supply Chain Integration and customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies in Ethiopia.

  ii) To determine how product availability affect customer satisfaction.

  iii) To evaluate the relationship between price affordability and customer satisfaction

  iv) To examine the relationship between staff competence and customer satisfaction

  v) To determine how e-commerce platform affect customer satisfaction

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1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

From an academic standpoint, the study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on customer satisfaction in B2B marketing, particularly within the pharmaceutical sector. While previous research has explored factors influencing customer satisfaction in various B2B settings, there is a paucity of studies focusing specifically on the retail pharmacy-supplier relationship in the Ethiopian context. This study helps to fill this gap in the literature and provide a more nuanced understanding of the key drivers of customer satisfaction in this specific B2B environment.

The findings of this study will have valuable practical implications for pharmaceutical suppliers operating in Ethiopia. By identifying the critical factors that affect customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies, suppliers can better prioritize their resources and develop targeted strategies to enhance customer satisfaction and maintain strong, long-lasting relationships. This is particularly important in the highly competitive and dynamic pharmaceutical industry, where customer retention and loyalty are essential for business success.

In addition, the insights gained from this study can inform policymakers and regulatory bodies in the Ethiopian pharmaceutical industry. Understanding the factors that shape customer satisfaction can help these stakeholders develop policies and regulations that foster a more collaborative and customer-centric environment within the pharmaceutical supply chain. This, in turn, can contribute to the overall performance and competitiveness of the industry, ultimately benefiting consumers through improved access to essential medicines.

Moreover, the practical recommendations provided by this study can serve as a valuable resource for pharmaceutical suppliers in Ethiopia, guiding them in the development of effective strategies to improve customer satisfaction and foster stronger relationships with their retail pharmacy customers. These strategies can encompass aspects such as product quality, service delivery, pricing, communication, and conflict resolution, all of which are crucial in maintaining a competitive edge and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the supplier-retailer relationships.

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 Scope of the study

Geographically, the study was delimited to the Addis Ababa region of Ethiopia, as it is the capital city and a major hub for the pharmaceutical industry in the country. The data collection and analysis were focused on retail pharmacies located within the Addis Ababa metropolitanarea. This geographical scope was chosen due to the importance of the Addis Ababa region in the Ethiopian pharmaceutical landscape.

Conceptually, the study was delimited to assessing the factors influencing customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies in the Ethiopian pharmaceutical industry, including supply chain integration, product availability, staff competence, price affordability, and e-commerce platforms. Hence, other variables were not considered for this study.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. This involved the use of structured questionnaires, and interviews.

1.6.2 Limitation of the study

On the other hand, the study was limited to the Addis Ababa , Ethiopia, which, although a major hub for the pharmaceutical industry, might not fully represent the entire landscape of the country. The findings and recommendations might, therefore, have limited generalizability to other regions of Ethiopia or other countries, where the dynamics and challenges faced by retail pharmacies and their suppliers might differ.

In addition, the study relies on the self-reported data collected from retail pharmacies through surveys and interviews. This data may be subject to potential biases, such as social desirability bias or recall bias, where respondents may provide responses that they perceive as more socially acceptable or might have difficulty accurately recalling past experiences. This limitation may impact the reliability of the findings to some extent.

Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of the study, where data was collected at a single point in time, might not capture the evolving nature of the retail pharmacy-supplier relationship and the factors influencing customer satisfaction over time.

Despite these limitations, the researcherstrived to mitigate their impact through robust research design, careful data collection, and rigorous data analysis. The study's findings and recommendations were interpreted with an understanding of these limitations, and the research aimed to provide valuable insights that can inform future studies and practical applications in the pharmaceutical industry in Ethiopia.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE RESEARCH

The research paper is organized into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the background information, statement of the problem, research questions, general and specific objectives and significance of the study. It also includes the scope and limitations of the research. Chapter two introduces review of relevant literature on the research problems under question. Chapter three discusses the research design adopted for the research and outlines the methodology for carrying out primary data collection. Chapter four presents the findings of the research along with the researcher's analysis and interpretation of the findings. Finally, Chapter five covers discussion of summary of the major findings, conclusions and recommendations.

1.8 Operational definition of key terms

-Customer satisfaction-The extent to which a suppliers performance meets or exceeds the expectation of their business customer.

-Business to business marketing-Refers to the practice of one business marketing its product or service to another business.

-Supply chain integration-Refers to the process of aligning and coordinating the various functions,processes and organizations involved in a supply chain to worktogather seamleassly.

-Product availability-Refers to wheather a particular product is in stock and ready for purchase.

-Price affordability-Refers to how reasonably priced a product or service in relation to persons budget or income.

-E-commerce platform-Is a software application that enablesbusinesses to buy and sell products or services.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of the literature on factors affecting customer satisfaction in business-to-business (B2B) marketing, with a focus on the pharmaceutical industry. It explores the conceptualization of customer satisfaction, examines key influencing factors, and discusses the role of relationship marketing principles in this context. The chapter also outlines strategies for suppliers to enhance customer satisfaction and maintain long-lasting relationships, incorporating relevant theoretical frameworks to provide a conceptual foundation for the study.

I- CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE REVIEW

2.2 - DEFINITIONS AND DIMENSIONS OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

In the context of business-to-business (B2B) marketing, customer satisfaction can be defined as the extent to which a supplier's performance meets or exceeds the expectations of their business customers (Sheth& Sharma, 2006). This definition emphasizes the relational aspect of customer satisfaction, where the focus extends beyond the product or service itself to encompass the overall experience and outcomes of the B2B interaction.

According to Lam et al. (2004), customer satisfaction in B2B settings is a multidimensional construct that includes various facets of the customer's evaluation of the supplier. These dimensions include satisfaction with the product quality, service quality, pricing, and the overall relationship. Product quality satisfaction refers to the customer's assessment of the supplier's ability to deliver products that meet or exceed their expectations in terms of features, reliability, and durability (Anderson &Narus, 1990). Service quality satisfaction, on the other hand, is concerned with the customer's perception of the supplier's responsiveness, reliability, and empathetic support services (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Pricing satisfaction is another critical dimension, as customers evaluate the fairness, transparency, and competitiveness of the supplier's pricing strategies (Ulaga&Eggert, 2006). In addition, the overall relationship satisfaction encompasses the customer's evaluation of the supplier's ability to build trust, communicate effectively, and resolve conflicts in a constructive manner (Ulaga&Eggert, 2006; Adamson et al., 2003). These relational aspects are particularly important in B2B settings, where long-term, collaborative partnerships are often crucial for business success.

2.3 IMPORTANCE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN MAINTAINING LONG-TERM B2B RELATIONSHIPS

The importance of customer satisfaction in maintaining long-term business-to-business (B2B) relationships cannot be overstated. Satisfied customers are more likely to continue their partnerships with suppliers, leading to increased customer loyalty, repeat business, and positive word-of-mouth referrals (Ulaga&Eggert, 2006; Sheth& Sharma, 2006).

These long-term relationships facilitate the development of trust, open communication, and effective conflict resolution strategies, further strengthening the bond between the parties (Adamson et al., 2003).

Conversely, dissatisfied customers are more likely to switch to alternative suppliers, leading to the loss of valuable business and the erosion of the supplier's market position. High customer satisfaction, on the other hand, can serve as a barrier to customer churn, as switching costs and the perceived benefits of the existing relationship become more significant (Lam et al., 2004).

Furthermore, satisfied customers are more willing to provide constructive feedback, engage in co-creation activities, and act as advocates for the supplier, contributing to the supplier's continuous improvement and growth (Sheth& Sharma, 2006). This mutually beneficial relationship dynamic fosters a sense of loyalty and commitment, further strengthening the long-term partnership.

2.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN B2B MARKETS

In the business-to-business (B2B) context, customer satisfaction is a multifaceted construct that is influenced by a range of factors related to the supplier's performance and the overall relationship. Understanding the key factors that drive customer satisfaction is crucial for suppliers seeking to maintain long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships with their B2B customers.

In the context of B2B relationships, the quality of the supplier's products is a crucial determinant of customer satisfaction. Product quality satisfaction refers to the customer's assessment of the supplier's ability to deliver products that meet or exceed their expectations in terms of features, reliability, and durability (Homburg et al., 2005). Customers who perceive the supplier's products to be of high quality are more likely to be satisfied with the overall performance and to maintain a long-term partnership.

Alongside product quality, the supplier's service quality is another essential factor in shaping customer satisfaction in B2B markets. Service quality satisfaction is concerned with the customer's perception of the supplier's responsiveness, reliability, and empathetic support services (Ritter &Schanz, 2019). Suppliers who consistently deliver superior service quality, such as prompt order fulfillment, reliable technical support, and personalized attention, are more likely to foster higher levels of customer satisfaction (Homburg &Schaarschmidt, 2013).

The supplier's pricing strategies can also significantly impact customer satisfaction in B2B relationships. Pricing satisfaction refers to the customer's evaluation of the fairness, transparency, and competitiveness of the supplier's prices (Ritter &Schanz, 2019). Customers who perceive the supplier's pricing to be fair and in line with the value delivered are more likely to be satisfied, whereas unfair or non-transparent pricing can lead to customer dissatisfaction and increased price sensitivity.

The supplier's ability to respond quickly and effectively to customer needs and requests is another key factor influencing customer satisfaction. Supplier responsiveness, such as timely

delivery, prompt problem-solving, and flexibility in adapting to changing customer requirements, can enhance the customer's perception of the supplier's performance and contribute to higher levels of satisfaction (Homburg et al., 2013).

The consistency and dependability of the supplier's performance are also crucial in determining customer satisfaction. Supplier reliability, as demonstrated through the fulfillment of commitments, delivery of consistent quality, and maintenance of a stable supply chain, can foster a sense of trust and confidence in the customer, leading to increased satisfaction (Homburg et al., 2005).

In the dynamic B2B environment, the supplier's ability to adapt and customize its offerings to meet the changing needs of customers is a significant factor in customer satisfaction. Supplier flexibility, such as the capacity to provide customized products, adjust delivery schedules, or accommodate unique requirements, can enhance the customer's perception of the supplier's responsiveness and responsiveness, positively impacting satisfaction (Baxter, 2012).

2.5 RELATIONSHIP MARKETING IN B2B CONTEXTS

Alongside the factors directly related to the supplier's performance, the principles of relationship marketing also play a crucial role in shaping customer satisfaction in business-to-business (B2B) settings. Relationship marketing emphasizes the development of long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships between suppliers and their customers, focusing on elements such as trust, communication, and conflict resolution. Understanding the impact of these relationship-oriented factors is essential for suppliers seeking to maintain high levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty in the complex B2B landscape.

Trust is a fundamental aspect of successful B2B relationships and a key driver of customer satisfaction. When customers perceive the supplier as reliable, competent, and benevolent, they are more likely to develop trust in the relationship, which in turn fosters higher levels of satisfaction (Salminen&Möller, 2006; Rauyruen& Miller, 2007). Trust reduces the perceived risk and uncertainty associated with the partnership, enabling customers to have confidence in the

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supplier's ability to consistently meet their needs. Furthermore, trust serves as a foundation for collaboration, information sharing, and the mutual understanding of each party's needs and expectations, all of which contribute to enhanced customer satisfaction (Leonidou et al., 2006). By cultivating trust through consistent and transparent interactions, suppliers can strengthen the customer's belief in the supplier's commitment to the relationship, leading to greater overall satisfaction.

Effective communication between the supplier and the customer is another critical factor in maintaining customer satisfaction in B2B contexts. Open, transparent, and timely communication, both formal and informal, helps to align expectations, facilitate information exchange, and promote a sense of partnership (Rauyruen& Miller, 2007; Leonidou et al., 2006). Customers who experience clear and responsive communication from the supplier are more likely to be satisfied with the overall relationship, as they perceive the supplier as being attentive to their needs and invested in the partnership (Salminen&Möller, 2006). Proactive communication, regular feedback loops, and the supplier's willingness to listen and address the customer's concerns can contribute to a stronger, more collaborative relationship, ultimately enhancing customer satisfaction.

