



Efforts to Build A Strategy to Increase Pharmacy Sales

Nurjanah¹, Paulus Wardoyo², DC Kuswardani³

^{1,2,3}Department Master of Management, University of Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze how to build superior service in pharmacies, as well as formulate alternative strategies to increase pharmacy sales. The research method used is qualitative based on phenomenology. Data collection was carried out at 3 pharmacies in Pati Regency. The selected sources were pharmacy owners and pharmacy employees. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, observation and documentation. Data analysis techniques include data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions. The research results obtained were that in running their business, pharmacies experienced problems with Human Resource competency, compliance in implementing Standard Operating Procedures and applicable regulations. In an effort to increase sales, pharmacies need to implement superior service strategies, supported by the use of information technology and providing job training to employees to increase product knowledge, as well as implementing existing Standard Operating Procedures. Apart from that, pharmacies must be able to build customer trust by providing customer education.

Keywords: *Strategy, Superior Service, On The Job Training, Product Knowledge, Pharmacy Sales*

INTRODUCTION

The pharmaceutical business is increasing along with the increase in population, public awareness of health, advances in science and information technology, support for government health programs and improvements in the economy and people's purchasing power. The large number of pharmacies increases competition between pharmacies in getting customers. This condition requires every pharmacy to be able to create innovations and strategies to be better than its competitors. On the other hand, for society, health is important. People realize that health will support them in carrying out their daily activities and increase productivity in their lives.

A pharmacy is a pharmaceutical service facility where pharmaceutical practice is carried out by pharmacists (PERMENKES RI, No. 9 of 2017). Pharmaceutical services are a direct and responsible service, responsible to patients regarding pharmaceutical preparations with the aim of achieving definite results to improve the patient's quality of life (PERMENKES, No. 35 of 2014). In accordance with this definition, the function of a pharmacy is as a health service facility which is expected to help the community achieve optimal health.

Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 36 of 2009 concerning Health, states that pharmaceutical practice includes the manufacture including quality control of pharmaceutical preparations, security, procurement, storage and distribution of drugs, drug services based on doctor's prescriptions, drug information services and health services, drug development, materials medicine, and traditional medicine. Based on this concept, a pharmacy is a place for pharmaceutical services by pharmacists to the public. On the other hand, as a place of business, pharmacies try to get as many customers as possible in order to increase sales. Efforts to increase pharmacy sales must be accompanied by competency and quality of pharmaceutical services. The Pharmacist in Charge of the Pharmacy has the obligation to monitor the quality of pharmaceutical products in the pharmacy, as well as provide counseling regarding matters relating to the safety and correct use of drugs, in order to achieve the expected effects and healing. This is in accordance with the function of pharmacies as a place for pharmaceutical services to improve public health.

Customers are people whose activities are to buy and use a product, both goods and services continuously (Daryanto and Setyobudi, 2014). Customers or users of a product are people who are directly or indirectly related to a business company. Customers can also be defined as all people who require an organization to meet certain quality standards, and therefore have an influence on organizational performance. Based on this definition, it can be concluded that a customer is anyone who demands the provision of services (companies) to meet certain service quality standards, so that they can influence the performance of the service provider (company). The role of customers is very important for company life. The success of a company really depends on how the company meets the needs of its customers and how to establish good relationships with its customers to create loyal customers who are a source of profit for the company. Therefore, meeting needs and establishing good relationships with customers is one of the keys to a company's success (Daryanto and Setyobudi, 2014).

As people's way of thinking develops in making transactions at pharmacies, it is not only the price that they see, but also the service satisfaction they expect. Considering that the goal of a business is to create customer satisfaction with the products or services offered, in order to improve service and

customer satisfaction, the pharmacy concept has undergone a change in orientation from previously being product-oriented, to now being patient-oriented. This is because pharmacies try to provide the best service to provide satisfaction to customers. Creating customer satisfaction can provide many benefits for the company. One of the benefits that companies gain from creating customer satisfaction is that the relationship between the company and customers becomes harmonious. The good relationship created between the company and customers will contribute to repeat purchases and will increase customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction and loyalty can result in recommendations from one customer to other potential customers and this will be very profitable for the company.