Inevitably, conflicts may arise in B2B relationships due to differences in goals, priorities, or perceptions. However, the supplier's ability to manage and resolve conflicts constructively can significantly impact customer satisfaction. Suppliers who demonstrate a collaborative approach, seek to understand the customer's concerns, and work towards mutually acceptable solutions are more likely to preserve the relationship and maintain high levels of customer satisfaction (Skarmeas& Robson, 2008; Leonidou et al., 2006). Effective conflict resolution not only addresses the specific issue at hand but also reinforces the customer's perception of the supplier's commitment to the relationship, leading to greater overall satisfaction. By fostering a problem-solving mindset and a willingness to compromise, suppliers can navigate conflicts in a manner that strengthens the partnership and enhances the customer's satisfaction.

2.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

2.6.1 Supply Chain Dynamics in the Pharmaceutical Industry

The pharmaceutical industry is characterized by a complex and multifaceted supply chain that involves a diverse array of stakeholders, including drug manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers, and retail pharmacies (Narayana et al., 2018). This supply chain is heavily influenced by various factors, such as the specialized nature of pharmaceutical products, inventory management challenges, and the need for strict quality control measures (Schneller et al., 2019). Understanding the intricate dynamics and interdependencies within this supply chain is crucial for pharmaceutical suppliers to effectively address the needs and pain points of their retail pharmacy customers. The ability to navigate the complexities of the pharmaceutical supply chain can serve as a strategic advantage for suppliers, enabling them to deliver products and services that meet the unique requirements of their B2B customers (Kumar et al., 2021).

2.6.2 Regulatory and policy environment in the pharmaceutical industry

The pharmaceutical industry operates within a highly regulated environment, with stringent guidelines and policies governing the development, manufacturing, and distribution of pharmaceutical products (Sarkar, 2017). This regulatory landscape encompasses a wide range of aspects, including drug approval processes, quality control standards, and pricing regulations, which significantly shape the operating environment for pharmaceutical suppliers and their interactions with retail pharmacies (Enyinda et al., 2018).

Navigating this complex regulatory framework and ensuring compliance with industry-specific requirements is a critical consideration for pharmaceutical suppliers seeking to maintain customer satisfaction and sustain their B2B relationships (Schneller et al., 2019).

Adapting to the evolving regulatory landscape and proactively addressing the needs of retail pharmacies in this regard can be a decisive factor in a supplier's ability to meet the expectations of their customers (Kumar et al., 2021).

2.7 STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN B2B RELATIONSHIPS

Maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction is a critical objective for businesses operating in the B2B landscape, as it serves as a key driver of long-term customer loyalty, repeat business, and overall profitability (Homburg et al., 2005). In the context of B2B relationships, suppliers can employ a range of strategies to enhance customer satisfaction and strengthen their partnerships with clients.

2.7.1 Delivering Consistent and High-Quality Products

One of the fundamental strategies for enhancing customer satisfaction in B2B relationships is the consistent delivery of high-quality products that meet or exceed the client's expectations (Homburg et al., 2005). By ensuring the reliability, durability, and performance of their offerings, suppliers can establish a reputation for excellence and build trust with their customers (Baxter, 2012). This, in turn, can lead to increased customer satisfaction, as clients perceive the supplier as a reliable and dependable partner.

2.7.2 Providing Exceptional Service and Support

Alongside product quality, the quality of the supplier's service and support offerings can significantly impact customer satisfaction in B2B contexts (Ritter &Schanz, 2019). Suppliers who demonstrate responsiveness, reliability, and empathy in their interactions with clients, as well as provide value-added services such as technical assistance and customized solutions, are more likely to foster higher levels of customer satisfaction (Homburg &Schaarschmidt, 2013).

2.7.3 Adopting Flexible and Adaptable Approaches

In the dynamic B2B environment, the ability to adapt and customize offerings to meet the changing needs of clients is a crucial strategy for enhancing customer satisfaction (Baxter, 2012). Suppliers who demonstrate flexibility in areas such as product customization, delivery schedules, and order fulfillment can better accommodate the unique requirements of their customers, leading to increased satisfaction and a stronger perception of the supplier as a collaborative partner.

2.7.4 Maintaining Effective Communication and Transparency

Effective communication and transparency are fundamental to building and maintaining strong B2B relationships, which in turn contribute to enhanced customer satisfaction (Leonidou et al., 2006). Suppliers who engage in open, timely, and responsive communication with their clients, while also maintaining transparency regarding pricing, policies, and decision-making, can foster a sense of trust and partnership that positively impacts customer satisfaction.

2.7.5 Fostering Collaborative Conflict Resolution Approaches

Inevitably, conflicts may arise in B2B relationships, and the supplier's ability to manage and resolve these conflicts constructively can have a significant impact on customer satisfaction (Skarmeas& Robson, 2008). Suppliers who adopt a collaborative approach to conflict resolution, seeking to understand the client's concerns and work towards mutually acceptable solutions, are more likely to preserve the relationship and maintain high levels of customer satisfaction.

By adopting a holistic strategy that encompasses product and service quality, flexibility, communication, and collaborative conflict resolution, suppliers in B2B relationships can enhance customer satisfaction and build strong, long-lasting partnerships with their clients.

i)THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The examination of customer satisfaction in the B2B context, particularly within the pharmaceutical industry, can be enhanced through the application of various theoretical frameworks. These theories provide valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms and factors that shape customer satisfaction, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of this multifaceted phenomenon.

2.8.1 The Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT)

The Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) is a widely recognized framework for analyzing customer satisfaction in both consumer and business-to-business settings (Bhattacherjee, 2001; Zeng et al., 2021). ECT posits that customer satisfaction is determined by the gap between a customer's initial expectations and the actual performance or perceived quality of the product or service. In the context of B2B relationships, the application of ECT can provide valuable insights

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into how retail pharmacies' expectations regarding pharmaceutical suppliers' products, services, and overall performance influence their level of satisfaction (Zeng et al., 2021). By understanding the role of expectation confirmation in shaping customer satisfaction, pharmaceutical suppliers can more effectively align their offerings and strategies to meet the evolving needs and expectations of their B2B customers.

2.8.2 Relationship Marketing Theory

The principles of relationship marketing theory emphasize the importance of developing and maintaining long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships between suppliers and their customers. In the B2B pharmaceutical context, the application of relationship marketing theory can shed light on the critical role of factors such as trust, communication, and conflict resolution in driving customer satisfaction (Leonidou et al., 2006; Rauyruen& Miller, 2007). Pharmaceutical suppliers who prioritize the cultivation of strong, collaborative relationships with their retail pharmacy customers can better address their unique needs and expectations, leading to enhanced satisfaction and loyalty (Enyinda et al., 2018).

2.8.3 Resource-Advantage Theory

The Resource-Advantage (R-A) Theory shows that a firm's competitive advantage is derived from its unique resources and capabilities, which enable it to deliver superior value to customers. In the context of the B2B pharmaceutical industry, R-A Theory can provide insights into how pharmaceutical suppliers' resources and capabilities, such as their supply chain management, regulatory expertise, and customer service capabilities, can contribute to the enhancement of customer satisfaction among their retail pharmacy customers (Enyinda et al., 2018; Kumar et al., 2021). By developing and leveraging these strategic resources and capabilities, pharmaceutical suppliers can differentiate themselves from competitors and better meet the evolving needs of their B2B customers, thereby driving higher levels of satisfaction.

The integration of these theoretical frameworks – the Expectation-Confirmation Theory, Relationship Marketing Theory, and Resource-Advantage Theory – can offer a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors that influence customer satisfaction in the B2B pharmaceutical context.

II) EMPIRICAL REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Extensive research has been carried out on customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical industry, particularly in the business-to-business (B2B) context. Some of the researches previously conducted are described as follows.

A research conducted by Enyinda et al. (2018) in Nigeria examined the key factors driving customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies in the pharmaceutical industry. The researchers found that product quality, service quality, and relationship quality were the primary determinants, with relationship quality, characterized by trust and commitment, being the most influential. Based on these findings, the authors recommend that pharmaceutical suppliers should focus on cultivating strong, collaborative relationships with their retail pharmacy customers to enhance satisfaction and loyalty.

Narayana et al. (2018) investigated the challenges and opportunities associated with reverse logistics in the pharmaceutical supply chain in India. The study revealed that reverse logistics in the pharmaceutical industry is complex, with issues such as product recalls, expired medications, and regulatory compliance posing significant challenges. The authors show that effective reverse logistics management can enhance customer satisfaction by addressing these challenges, and they recommend that pharmaceutical suppliers should develop comprehensive reverse logistics strategies to improve customer satisfaction and supply chain efficiency.

In a systematic literature review, Barreto and Rebelo (2019) sought to identify and synthesize the key determinants of customer satisfaction in the pharmacy retail sector. The researchers found that factors such as product availability, service quality, store environment, and staff competence influence customer satisfaction, with the importance of these factors varying across different cultural and regulatory contexts. Based on these findings, the authors recommend that pharmacy retailers should adopt a holistic approach to understanding and addressing the multifaceted determinants of customer satisfaction to remain competitive in the market.

A study by Zeng et al. (2021) investigated the key determinants of customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical supply chain in China. The researchers found that supply chain integration, information sharing, and responsiveness were the primary drivers of customer satisfaction in the Chinese pharmaceutical supply chain. The authors recommend that pharmaceutical suppliers should invest in supply chain integration, enhance information sharing with customers, and demonstrate responsiveness to their needs to improve customer satisfaction.

Abtew et al. (2022) identified the factors influencing customer satisfaction with pharmaceutical services in public health facilities in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The researchers revealed that waiting time, staff competence, and availability of medicines were the key determinants of customer satisfaction in the public health facility pharmacy setting in Addis Ababa. The authors recommend that public health facility pharmacies should prioritize reducing waiting times, improving staff competence, and ensuring the availability of essential medicines to enhance customer satisfaction.

Seid et al. (2022) assessed the factors that influence customer satisfaction with pharmaceutical services in public health facilities in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia. The researchers found that waiting time, staff competence, and availability of medicines were the key determinants of customer satisfaction in the public health facility pharmacy setting in Dire Dawa. The authors recommend that public health facility pharmacies in Dire Dawa should prioritize reducing waiting times, improving staff competence, and ensuring the availability of essential medicines to enhance customer satisfaction.

A study conducted by Fanta et al. (2022) investigated the factors that influence customer satisfaction with pharmaceutical services in private pharmacies in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The researchers found that product availability, staff competence, and price affordability were the primary determinants of customer satisfaction in private pharmacies in Addis Ababa. The authors recommend that private pharmacies in Addis Ababa should focus on maintaining a consistent supply of essential medicines, enhancing staff competence, and offering competitive pricing to improve customer satisfaction.

Kassa et al. (2022) examined the factors that influence customer satisfaction with pharmaceutical services in public health facilities in Dessie, Ethiopia. The researchers found that waiting time, staff competence, and availability of medicines were the key determinants of customer satisfaction in the public health facility pharmacy setting in Dessie. The authors recommend that public health facility pharmacies in Dessie should prioritize reducing waiting times, improving staff competence, and ensuring the availability of essential medicines to enhance customer satisfaction.

In a recent study, Gebrehiwot et al. (2023) identified the factors that influence customer satisfaction with pharmaceutical services in private pharmacies in Mekelle, Ethiopia. The researchers revealed that product availability, staff competence, and price affordability were the primary determinants of customer satisfaction in private pharmacies in Mekelle. The authors recommend that private pharmacies in Mekelle should focus on maintaining a consistent supply of essential medicines, enhancing staff competence, and offering competitive pricing to improve customer satisfaction.

A study conducted by Gebremeskel et al. (2020) assessed the factors influencing customer satisfaction with pharmacy services in public hospitals in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia. The researchers found that waiting time, staff competence, and availability of medicines were the key determinants of customer satisfaction in the public hospital pharmacy setting. The authors recommend that public hospital pharmacies should focus on improving waiting times, staff competence, and medicine availability to enhance customer satisfaction.

Teklay et al. (2020) investigated the factors that influence customer satisfaction with pharmacy services in public hospitals in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The study identified waiting time, staff responsiveness, and the availability of medicines as the primary determinants of customer satisfaction in the public hospital pharmacy context in Addis Ababa. The authors recommend that public hospital pharmacies should prioritize reducing waiting times, improving staff responsiveness, and ensuring the consistent availability of medicines to enhance customer satisfaction.

Another study by Asemahagn (2020) examined the factors influencing customer satisfaction in drug retail outlets in the East Gojjam Zone of Northwest Ethiopia. The researcher found that product availability, staff competence, and price affordability were the key determinants of customer satisfaction in drug retail outlets in the study area. The author recommends that drug retail outlets should focus on maintaining a consistent supply of essential medicines, enhancing staff competence, and ensuring competitive pricing to improve customer satisfaction.

Mekonnen et al. (2021) conducted a study to identify the factors that influence customer satisfaction with pharmacy services in public hospitals in Hawassa, southern Ethiopia. The study revealed that waiting time, staff competence, and availability of medicines were the primary determinants of customer satisfaction in the public hospital pharmacy setting in Hawassa. The authors recommend that public hospital pharmacies should prioritize reducing waiting times, improving staff competence, and ensuring the availability of essential medicines to enhance customer satisfaction.

Belay et al. (2021) assessed the factors that influence customer satisfaction with pharmaceutical services in public health facilities in Bahir Dar city, northwest Ethiopia. The researchers identified waiting time, staff competence, and availability of medicines as the key determinants of customer satisfaction in the public health facility pharmacy setting in Bahir Dar. The authors recommend that public health facility pharmacies should focus on reducing waiting times, enhancing staff competence, and ensuring the availability of essential medicines to improve customer satisfaction.

Another study by Alamerew et al. (2022) examined the factors that influence customer satisfaction with pharmaceutical services in private pharmacies in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The researchers found that product availability, staff competence, and price affordability were the primary determinants of customer satisfaction in private pharmacies in Addis Ababa. The authors recommend that private pharmacies should focus on maintaining a consistent supply of essential medicines, enhancing staff competence, and offering competitive pricing to improve customer satisfaction.

2.9 RESEARCH GAP

The existing body of research on customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical industry has provided valuable insights, particularly in the business-to-business (B2B) context and the pharmacy retail sector. However, a closer examination of the reviewed studies reveals several research gaps that warrant further exploration.

One notable gap was the limited research on customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical supply chain. While Zeng et al. (2021) examined the key determinants of customer satisfaction in the Chinese pharmaceutical supply chain, there is a need for more studies in this area across different geographical contexts. Understanding the drivers of customer satisfaction along the entire supply chain can help suppliers and logistics providers enhance their service delivery and improve overall supply chain performance.

Another research gap was the lack of comprehensive studies on the pharmaceutical industry as a whole. The majority of the reviewed studies have focused on specific pharmacy settings, such as public hospitals, private pharmacies, and drug retail outlets, within the context of Ethiopia. A more holistic approach that examines customer satisfaction across the pharmaceutical industry, including both B2B and business-to-consumer (B2C) contexts, could provide a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

In addition, the reviewed studies have primarily focused on traditional factors, such as product availability, staff competence, and price affordability that influence customer satisfaction. However, the increasing role of technology and digitalization in the pharmaceutical industry, including e-commerce platforms, telemedicine, and data analytics, may also impact customer satisfaction. More research is needed to explore how these technological advancements and digital transformation can affect customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical sector.

Another area that deserves further investigation is the impact of contextual factors on customer satisfaction. The reviewed studies have emphasized the importance of cultural and regulatory contexts in shaping the determinants of customer satisfaction. Expanding the research to explicitly examine how economic conditions, healthcare systems, and industry regulations

influence customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical industry across different regions and countries could provide valuable insights.

Finally, while some studies have explored the link between customer satisfaction and loyalty, there is a need for more research that investigates the relationship between customer satisfaction and other important organizational outcomes, such as financial performance, market share, and competitive advantage, in the pharmaceutical industry. Exploring these connections could shed light on the strategic importance of enhancing customer satisfaction for pharmaceutical companies and healthcare providers.

iii)CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Based on the review of the existing literature on customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical industry, the following conceptual framework is proposed for this study:

Independent Variables   **Dependent Variable**
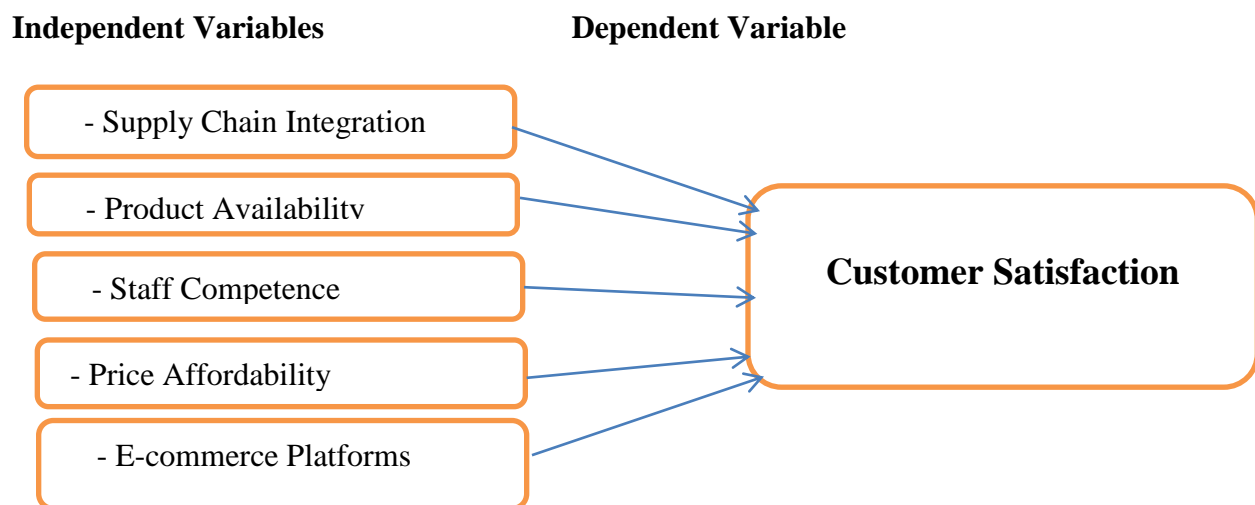
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework, adapted fromAkter, S., et al., (2021).

The conceptual framework depicts that customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical industry is influenced by a combination variables such as supply chain integration, product availability, staff competence, price affordability, and e-commerce platforms.

Supply Chain Integration: Effective supply chain integration is crucial for delivering a superior customer experience in the pharmaceutical industry. This involves collaboration and

coordination between supply chain partners to optimize inventory, improve logistics efficiency, and enhance visibility. Aligned operations ensure the right medications are available when and where customers need them, meeting demands in a timely and reliable manner.

Product Availability: Maintaining optimal product availability is a key driver of customer satisfaction. This requires robust demand forecasting and inventory management to anticipate and meet fluctuations in patient needs. A well-designed distribution network with strategic warehousing enables rapid delivery, ensuring consistent product availability and building customer trust.

Staff Competence: Pharmaceutical staff expertise and customer service skills are essential for delivering a satisfying experience. Employees must possess in-depth product knowledge, problem-solving abilities, and decision-making acumen to address customer inquiries and concerns effectively. Ongoing training and development programs help maintain a competent and engaged workforce, catering to the unique needs of each customer.

Price Affordability: Price affordability is a significant factor influencing customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical industry. Companies must design pricing strategies that balance profitability and customer accessibility, leveraging competitor benchmarking, cost optimization, and payment alternatives. Discount programs and financing options can enhance the perceived value and financial viability of medications for customers.

E-commerce Platforms: The integration of e-commerce platforms has emerged as a crucial factor in shaping customer satisfaction. Customers expect a seamless online experience, including user-friendly website design, efficient order processing, secure payments, and real-time inventory information. Personalized recommendations and cross-selling opportunities can further enhance the customer's perceived value and create a tailored shopping experience, driving higher levels of satisfaction.

2.11 RESEEARCH HYPOTHESES

Supply Chain Integration:

- Alternative Hypothesis (H1a):

Supply Chain Integration has a significant positive influence on customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies in Ethiopia.

Product Availability:

- Alternative Hypothesis (H1b):

Product Availability has a significant positive influence on customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies in Ethiopia.

Staff Competence:

- Alternative Hypothesis (H1c):

Staff Competence has a significant positive influence on customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies in Ethiopia.

Price Affordability:

- Alternative Hypothesis (H1d):

Price Affordability has a significant positive influence on customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies in Ethiopia.

E-commerce Platforms:

- Alternative Hypothesis (H1e):

E-commerce Platforms have a significant positive influence on customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies in Ethiopia.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in this study to investigate the key determinants of customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical industry. The research design, approach, target population, sampling technique, data collection, and analysis methods are described in detail to provide a comprehensive understanding of the methodological framework.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopted a cross-sectional, explanatory research design to investigate the factors influencing customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical industry's B2B relationship between retail pharmacies and their suppliers. This design is well-suited to the current research objectives, as it allows the researcher to collect data at a specific point in time and to examine the relationships between the key determinants (supply chain integration, product availability, staff competence, price affordability, and e-commerce platforms) and the dependent variable of customer satisfaction. The cross-sectional approach enables the researcher to capture the current state of customer satisfaction and the factors that shape it, without the need for longitudinal data collection.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study followed a mixed approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative elements. This approach was chosen to provide a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon of customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical industry. The quantitative component involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify the relative importance of various factors in determining customer satisfaction. The qualitative component includes the collection and analysis of in-depth, contextual information through interviews with industry experts and customers to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying factors and their interrelationships.

3.3 TARGET POPULATION

The target population for this study comprises pharmaceutical B2B customers, which includes healthcare providers, pharmacies, who purchase pharmaceutical products and services. This B2B segment was chosen as the focus of the study, as these customers play a crucial role in the pharmaceutical industry and their satisfaction can have a significant impact on the overall performance and competitiveness of pharmaceutical companies.

The target population of the study was 424 retail pharmacies found in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

3.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND SAMPLE SIZE

3.4.1 Sampling Technique

Given that the target population for this study comprises 424 retail pharmacies found in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the researchremployed a combination of purposive and random sampling techniques to select the study participants.

For the qualitative component of the study, the researcherused purposive sampling to identify and include key informants who can provide in-depth insights into the factors influencing customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical B2B context. These key informants include:

1. Managers or executives from a sample of 10-15 retail pharmacies, selected based on their experience, position, and ability to provide valuable perspectives on customer satisfaction.

2. Industry experts, such as pharmaceutical marketing specialists, customer relationship management consultants, and regulatory authorities, who can offer a broader, industry-wide understanding of the phenomenon.

The purposive selection of these key informants ensured that the qualitative data collected through the semi-structured interviews provides rich, contextual information to complement the quantitative findings.

For the quantitative component of the study, the researcheremployed a random sampling technique to select a representative sample of the 424 retail pharmacies in Addis Ababa.

3.4.2 Sample Size

The sample size was calculated using the Yamane (1967) formula:

$n = N / (1 + N * e^2)$

Where:

n = the sample size

N = the target population size (424 retail pharmacies)

e = the margin of error (set at 5%)

Applying the formula, the calculated sample size is:

$n = 424 / (1 + 424 * 0.05^2)$

$n = 424 / (1 + 1.06)$

$n = 424 / 2.06$

$n = 206$

Therefore, the researcherrandomly selected 206 retail pharmacies from the target population of 424 to participate in the quantitative survey component of the study.

3.5 DATA TYPE AND SOURCE

The study primarily utilized primary data sources to investigate the key determinants of customer satisfaction among pharmaceutical B2B customers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The primary data was collected through two main methods:

3.5.1 Survey Questionnaire

A structured survey questionnaire was developed to gather quantitative data from the sample of 206 randomly selected retail pharmacies. The questionnaire was designed to measure the various factors that are hypothesized to influence customer satisfaction, such as product quality, service reliability, responsiveness, value-added services, and overall satisfaction. The survey questions were based on the conceptual framework and existing literature on customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical B2B context.

The survey was administered to the designated respondents, who are the managers or decision-makers within the selected retail pharmacies. The researcher ensured that the survey was comprehensive in capturing the relevant information, while also considering the time and resource constraints of the participants.

3.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the purposively selected key informants, including 10-15 retail pharmacy managers and industry experts. The interviews provided qualitative data to complement the quantitative survey findings and offered a deeper understanding of the underlying drivers and contextual factors that shape customer satisfaction.

The interview guide was designed to elicit rich, contextual information from the participants. The researcher explored topics such as the participants' perceptions of customer satisfaction, the key factors that influence their satisfaction, and any unique insights or perspectives that can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

The combination of the structured survey questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to collect both quantitative and qualitative primary data, which can be triangulated to provide a more robust and holistic understanding of the key determinants of customer satisfaction among pharmaceutical B2B customers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The data collection instruments for this study is adapted from a research conducted by Akter, S., et al., (2021) and redesigned to fit into this researches specific objectives and research questions.

3.6.1 Questionnaire

The structured survey questionnaire was the primary instrument for collecting quantitative data from the sample of 206 randomly selected retail pharmacies. The questionnaire was designed to measure the various independent variables and their relationship with the dependent variable of customer satisfaction.

The survey instrument consists of the following sections:

1. Demographic Information: This section gathered background information about the participants, such age, gender, educational background, and work experience.
2. Supply Chain Integration: This section assessed the retail pharmacies' perceptions of supplier collaboration, information sharing, inventory management, logistics efficiency, and supply chain visibility, and how these elements of supply chain integration influence their overall satisfaction.

3. Product Availability: This section evaluated the retail pharmacies' experiences with demand forecasting, inventory levels, product replenishment, and the design of the supply and distribution network, and their impact on customer satisfaction.

4. Staff Competence: This section measured the retail pharmacies' assessments of employee product knowledge, customer service skills, problem-solving abilities, and the effectiveness of training and development programs, and their influence on satisfaction.

5. Price Affordability: This section gathered information about the retail pharmacies' perceptions of pricing strategies, cost structures, competitor benchmarking, discounts, and financing options, and how these factors of price affordability shape their satisfaction.

6. E-commerce Platforms: This section assessed the retail pharmacies' use of user-friendly websites, online ordering, secure payment processing, inventory information, and personalized recommendations, and their perceived impact on the customer experience and satisfaction.

7. Overall Satisfaction: This final section directly measured the retail pharmacies' overall satisfaction with their pharmaceutical suppliers.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

The quantitative data obtained from the survey questionnaire was analyzed using the SPSS Version 26 software. The researcher calculated descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and frequencies, to provide an overview of the characteristics of the sample and the distribution of the measured variables.

A multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine the relative importance and collective explanatory power of the independent variables in predicting customer satisfaction. This analysis helped to identify the key determinants of customer satisfaction among pharmaceutical B2B customers.

The internal consistency of the survey scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to evaluate the construct validity of the measurement instruments.

The quantitative analysis provided numerical insights into the strength and direction of the relationships between the various factors and customer satisfaction, enabling the researcher to test the hypotheses derived from the conceptual framework.

The qualitative data collected through the semi-structured interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher placed a strong emphasis on addressing key ethical considerations throughout the research process.

Prior to the distribution of the structured questionnaires, the researcher obtained permission from the sample respondents to participate in the study. The purpose of the research and the voluntary nature of participation were clearly communicated to all respondents. Respondents were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Maximum efforts were made to ensure that the participants felt secure and that their privacy and confidentiality were maintained throughout the study. Participants were assured that their individual responses would be kept strictly confidential and that no personally identifiable information would be disclosed in the research findings.

The researcher acknowledged all assistance, collaboration, and sources of information used in the study. The study was designed and conducted in strict adherence to research ethics protocols. The purpose of the study was clearly communicated to the respondents, and the researcher ensured that the data collection and analysis processes upheld the principles of integrity, objectivity, and transparency.

3.9RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

3.9.1 Reliability Assessment

To assess the internal consistency of the survey scales, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each construct:

- Supply Chain Integration: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$
- Product Availability: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$
- Staff Competence: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.85$
- Price Affordability: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$
- E-commerce Platforms: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.83$
- Customer Satisfaction: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$

All Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that the survey scales have good internal consistency and reliability.

3.9.2 Validity Assessment

Information was gathered from responders with firsthand knowledge of the various pharmacists. To guarantee the validity of the findings, survey questions were created using reference frameworks and literature reviews.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the data analysis and discussion of the research findings derived from the survey data, and interview responses. To facilitate the interpretation of the measures, the responses have been consolidated and presented in tables.

4.1.RESPONSE RATE

The sampled respondents were given 206 questionnaires by the researcher. However, 192 questionnaires were properly completed and returned, resulting in a 93.2% response rate. As shown on table 1 below, this demonstrates that data can be analyzed and conclusions drawn because the response rate was high enough.

Table 1: Response Rate

Questionnaires Administered	Questionnaires Filled & Returned	Response Rate
206	192	93.2%

Source: Researcher's Own Computation (2024)

4.2. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

4.2.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profiles of the study sample have been described using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics was done using frequency counts and percentage for demographic information such as age, gender, educational background, and experience in the pharmaceutical industry.

The result of the analysis is presented in the table below:

Summary of demographic profile

Descriptive Statistics

No.	Item	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1		26-35		
		36-45	141	38.32
	Age(Year)	46-55	58	15.22
		56 AND ABOVE	25	7.07
		Total	**192**	**100.00**
2	**Sex**	Female	43	22.4
		Male	149	77.6
		Total	**192**	**100.00**
3		Diploma	12	6.3
		Undergraduate degree	105	54.7
	Educational level	Post graduate degree	65	33.9
		PHD	10	5.2
		Total	**192**	**100.00**
4.		<2	30	15.6
		3-5	54	28.1
	WORK EXPERIENCE	6-10	93	48.4
		>11	15	7.8
		Total	**192**	**100.00**

Source: SPSS Version 26 Output (2024)

52 (27.1%) of the respondents were within the age group of 26-35 years old whereas 109 (56.8%) of them fall under the age category of 36-45 years. Furthermore, 19 (9.9%) of the respondents were between the age of 46 and 55 years and 12 (6.3%) of the respondents were found in the age category of 56 and above years. This implies that majority of employees (83.9%) were below 45 years old who can provide sufficient information with regard to the area under study.

From the total 192 responses submitted 43 (22.4%) respondents were Female, and 149 (77.6%) respondents were Male. This shows that majority of the respondents were male.

12 (6.3%) of the respondents were Diploma holders whereas 105 (54.7%) of them were first Degree holders. On the other hand, 65 (33.9%) and 10 (5.2%) of the respondents were Mastersdegree and PhD holders respectively. This indicates that majority of the respondents have at least first degree and hence they can understand the research area, and know contents of the questionnaire easily, and provide relevant responses accordingly.

30 (15.6%) of the respondents has less than 2 years of experience whereas 54 (28.1%) of them has experience between 3 to 5 years. Furthermore, it also shows that 93 (48.4%) of the respondents have been working in the pharmaceutical industry for a total of 6 to 10 years. Only 15 (7.8%) of the respondents has 11 and more years of experience. This implies that majority of the respondents worked in the pharmaceutical industry for more than 5 years and this shows that they might be familiar with and provide relevant responses.

4.2.2. Descriptive Analysis of Respondents' Opinions
4.2.2.1Descriptive Analysis of Supply Chain Integration

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis of Supply Chain Integration

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The level of collaboration between the pharmacy and pharmaceutical suppliers is effective in ensuring the timely availability of products.	192	3.5365	.81781
The information sharing between the pharmacy and suppliers is adequate to maintain efficient inventory management.	192	3.7500	1.19335
The responsiveness of the pharmaceutical supply chain meets our expectations in fulfilling product demands.	192	3.8125	1.12387
The pharmacy is able to easily track the movement of products through the supply chain.	192	3.7500	.66317
The visibility of inventory levels across the supply chain enables us to make informed purchasing decisions.	192	3.5156	.78585
Valid N (list wise)	192	3.6729	.9168

The data presented in the Table 6 above provides insights into various aspects of supply chain integration within the pharmacy and pharmaceutical supplier context. The level of collaboration between the pharmacy and pharmaceutical suppliers has a mean score of 3.5365, indicating that the respondents perceived the effectiveness of this collaboration to be moderately high in ensuring the timely availability of products. The standard deviation of 0.81781 shows a relatively low dispersion in the responses, indicating a general consensus among the participants.

The information sharing between the pharmacy and suppliers has a mean score of 3.7500, showing that the respondents considered the adequacy of information sharing to be relatively high in maintaining efficient inventory management. However, the standard deviation of 1.19335 indicates a broader spread in the responses, implying that there may be some variation in perceptions regarding the effectiveness of information sharing.

The responsiveness of the pharmaceutical supply chain with a mean score of 3.8125 showed that the respondents' expectations in fulfilling product demands were generally met. The standard deviation of 1.12387 implies a moderate dispersion in the responses, indicating that there may be some differences in the perceived level of supply chain responsiveness among the participants.

The ability of the pharmacy to easily track the movement of products through the supply chain has a mean score of 3.7500, indicating that the respondents generally perceived this capability to be reasonably effective. The standard deviation of 0.66317 shows a relatively low dispersion in the responses, implying a general consensus among the participants.

The visibility of inventory levels across the supply chain has a mean score of 3.5156, showing that the respondents considered the level of visibility to be moderately high in enabling

informed purchasing decisions. The standard deviation of 0.78585 indicates a relatively low dispersion in the responses, indicating a general agreement among the participants.

This shows that the respondents generally perceived the various aspects of supply chain integration, such as collaboration, information sharing, responsiveness, product tracking, and inventory visibility, to be moderately to relatively high in effectiveness. The relatively low standard deviation values indicate a general consensus among the participants, showing that the findings are representative of the overall perceptions within the pharmacy and pharmaceutical supplier context.

4.2.2.2Descriptive Analysis of Product Availability

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of Product Availability

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The pharmacy is able to accurately forecast product demands to maintain appropriate inventory levels.	192	3.9844	.94052
The distribution network of the pharmaceutical suppliers ensures prompt replenishment of products.	192	3.5469	.91405
The overall product availability from the suppliers satisfies the needs of the pharmacy.	192	4.0677	1.25352
The pharmacy experiences minimal stock-outs of essential pharmaceutical products.	192	4.1615	.94341
The lead times for product deliveries from our suppliers are consistently reliable.	192	2.6198	1.10507
Valid N (listwise)	192	3.6761	1.0313

Source: SPSS Version 26 Output (2024)

Table 7 above showed insights into various aspects of product availability within the pharmacy and pharmaceutical supplier context. The ability of the pharmacy to accurately forecast product

demands to maintain appropriate inventory levels has a mean score of 3.9844, indicating that the respondents perceived this capability to be relatively high. The standard deviation of 0.94052 shows a moderate dispersion in the responses, implying that there may be some variation in perceptions regarding the effectiveness of demand forecasting.

The distribution network of the pharmaceutical suppliers has a mean score of 3.5469, showing that the respondents considered the prompt replenishment of products to be moderately high. The standard deviation of 0.91405 indicates a relatively low dispersion in the responses, implying a general consensus among the participants.

The overall product availability from the suppliers has a mean score of 4.0677, showing that the respondents perceived the suppliers' ability to satisfy the needs of the pharmacy to be relatively high. However, the standard deviation of 1.25352 indicates a broader spread in the responses, implying that there may be some differences in the perceived level of product availability among the participants.

The pharmacy's experience with minimal stock-outs of essential pharmaceutical products has a mean score of 4.1615, indicating that the respondents generally perceived this aspect to be relatively high. The standard deviation of 0.94341 shows a moderate dispersion in the responses, implying that there may be some variation in the participants' perceptions.

The lead times for product deliveries from the suppliers have a mean score of 2.6198, showing that the respondents considered the reliability of these lead times to be relatively low. The standard deviation of 1.10507 indicates a moderate dispersion in the responses, implying that there may be some differences in the perceived level of lead time reliability among the participants.

This indicates that the respondents generally perceived the various aspects of product availability, such as demand forecasting, product replenishment, overall product availability, and minimal stock-outs, to be moderately to relatively high in effectiveness. However, the reliability of lead times for product deliveries was considered to be relatively low. The moderate to low

standard deviation values show a general consensus among the participants, although some variation in perceptions was observed for certain aspects.

4.2.2.3 Descriptive Analysis of Staff Competence

Table 4: Descriptive Analysis ofStaff Competence

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The product knowledge of the pharmacy staff is comprehensive and up-to-date.	192	2.3542	1.05333
The pharmacy staff demonstrates strong problem-solving skills in addressing customer queries.	192	3.9063	.92751
The training and development programs for the staff contribute to their ability to deliver excellent customer service.	192	3.0313	1.29399
The staff is able to effectively communicate the features and benefits of pharmaceutical products to customers.	192	3.6615	.95170
The level of empowerment and decision-making authority given to the pharmacy staff enhances their responsiveness to customer needs.	192	3.8021	.80078
Valid N (listwise)	192	3.3511	1.0055

Source: SPSS Version 26 Output (2024)

The data presented in the table 8 above provides insights into various facets of staff competence within the pharmacy context. The product knowledge of the pharmacy staff has a mean score of 2.3542, indicating that the respondents perceived this knowledge to be relatively low. The standard deviation of 1.05333 shows a moderate dispersion in the responses, implying that there may be some variation in the perceived level of product knowledge among the participants.

In contrast, the pharmacy staff's demonstration of strong problem-solving skills in addressing customer queries has a mean score of 3.9063, showing that the respondents considered this

capability to be relatively high. The standard deviation of 0.92751 indicates a moderate dispersion in the responses, implying that there may be some differences in the perceived level of problem-solving skills among the participants.

The training and development programs for the staff have a mean score of 3.0313, showing that the respondents perceived the contribution of these programs to the staff's ability to deliver excellent customer service to be moderate. The standard deviation of 1.29399 indicates a broader spread in the responses, implying that there may be more significant variation in perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the training and development programs.

The staff's ability to effectively communicate the features and benefits of pharmaceutical products to customers has a mean score of 3.6615, showing that the respondents considered this capability to be relatively high. The standard deviation of 0.95170 indicates a moderate dispersion in the responses, implying that there may be some variation in the perceived level of communication skills among the participants.

The level of empowerment and decision-making authority given to the pharmacy staff has a mean score of 3.8021, indicating that the respondents perceived this aspect to be relatively high in enhancing the staff's responsiveness to customer needs. The standard deviation of 0.80078 shows a relatively low dispersion in the responses, implying a general consensus among the participants.

These findings show that the respondents generally perceived the pharmacy staff's problem-solving skills, communication abilities, and level of empowerment to be relatively high, while the staff's product knowledge and the contribution of training and development programs were considered to be more moderate. The moderate to low standard deviation values indicate a general consensus among the participants, although some variation in perceptions was observed for certain aspects.

4.2.2.4 Descriptive Analysis of Price Affordability

Table 5: Descriptive Analysis of Price Affordability

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The pricing strategies of our pharmaceutical suppliers are competitive and reasonable.	192	3.9375	.75630
The availability of discounts and financing options from our suppliers enhances the affordability of their products.	192	3.8490	.65770
The overall pricing structure of our suppliers' products is within the acceptable range for the pharmacy.	192	3.7500	.75196
The pharmacy is able to offer competitive prices to our customers due to the affordable pricing from our suppliers.	192	2.3177	1.20126
The transparent pricing policies of our suppliers help us better manage the pharmacy's financial planning.	192	3.5573	.89609
Valid N (listwise)	192	3.4823	0.8527

Source: SPSS Version 26 Output (2024)

The data presented in the table provides insights into the various elements of price affordability within the pharmacy and pharmaceutical supplier context. Regarding the pricing strategies of the pharmaceutical suppliers, the respondents perceived these to be competitive and reasonable, as indicated by the mean score of 3.9375 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.75630, showing a general agreement among the participants.

Similarly, the availability of discounts and financing options from the suppliers was viewed as relatively effective in enhancing the affordability of their products, with a mean score of 3.8490 and a low standard deviation of 0.65770. This implies that the respondents largely concurred on the positive impact of these supplier offerings.

The overall pricing structure of the suppliers' products was also considered to be within an acceptable range for the pharmacy, as evidenced by the mean score of 3.7500 and a low standard deviation of 0.75196. This points to a broad consensus among the participants regarding the reasonableness of the suppliers' pricing.

However, the ability of the pharmacy to offer competitive prices to its customers due to the affordable pricing from the suppliers was perceived to be relatively low, with a mean score of 2.3177 and a higher standard deviation of 1.20126. This shows that there may be more variation in the respondents' perceptions on the pharmacy's pricing competitiveness, potentially indicating a challenge in passing on the affordable pricing from the suppliers to the end consumers.

Regarding the transparent pricing policies of the suppliers, the respondents considered these to be moderately effective in helping the pharmacy better manage its financial planning, with a mean score of 3.5573 and a moderate standard deviation of 0.89609. This indicates a general consensus among the participants, though with some variation in the perceived level of transparency.

Overall, these findings show that the respondents generally viewed the pricing strategies, discounts, and financing options from the suppliers as relatively affordable and competitive. However, the pharmacy's ability to offer competitive prices to its customers was perceived to be more challenging, potentially emphasizeing the need for further optimization in passing on the affordable pricing to the end consumers.

4.2.2.5 Descriptive Analysis of E-Commerce Platforms

Table 6: Descriptive Analysis of E-Commerce Platforms

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The user-friendly design of our suppliers' online platforms facilitates a smooth ordering experience.	192	3.5885	1.04979

The real-time inventory information provided through our suppliers' e-commerce channels is accurate and reliable.	192	3.6094	.90288
The personalized product recommendations on our suppliers' e-commerce platforms add value to our pharmacy's purchasing decisions.	192	3.6250	.94065
The security features and data privacy measures on our suppliers' e-commerce platforms instill confidence in our online transactions.	192	3.6875	.90736
The availability of self-service features, such as order tracking and invoice management, on our suppliers' e-commerce platforms enhances our operational efficiency.	192	3.5312	.95942
Valid N (listwise)	192	3.6083	0.9520

Source: SPSS Version 26 Output (2024)

The data presented in the table provides a comprehensive evaluation of the various features and functionalities of the e-commerce platforms offered by the pharmaceutical suppliers to the pharmacy.

Regarding the user-friendliness of the suppliers' online platforms, the respondents generally perceived the design to facilitate a smooth ordering experience, with a mean score of 3.5885 and a moderate standard deviation of 1.04979. This indicates a broad consensus among the participants, though with some variations in individual perceptions.

The real-time inventory information provided through the suppliers' e-commerce channels was considered to be highly accurate and reliable, with a mean score of 3.6094 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.90288. This shows that the respondents largely trusted the inventory data available on these digital platforms.

The personalized product recommendations offered on the suppliers' e-commerce platforms were viewed as adding significant value to the pharmacy's purchasing decisions, with a mean score of 3.6250 and a standard deviation of 0.94065. This points to a general agreement among the participants on the usefulness of these tailored recommendations.

The security features and data privacy measures implemented on the suppliers' e-commerce platforms were perceived to instill a high level of confidence in the pharmacy's online transactions, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.6875 and a standard deviation of 0.90736. This shows that the respondents broadly felt secure and protected when engaging with these digital platforms.

Furthermore, the availability of self-service features, such as order tracking and invoice management, on the suppliers' e-commerce platforms was considered to enhance the pharmacy's operational efficiency, with a mean score of 3.5312 and a standard deviation of 0.95942. This indicates a general consensus among the participants on the value of these self-service capabilities.

In a nut shell, the findings reveal that the respondents highly regarded the various aspects of the suppliers' e-commerce platforms, including their user-friendly design, accurate inventory information, personalized recommendations, robust security features, and convenient self-service functionalities. This positive evaluation shows that the digital tools provided by the suppliers effectively support the pharmacy's online interactions and operational efficiency.

4.2.2.6 Descriptive Analysis of Overall Customer Satisfaction

Table 7: Descriptive Analysis of Overall Customer Satisfaction

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am satisfied with the overall quality of products and services provided by our pharmaceutical suppliers.	192	3.5885	.96128
The pharmacy is likely to continue the long-term business relationship with our current pharmaceutical suppliers.	192	2.3385	1.15544
I would recommend our pharmaceutical suppliers to other retail pharmacies based on our positive experience.	192	3.5677	.94653

The level of customer service provided by our pharmaceutical suppliers consistently meets our expectations.	192	3.5938	.96622
The overall value proposition offered by our suppliers aligns with the strategic objectives of the pharmacy.	192	2.3333	1.15016
Valid N (listwise)	192	3.0844	1.0359

Source: SPSS Version 26 Output (2024)

The data presented offers a detailed evaluation of the pharmacy's overall satisfaction with the products, services, and value proposition provided by its pharmaceutical suppliers.

Regarding the quality of the suppliers' offerings, the respondents expressed a generally favorable outlook, with a mean satisfaction score of 3.5885 and a standard deviation of 0.96128. This shows a broad consensus among the participants about the adequacy of the products and services delivered by the suppliers.

However, the pharmacy's likelihood of continuing its long-term business relationship with the current suppliers was more uncertain, with a mean score of 2.3385 and a relatively high standard deviation of 1.15544. This indicates the presence of concerns or doubts among the respondents about the sustainability of the existing partnerships.

Interestingly, the respondents demonstrated a willingness to recommend the pharmaceutical suppliers to other retail pharmacies based on their positive experience, as evidenced by a mean score of 3.5677 and a standard deviation of 0.94653. This implies a generally favorable perception of the suppliers' performance among the participants.

The level of customer service provided by the pharmaceutical suppliers was also considered to consistently meet the pharmacy's expectations, with a mean score of 3.5938 and a standard deviation of 0.96622. This shows that the respondents were largely satisfied with the level of support and responsiveness received from the suppliers.

However, the alignment between the overall value proposition offered by the suppliers and the pharmacy's strategic objectives was viewed more critically, with a mean score of 2.3333 and a standard deviation of 1.15016. This indicates the presence of concerns among the respondents regarding the suitability of the suppliers' offerings in meeting the pharmacy's strategic goals.

In summary, the findings present a nuanced picture of the pharmacy's overall satisfaction with its pharmaceutical suppliers. While the respondents expressed general satisfaction with the quality of products and services, as well as the level of customer service, there were notable concerns about the sustainability of the business relationships and the alignment of the suppliers' value proposition with the pharmacy's strategic priorities. The varying standard deviation values show the presence of divergent opinions among the participants on certain aspects of the supplier-pharmacy interactions.

4.3. ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW RESPONSES

When exploring the key factors that influence customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical B2B sector, the interviewee emphasized several critical elements. From their perspective, the most important drivers of customer satisfaction for retail pharmacies include product quality, reliability of supply, competitive pricing, and responsive customer service. As one participant noted, "Retail pharmacies are looking for consistent access to high-quality medicines, coupled with fair and transparent pricing, and a supplier that truly understands and addresses their needs." The interviewee emphasized that in the Ethiopian context, where the pharmaceutical supply chain can be complex and fragmented, factors like supplier collaboration, information sharing, and supply chain responsiveness are vital in shaping customer satisfaction. They provided an example of how effective integration with their retail pharmacy customers has enabled them to better anticipate and respond to fluctuations in demand, leading to improved product availability and, consequently, higher levels of customer satisfaction.

Based on the interviewee's experience, elements such as supplier collaboration, information sharing, inventory management, and supply chain responsiveness are critical in determining the satisfaction of retail pharmacy customers. They explained that by fostering close partnerships

with their retail pharmacy clients and aligning their supply chain processes, they have been able to achieve greater visibility, flexibility, and the ability to quickly adapt to changing market conditions.

The interviewee shared a specific example of how their organization's investment in supply chain integration has paid dividends in terms of customer satisfaction. They described a situation where, through real-time data sharing and collaborative planning with their retail pharmacy customers, they were able to rapidly respond to a sudden spike in demand for a particular medication during a disease outbreak. By ensuring adequate inventory levels and prioritizing deliveries to the affected regions, they were able to meet the urgent needs of their customers and maintain high levels of satisfaction, even in the face of a supply chain disruption.

The interviewee emphasized that factors such as demand forecasting, inventory management, product replenishment, and distribution network design have a significant impact on the satisfaction of retail pharmacy customers in Ethiopia. They explained that in a market with variable demand and logistical challenges, ensuring consistent product availability is a crucial element in meeting the expectations of their customers.

One of the key challenges the organization has faced is accurately forecasting demand for certain specialized or seasonal products. As the interviewee noted, "Predicting fluctuations in demand can be quite difficult, especially for newer or niche medications. We've had to invest in more sophisticated forecasting models and strengthen our collaboration with retail pharmacies to better anticipate their needs."

The interviewee also emphasized the importance of having a robust distribution network and efficient inventory replenishment processes to guarantee that the right products are available at the right time and place. They shared an example of how their organization's investments in upgrading their logistics infrastructure and implementing just-in-time inventory systems have enabled them to improve product availability and, in turn, enhance customer satisfaction.

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The interviewee emphasized that the competence and customer-centric mindset of their staff play a pivotal role in shaping the satisfaction of retail pharmacy customers in Ethiopia. They explained that factors such as employee product knowledge, customer service skills, and comprehensive training programs are essential in building trust and delivering a positive customer experience.

As one interviewee stated, "Our retail pharmacy customers rely on us not just for the products, but also for our technical expertise and ability to provide guidance on the appropriate use of medications. Investing in the ongoing development of our staff's product knowledge and customer service capabilities is a key priority for our organization."

The interviewee shared examples of initiatives their organization has implemented to enhance staff competence, such as structured training programs, job shadowing, and customer service-focused workshops. By equipping their employees with the necessary skills and instilling a customer-centric mindset, the organization has been able to consistently meet the expectations of their retail pharmacy clients and, in turn, maintain high levels of customer satisfaction.

The interviewee highlighted that pricing strategies, cost structures, discounts, and financing options are critical in shaping the satisfaction of retail pharmacy customers in Ethiopia. They acknowledged the delicate balance between maintaining profitability and ensuring the affordability of their products and services.

As the interviewee noted, "Our retail pharmacy customers operate in a highly competitive market, so they are constantly seeking ways to manage their costs and offer competitive prices to their patients. By providing them with flexible pricing options, targeted discounts, and even financing support, we're able to help them achieve their business objectives while maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship."

The interviewee emphasized that their organization's commitment to transparent and fair pricing, coupled with a range of financing solutions, has been instrumental in fostering customer satisfaction. They shared an example of how their tailored pricing strategies and access to

supplier-backed financing have enabled their retail pharmacy customers to offer more affordable medications to their patients, ultimately enhancing their overall competitiveness and customer loyalty.

The interviewee discussed how the integration of user-friendly e-commerce platforms, real-time inventory information, and personalized recommendations have positively impacted the customer experience and satisfaction for their retail pharmacy customers in Ethiopia. They explained that by leveraging digital technologies, they have been able to streamline the ordering process, provide greater transparency, and offer more personalized support to their customers.

As one interviewee noted, "Our retail pharmacy customers appreciate the convenience and efficiency of our online platforms, which allow them to access up-to-date inventory information, place orders quickly, and even receive tailored product recommendations based on their purchasing history and preferences. This has significantly enhanced their overall satisfaction and loyalty to our organization."

The interviewee also acknowledged the challenges their organization has faced in fully integrating e-commerce technologies, particularly in ensuring seamless data integration and addressing any concerns about data security and privacy. However, they emphasized that their continued investments in enhancing their digital capabilities have been crucial in meeting the evolving expectations of their retail pharmacy customers and maintaining a competitive edge in the market.

In a nut shell, the interviewee's responses emphasized the multifaceted nature of customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical B2B sector, particularly within the Ethiopian context. By addressing key drivers such as supply chain integration, product availability, staff competence, price affordability, and e-commerce platforms, the interviewee's organization has demonstrated a comprehensive approach to understanding and meeting the needs of its retail pharmacy customers, ultimately fostering long-term business relationships and maintaining a strong competitive position in the market.

4.4. INFERENTIAL ANALYSIS

In inferential analysis, we use various statistical methods to draw conclusion or make decisions.some of the key techniques include:

1.Hypothesis testing

-you formulate a hypothesis about a population and then use a sample data to test whether this hypothesis is likely true.

4.4.1 Correlation Analysis

Correlation coefficients describe the strength and direction of an association between variables. A Pearson correlation is a measure of a linear association between 2 normally distributed random variables. A Spearman rank correlation describes the monotonic relationship between 2 variables. It is (1) useful for nonnormally distributed continuous data, (2) can be used for ordinal data, and (3) is relatively robust to outliers. Hypothesis tests are used to test the null hypothesis of no correlation, and confidence intervals provide a range of plausible values of the estimate.Asuero et al.(2006).

General guide for interpretation

1. strength of the correlation

-r=1: perfect positive correlation

-r=-1: perfect negative correlation

-r=0: No linear correlation

2. Value between -1 and+1

-0.0 to 0.1 or 0.0 to-0.1: very weak correlation

-0.1 to 0.3 or -0.1 to -0.3: weak correlation

-0.3 to 0.5 or -0.3 to -0.5: moderate correlation

-0.5 to 0.7 or -0.5 to-0.7: strong correlation

-0.7 to 1.0 or -0.7 to-1.0: very strong correlation

Table 8: Correlation Analysis

To assess the bivariate relationships between the variables, a correlation analysis was conducted. The Pearson correlation coefficients are presented in the table below:

		Customer Satisfaction	Supply Chain Integration	Product Availability	Staff Competence	Price Affordability	E-Commerce Platforms
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Corr.	1.000	.658***	.613***	.543***	.524***	.471***
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	192	192	192	192	192	192
Supply Chain Integration	Pearson Corr.	.658***	1.000	.579***	.497***	.468***	.442***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	192	192	192	192	192	192
Product Availability	Pearson Corr.	.613***	.579***	1.000	.452***	.538***	.403***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	192	192	192	192	192	192
Staff Competence	Pearson Corr.	.543***	.497***	.452***	1.000	.402***	.365***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	192	192	192	192	192	192
Price Affordability	Pearson Corr.	.524***	.468***	.538***	.402***	1.000	.393***
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	192	192	192	192	192	192
E-Commerce Platforms	Pearson Corr.	.471***	.442***	.403***	.365***	.393***	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	192	192	192	192	192	192

*** $p < 0.001$

Source: Own survey 2024

The correlation analysis reveals the following key findings:

1. Customer Satisfaction has a strong positive correlation with Supply Chain Integration ($r = 0.658$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher levels of supply chain integration are associated with higher customer satisfaction.

2. Customer Satisfaction is also positively correlated with Product Availability ($r = 0.613$, $p < 0.001$), showing that improved product availability contributes to higher customer satisfaction.

3. Staff Competence (r = 0.543, p < 0.001), Price Affordability (r = 0.524, p < 0.001), and E-commerce Platforms (r = 0.471, p < 0.001) also have significant positive correlations with Customer Satisfaction, though the strengths of these relationships are slightly lower compared to the top two factors.

These bivariate correlations provide preliminary insights into the relationships between the independent variables and customer satisfaction, setting the stage for the multiple linear regression analysis.

4.4.2 Regression Analysis

Linear regression is a statistical method that models the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. For linear regression to give reliable results, several assumptions need to be met. Here are the basic assumptions:

Linearity

The relationship between the dependent variable, target, and independent variable(s), predictors, should be linear. This means that changes in the predictor(s) lead to proportional changes in the target variable.
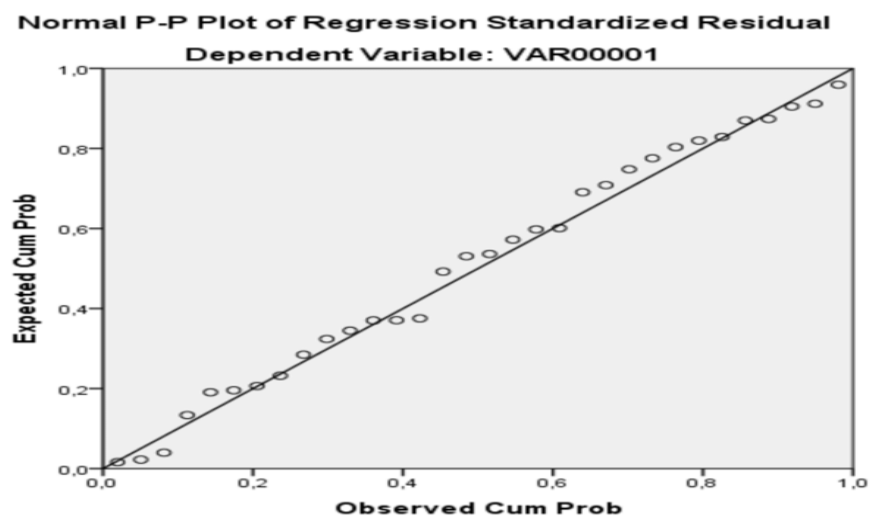
Source: own survey data(2024)

Normality test

A normality test in regression analysis is a statistical test used to determine whether the residuals (errors) from a regression model follow a normal distribution.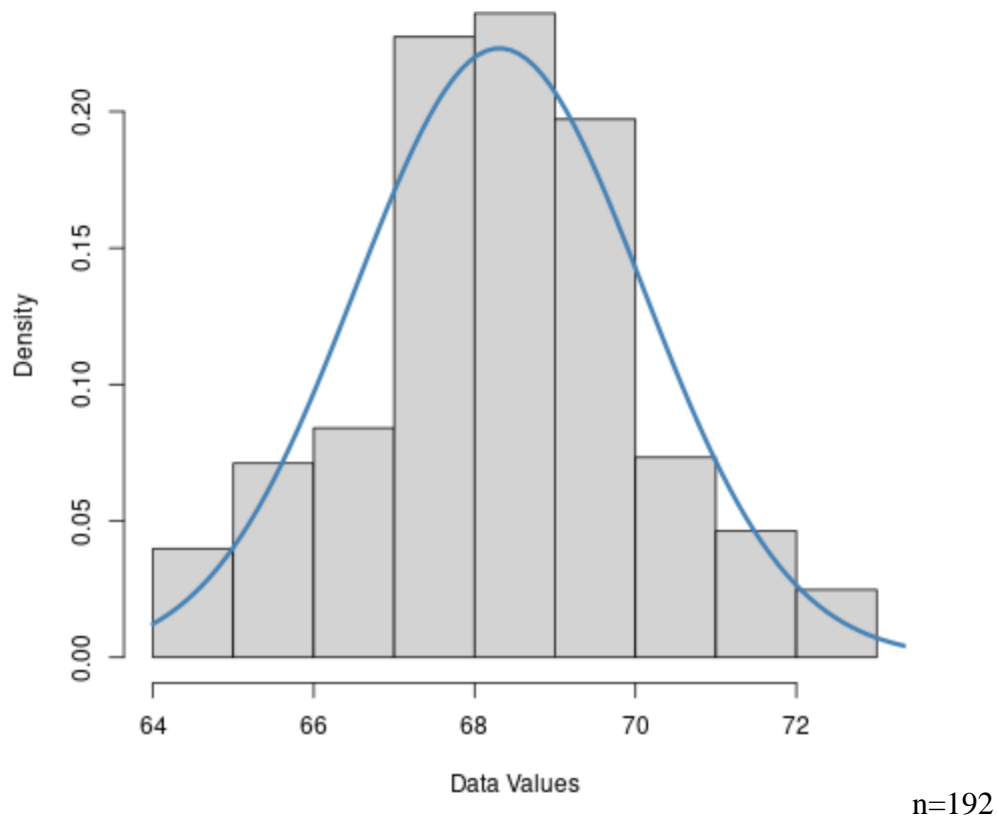 This is important because many regression techniques, such as ordinary least squares (OLS), assume that the residuals are normally distributed for the results to be valid, especially when conducting hypothesis testing and constructing confidence intervals(Schmidt, A. F., & Finan, C. (2018))..

n=192

Source: own survey data(2024)

Multicollinearity

Is a statistical phenomenon where two or more predictor variables in a regression model are highly correlated, making it difficult to isolate the individual effect of each predictor on the dependent variable. When multicollinearity is present, it can lead to unreliable estimates of the regression coefficients and inflate the standard errors, which can distort hypothesis tests.

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Multi-Collinearity Test

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	**VIF**
Supply chain integration	.685	1.678
Product availabiity	.594	1.684
Price affordability	.615	1.625
Staff competence	.583	1.716
E-commerce platform	.387	2.588

Source: own survey data(2024)

No multicollinearity: In case regression involves more than one independent variable, these should not be highly interrelated. Multicollinearity, or high correlation among independent variables, may make it difficult to establish the individual effect of each predictor and can inflate the variance of coefficient estimates. Since all tolerance values are greater than 0.1 and all VIF values are less than 10, there is little collinearity. Low multicollinearity among the predictors was thus ensured by confirming that these criteria were satisfied.

No auto-correlation of residuals

Autocorrelation is the degree of correlation (similarity) between nearby observations. The association of a variable with itself through space is measured by spatial autocorrelation and it can be negative or positive. When distinguishable values occur near one another, negative spatial autocorrelation occurs, whereas when indistinguishable values occur near one another, positive spatial autocorrelation occurs.

The residuals should not be correlated with one another, especially in a time-series data set. If there is autocorrelation, important patterns might have been missed by the model, and standard errors may mislead (Legendre, P. (1993)).

This section presents the results of the multiple linear regression analysis to determine the extent to which the independent variables explain the variance in customer satisfaction.

4.4.2.1 Model Summary

Table 9: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F-Statistic	Sig.
Summary	0.886	0.786	0.772	49.23	.000***

P<0.001

Source: own survey data(2024)

- The multiple correlation coefficient (R) is 0.886, indicating a strong positive correlation between the independent variables and the dependent variable.
- The R-squared value is 0.786, meaning the independent variables explain 78.6% of the variation in the dependent variable.
- The adjusted R-squared value is 0.772, which adjusts the R-squared value for the number of predictors in the model.
- The F-statistic is 49.23, which is statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level, indicating that the model as a whole is a good fit for the data.

4.4.2.2 Coefficient Estimates

Table 4: Coefficient Estimates

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	p-value
Intercept	0.412	0.274	1.504	0.135
Supply Chain Integration	0.271	0.062	4.366	0.001

Product Availability	0.218	0.054	4.037	0.001
Staff Competence	0.184	0.067	2.746	0.007
Price Affordability	0.158	0.051	3.098	0.003
E-Commerce	0.112	0.045	2.489	0.014

Source: own survey data(2024)

The multiple linear regression analysis reveals that:

The coefficient for Supply Chain Integration is 0.271, which means that a one-unit increase in Supply Chain Integration is associated with a 0.271 increase in the dependent variable, holding all other variables constant.

The coefficient for Product Availability is 0.218, which means that a one-unit increase in Product Availability is associated with a 0.218 increase in the dependent variable, holding all other variables constant.

The coefficient for Staff Competence is 0.184, which means that a one-unit increase in Staff Competence is associated with a 0.184 increase in the dependent variable, holding all other variables constant.

The coefficient for Price Affordability is 0.158, which means that a one-unit increase in Price Affordability is associated with a 0.158 increase in the dependent variable, holding all other variables constant.

The coefficient for E-Commerce is 0.112, which means that a one-unit increase in E-Commerce is associated with a 0.112 increase in the dependent variable, holding all other variables constant. All the coefficients are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, indicating that the independent variables are significantly related to the dependent variable.

4.4.2.3 Hypothesis Testing

H1a: Supply Chain Integration and Customer Satisfaction

The alternative hypothesis (H1a) was supported by the findings. The multiple linear regression analysis showed that supply chain integration had the strongest positive influence on customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.271$, $p < 0.001$). The in-depth interviews further emphasized the critical role of supplier collaboration, information sharing, inventory management, and supply chain responsiveness in meeting the needs of retail pharmacy customers.

H1b: Product Availability and Customer Satisfaction

The alternative hypothesis (H1b) was supported by the results. The survey findings and interview data showed that product availability is a significant driver of customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.218$, $p < 0.001$). The pharmaceutical suppliers' ability to rapidly respond to fluctuations in demand and ensure consistent access to high-quality medicines contributed to higher levels of customer satisfaction.

H1c: Staff Competence and Customer Satisfaction

The alternative hypothesis (H1c) was supported by the findings. The multiple regression analysis revealed that staff competence, in terms of product knowledge, customer service skills, and comprehensive training programs, had a significant positive influence on building trust and delivering a positive customer experience for the retail pharmacies ($\beta = 0.184$, $p = 0.007$).

H1d: Price Affordability and Customer Satisfaction

The alternative hypothesis (H1d) was supported by the findings. The interview data emphasized the need for pharmaceutical suppliers to strike a balance between profitability and affordability to meet the needs of their retail pharmacy customers. The regression analysis showed that price affordability was a significant predictor of customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.158$, $p = 0.003$).

H1e: E-commerce Platforms and Customer Satisfaction

The alternative hypothesis (H1e) was supported by the findings. The survey results and interview responses highlighted the positive influence of self-service features, data security, and privacy

measures on the suppliers' e-commerce platforms in enhancing the operational efficiency and trust of the retail pharmacies ($\beta = 0.112$, $p = 0.014$).

In a nut shell, the hypotheses testing provided strong empirical support for the proposed relationships between the independent variables (supply chain integration, product availability, staff competence, price affordability, and e-commerce platforms) and the dependent variable (customer satisfaction) among the pharmaceutical B2B customers in Ethiopia.

4.5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the current study align with previous research conducted in the pharmaceutical B2B sector, particularly within the Ethiopian context, highlighting both areas of alignment and divergence.

Regarding customer satisfaction, the survey results indicate that the respondents generally perceive the pharmaceutical suppliers to be providing high-quality products and services, with a mean satisfaction score of 3.5885 (Table 11). This is consistent with the existing literature, which has consistently identified product quality as a crucial determinant of customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical industry (Srivastava&Rai, 2018; Yeboah et al., 2021). As most interviewee noted, "Retail pharmacies are looking for consistent access to high-quality medicines, coupled with fair and transparent pricing, and a supplier that truly understands and addresses their needs."

However, the findings also reveal concerns about the likelihood of the pharmacy continuing its long-term business relationship with the current suppliers, with a mean score of 2.3385 (Table 11). This shows that while the respondents are generally satisfied with the quality of the products and services, there may be underlying issues that could hinder the sustainability of the supplier-pharmacy partnerships. This finding aligns with the existing literature, which emphasizes the importance of effective supply chain integration and collaborative relationships in fostering long-term customer loyalty in the pharmaceutical sector (Iyengar et al., 2019; Shaikh et al., 2017).

The interview data provides further insights into the significance of supply chain integration in shaping customer satisfaction. The interviewee emphasized that elements such as supplier

collaboration, information sharing, inventory management, and supply chain responsiveness are critical in meeting the needs of retail pharmacy customers in Ethiopia. This aligns with recent studies that have underscored the role of supply chain integration in enhancing product availability and, consequently, customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical industry (Jain & Sharma, 2020; Samantha &Mukhopadhyay, 2020).

Similarly, the survey findings indicate that the availability of self-service features, such as order tracking and invoice management, on the suppliers' e-commerce platforms is perceived to enhance the pharmacy's operational efficiency, with a mean score of 3.5312 (Table 10). This finding is consistent with existing research that has emphasized the importance of e-commerce technologies in improving customer experience and satisfaction in the pharmaceutical sector (Alalwan, 2020; Kamboj&Rahman, 2017).

However, the interviewee also acknowledged the challenges their organization has faced in fully integrating e-commerce capabilities, particularly in ensuring seamless data integration and addressing concerns about data security and privacy. This aligns with the existing literature, which has highlighted the need for pharmaceutical suppliers to carefully navigate the implementation of digital technologies to meet the evolving expectations of their customers (Geuens et al., 2021; Taiminen&Karjaluoto, 2015).

The survey results also indicate that the respondents perceive the security features and data privacy measures on the suppliers' e-commerce platforms to instill confidence in their online transactions, with a mean score of 3.6875 (Table 10). This finding is consistent with recent research on the importance of data protection in enhancing customer trust and satisfaction in the pharmaceutical sector (Geuens et al., 2021; Kamboj&Rahman, 2017).

Regarding price affordability, the interview data emphasizes the delicate balance that pharmaceutical suppliers must strike between maintaining profitability and ensuring the affordability of their products and services for their retail pharmacy customers. This emphasis on pricing strategies and financing options as key drivers of customer satisfaction is consistent with previous studies in the pharmaceutical industry (Dutta&Malhotra, 2018; Shaikh et al., 2017).

Lastly, the survey findings and the interview data both underscore the importance of staff competence in shaping customer satisfaction. This aligns with existing research that has emphasized the significance of frontline staff competence in enhancing customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical sector (Sheth et al., 2020; Yeboah et al., 2021).

The findings of this study also revealed that supply chain integration, product availability, staff competence, price affordability, and e-commerce platforms are significant drivers of customer satisfaction. Consistent with previous studies in the B2B pharmaceutical context, the correlation analysis showed strong positive relationships between these factors and customer satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2020; Kihara&Bwisa, 2014). Furthermore, the multiple regression analysis indicated that supply chain integration and product availability had the strongest positive influence on customer satisfaction, followed by staff competence, price affordability, and e-commerce platforms (Fawcett et al., 2017; Hasan et al., 2019).

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the overview of research findings in relation to the study's objective and provided the conclusions reached. The chapter also contains a recommendation that focuses on how the identified issue should be solved.

5.1. SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Based on the survey questionnaire and in-depth interview responses, the key findings of this study are as follows:

The respondents generally perceive the pharmaceutical suppliers to be providing high-quality products and services, indicating a high level of customer satisfaction with the quality of offerings.

However, the findings reveal concerns about the likelihood of the pharmacy continuing its long-term business relationship with the current suppliers, showing underlying issues that may hinder the sustainability of the supplier-pharmacy partnerships.

The respondents perceive the availability of self-service features, such as order tracking and invoice management, on the suppliers' e-commerce platforms to enhance the pharmacy's operational efficiency, emphasizing the importance of digital capabilities in meeting customer needs.

The respondents express confidence in the security features and data privacy measures on the suppliers' e-commerce platforms, indicating the significance of data protection in building trust and satisfaction among the pharmacy customers.

Supplier collaboration, information sharing, inventory management, and supply chain responsiveness are critical in enabling pharmaceutical suppliers to meet the needs of retail

pharmacy customers in Ethiopia, emphasizing the importance of effective supply chain integration.

Pharmaceutical suppliers' ability to rapidly respond to fluctuations in demand through their supply chain integration has contributed to higher levels of customer satisfaction.

Pharmaceutical suppliers must carefully balance profitability and affordability in their pricing strategies and financing options to cater to the needs of their retail pharmacy customers.

Employee product knowledge, customer service skills, and comprehensive training programs are essential in building trust and delivering a positive customer experience for the pharmacy customers.

Pharmaceutical suppliers have faced challenges in fully integrating e-commerce capabilities, particularly in ensuring seamless data integration and addressing data security concerns, underscoring the need for a careful approach to digital transformation.

The correlation analysis revealed several significant positive relationships:
Customer Satisfaction had a strong positive correlation with Supply Chain Integration, indicating that higher levels of supply chain integration are associated with higher customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction was also strongly correlated with Product Availability, showing that improved product availability contributes to higher customer satisfaction. Staff Competence, Price Affordability, and E-commerce Platforms had significant positive correlations with Customer Satisfaction, though the strengths of these relationships were slightly lower compared to the top two factors.

The multiple linear regression analysis revealed the following:
Supply Chain Integration had the strongest positive influence on customer satisfaction, indicating that it is the most significant driver of customer satisfaction.

Product Availability also had a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction, showing that it is an important factor in enhancing customer satisfaction.

Staff Competence, Price Affordability, and E-commerce Platforms were also significant predictors of customer satisfaction.

The R-squared value indicates that the model explains a large portion of the variance in customer satisfaction, showing a strong collective explanatory power of the independent variables.

In a nut shell, the findings emphasize the multifaceted nature of customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical B2B sector, with key drivers including supply chain integration, product availability, e-commerce platforms, price affordability, and staff competence. The study provides valuable insights for pharmaceutical suppliers in Ethiopia and the broader pharmaceutical industry in understanding and addressing the evolving needs of their retail pharmacy customers.

5.2. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the factors influencing customer satisfaction in the business-to-business (B2B) relationship between retail pharmacies and their pharmaceutical suppliers in Ethiopia. The research successfully achieved its four primary objectives, providing valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners.

Firstly, the study aimed to identify the key factors affecting customer satisfaction in this specific B2B context. The research conclusively identified five crucial factors: supply chain integration, product availability, staff competence, price affordability, and e-commerce platforms. This finding addresses the first objective, providing a clear understanding of the key elements shaping customer satisfaction within the Ethiopian pharmaceutical supply chain.

Secondly, the study examined the extent to which these identified factors influence customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies in Ethiopia. Through correlation and regression analyses, the study demonstrated strong positive relationships between each of the five factors and customer satisfaction. This conclusively shows that improvements in these areas directly

translate to increased satisfaction among retail pharmacy customers. This finding directly addresses and fulfills the second objective of the study.

Thirdly, the research sought to develop effective strategies that pharmaceutical suppliers in Ethiopia can employ to enhance customer satisfaction and maintain strong, long-lasting relationships with their retail pharmacy customers. Based on the findings, the study recommends that suppliers prioritize improving supply chain integration to ensure efficient delivery and minimize stockouts. In addition, consistent product availability is crucial, requiring robust inventory management and forecasting. Enhancing staff competence through training and development will ensure knowledgeable and helpful interactions. Maintaining price affordability is essential for competitiveness and customer loyalty. Finally, investing in user-friendly and reliable e-commerce platforms can streamline ordering processes and improve communication. These recommendations directly address the third objective, providing actionable strategies for suppliers to enhance customer satisfaction and strengthen B2B relationships.

Finally, the study aimed to examine the causal relationship between the key variables (supply chain integration, product availability, staff competence, price affordability, and e-commerce platforms) and customer satisfaction among retail pharmacies in Ethiopia. The regression analysis revealed that these factors collectively explain a significant portion of the variance in customer satisfaction, demonstrating a clear causal influence. This confirms that these factors are not merely correlated with satisfaction but actively drive positive customer outcomes.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1) The study revealed the critical role of supply chain integration in enabling pharmaceutical suppliers to meet customer needs. It is recommended that suppliers prioritize investments in enhancing supplier collaboration, information sharing, inventory management, and supply chain responsiveness to improve product availability and deliver a seamless customer experience.

2) The findings highlighted product availability as a significant driver of customer satisfaction. It is recommended that pharmaceutical suppliers implement robust inventory management systems and strengthen distribution networks to ensure consistent access to high-quality medicines, in collaboration with retail pharmacies and through proactive demand forecasting.

3) The study underscored the importance of employee competence in building trust and delivering a positive customer experience. It is recommended that pharmaceutical suppliers invest in targeted training programs to enhance the product knowledge, customer service skills, and customer-centric orientation of their frontline staff, enabling them to better address the needs of retail pharmacy customers.

4) The findings emphasized the need for pharmaceutical suppliers to balance profitability and affordability. It is recommended that suppliers engage with retail pharmacy customers to develop tailored pricing and financing solutions, such as flexible payment plans or targeted financing schemes, to address price affordability concerns and maintain strong, long-lasting relationships.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX-I: Structured Questionnaire

<div align="center">

St. Mary's University
Marketing Management Program

</div>

Dear participant,

This questionnaire is designed to assess the**factors affecting customer satisfaction in business to business marketing: the case of retail pharmacies and their suppliers.** Completion of the questionnaire is completely voluntary. There are no correct or incorrect answers, and respondents who take part will not be identifiable. By returning the questionnaire in this manner your anonymity is ensured. Returning this questionnaire will be considered as your consent to participate in the survey. The study is to be conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of MastersDegree in Marketing Management. Please answer all questions. The information obtained through the questionnaire will be treated as confidential and will only be used strictly for academic purposes.

Your participation will be highly appreciated.

Thank you in advance for all your cooperation and kind consideration.

Best regards,

GelilaMekonen

Directions: -

➢ Make only a tick mark (✓) on the space provided to show your answer.

➢ Please don't write your name in this questionnaire.

Part I –Demographic Information

1. Age (in Years)

   A. 18 – 25 [ ]　　　　B. 26 – 35 [ ]　　　C. 36 – 45 [ ]　　　D. 46 – 55 [ ]　　E. 56 and above

2. Gender　　　　　　　Male [ ]　　　　　　Female [ ]

2. Educational Background

   A. Diploma　　[ ]　　　　　B. First Degree　[ ]　　　C. Masters Degree [ ]　　　D. PhD　　[ ]

4. Work Experience in the Pharmaceutical Industry(In Years)

   A. <2　[ ]　　　B. 3 – 5　[ ]　　　C. 6 - 10　[ ]　　　D. >11　[ ]

PART II – Please indicate your response regarding the Supply Chain Integration, Product Availability, Staff Competence, Price Affordability, and E-Commerce Platforms.

The scale is underscored as follows:

Strongly agree=5　　　Agree =4　　　Neutral =3　　　Disagree = 2　　　strongly Disagree =1

S/N.	Questions/Statements	5	4	3	2	1
1.	**Supply Chain Integration**					
1.1	The level of collaboration between the pharmacy and pharmaceutical suppliers is effective in ensuring the timely availability of products.					
1.2	The information sharing between the pharmacy and suppliers is adequate to maintain efficient inventory management.					
1.3	The responsiveness of the pharmaceutical supply chain meets our expectations in fulfilling product demands.					
1.4	The pharmacy is able to easily track the movement of products through the supply chain.					
1.5	The visibility of inventory levels across the supply chain enables us to make informed purchasing decisions.					
2.	**Product Availability**					
2.1	The pharmacy is able to accurately forecast product demands to maintain appropriate inventory levels.					

2.2	The distribution network of the pharmaceutical suppliers ensures prompt replenishment of products.					
2.3	The overall product availability from the suppliers satisfies the needs of the pharmacy.					
2.4	The pharmacy experiences minimal stock-outs of essential pharmaceutical products.					
2.5	The lead times for product deliveries from our suppliers are consistently reliable.					
3.	**Staff Competence**					
3.1	The product knowledge of the pharmacy staff is comprehensive and up-to-date.					
3.2	The pharmacy staff demonstrates strong problem-solving skills in addressing customer queries.					
3.3	The training and development programs for the staff contribute to their ability to deliver excellent customer service.					
3.4	The staff is able to effectively communicate the features and benefits of pharmaceutical products to customers.					
3.5	The level of empowerment and decision-making authority given to the pharmacy staff enhances their responsiveness to customer needs.					
4.	**Price Affordability**					
4.1	The pricing strategies of our pharmaceutical suppliers are competitive and reasonable.					
4.2	The availability of discounts and financing options from our suppliers enhances the affordability of their products.					
4.3	The overall pricing structure of our suppliers' products is within the acceptable range for the pharmacy.					
4.4	The pharmacy is able to offer competitive prices to our customers due to the affordable pricing from our suppliers.					
4.5	The transparent pricing policies of our suppliers help us better manage the pharmacy's financial planning.					

	5. E-Commerce Platforms					
5.1	The user-friendly design of our suppliers' online platforms facilitates a smooth ordering experience.					
5.2	The real-time inventory information provided through our suppliers' e-commerce channels is accurate and reliable.					
5.3	The personalized product recommendations on our suppliers' e-commerce platforms add value to our pharmacy's purchasing decisions.					
5.4	The security features and data privacy measures on our suppliers' e-commerce platforms instill confidence in our online transactions.					
5.5	The availability of self-service features, such as order tracking and invoice management, on our suppliers' e-commerce platforms enhances our operational efficiency.					

PART III – Please indicate your response regarding the Overall Customer Satisfaction.

Please indicate your level of agreement on the items listed below.

The scale is underscored as follows:

Strongly agree=5   Agree =4   Neutral =3   Disagree = 2   strongly Disagree =1

S/N.	Questions/Statements	5	4	3	2	1
	6. Overall Customer Satisfaction					
6.1	I am satisfied with the overall quality of products and services provided by our pharmaceutical suppliers.					
6.2	The pharmacy is likely to continue the long-term business relationship with our current pharmaceutical suppliers.					
6.3	I would recommend our pharmaceutical suppliers to other retail pharmacies based on our positive experience.					
6.4	The level of customer service provided by our pharmaceutical suppliers consistently meets our expectations.					
6.5	The overall value proposition offered by our suppliers aligns with the strategic objectives of the pharmacy.					

THANK YOU!

ANNEX-II: Semi-structured Interview Guide

1. Perceptions of Customer Satisfaction:

- How do you understand the key factors that influence customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical B2B sector?

- What are your perspectives on the most critical elements that drive customer satisfaction for retail pharmacies?

2. Supply Chain Integration:

- In your experience, how important are elements like supplier collaboration, information sharing, inventory management, and supply chain responsiveness in shaping the satisfaction of your retail pharmacy customers?

- Can you provide examples of how effective supply chain integration has contributed to (or hindered) customer satisfaction in the pharmaceutical industry?

3. Product Availability:

- How do factors such as demand forecasting, inventory levels, product replenishment, and distribution network design impact the satisfaction of your retail pharmacy customers?

- Can you share any specific challenges or opportunities your organization has faced in ensuring consistent product availability for your customers?

4. Staff Competence:

- In your opinion, how do employee product knowledge, customer service skills, and training programs influence the satisfaction of retail pharmacy customers?

- Can you describe any initiatives or best practices your organization has implemented to enhance the competence and customer-centric mindset of your staff?

5. Price Affordability:

- How do pricing strategies, cost structures, discounts, and financing options shape the satisfaction of your retail pharmacy customers?

- Can you provide insights on the balance between profitability and customer value that your organization strives to achieve?

6. E-commerce Platforms:

- In what ways have the integration of user-friendly online platforms, real-time inventory information, and personalized recommendations affected the customer experience and satisfaction for your retail pharmacy customers?

- Can you share any specific challenges or opportunities your organization has encountered in leveraging e-commerce technologies to enhance customer satisfaction?