To support the running of services in pharmacies cannot be separated from the role of information technology. Apart from making it easier to manage stock and the payment process, information technology is also needed by pharmacies to improve communication with customers and suppliers. Communication with customers in the context of product sales and counseling services. Maintained communication will improve good relations between the company and customers, which in turn will increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. Meanwhile, communication with suppliers is really needed by pharmacies for orders and information about products. In other words, the ease of technology has a big impact on the entire service process in pharmacies, not only creating efficiency but also improving pharmacy service and sales.

In order to increase sales, various efforts are made by pharmacy entrepreneurs, both in terms of resources, service, price, innovation, service quality, completeness and product quality. According to Holdford (2018), based on the resource-based competitive advantage theory, innovation to achieve long-term competitive advantage from any business innovation, for example pharmaceutical services, is based on internal resources and the company's ability to use these resources to develop. competitive advantage for the benefit of consumers in a way that is difficult for competitors to imitate.

There are several things that can influence pharmacy sales levels, such as intense competition between pharmacies and applicable regulations. As has been the case in recent months, starting in October 2022, the Ministry of Health has ordered a ban on selling syrup-type medicines to pharmacies, to respond to acute kidney problems which are thought to be caused by some syrup products. The Ministry of Health also instructed Health Workers to temporarily not prescribe medicines in syrup form until an official announcement is made from the government in accordance with statutory provisions (Tribunnews.com, 2022). The prohibition on the sale of this syrup is stated in the Ministry of Health's letter number SR.01.05/III/3461/2022. This condition greatly affects the level of sales in pharmacies. Information from CNBC Indonesia (2022) that 6 pharmacies in Gading Serpong, Tangerang Regency, Banten, stated that their turnover had experienced a significant decline from 10 to 50 percent.

Indah Medika, Surya and Cahaya Medika, are pharmacies in Pati Regency that provide various pharmaceutical products in the form of tablets and syrup. The three pharmacies on average provide 300-500 brands of pharmaceutical products in tablet form and 100-200 brands of pharmaceutical products in syrup form. In the last few months, the three pharmacies have experienced significant changes in sales. The following is data on the number of sales changes in October - December 2022:

Table 1. Changes in Number of Pharmacy Sales for October – December 2022

No.	Pharmacy	Change in Sales Amount							
		Jul - Sep Average	Oct	change (%)	Nov	change (%)	Des	change (%)	Oct - Dec Average (%)
1	Indah Medika	73.135.000	61.709.000	15,62	63.859.000	12,68	67.281.000	8,00	12,10
2	Surya	85.274.000	73.148.000	14,22	53.255.000	37,55	56.898.500	33,28	28,35
3	Cahaya Medika	69.321.000	58.811.000	15,16	53.996.000	22,10	61.773.000	10,88	16,05

Source: Primary data (2023)

The data in table 1 is the number of pharmacy sales in October – December 2022. This data shows that there has been a significant decrease in the number of sales, namely; Indah Medika experienced an average decline in sales of 12.10%, Surya experienced an average decline of 28.35% and Cahaya Medika experienced an average sales decline of 16.05%. Following up on the problem phenomenon and data on the decline in sales, researchers are interested in analyzing strategies that can be used to build superior service to increase sales in pharmacies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resource Advantage Theory of Competition (RAToC)

According to Hunt and Morgan (1995) *Resource Advantage Theory of Competition (RAToC)* is an evolutionary, interdisciplinary theory of competitive processes not only in the sense that it has been developed in the literature of several different scientific disciplines, but also in that it refers to and has similarities with many other theories and research traditions, including evolutionary economics, the historical tradition, industrial organizational economics, the resource-based tradition, the competency-based tradition, institutional economics, transaction cost economics, and economic sociology.

In the *Resource Advantages Theory of Competition (RAToC)* that management of unique information resources will win the competition (Hunt and Morgan 1996).

Service-Dominant Logic (SDL)

Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) introduced by Vargo & Lusch (2004) is a new marketing paradigm that prioritizes service in the exchange process. This shift in perspective developed from the microeconomic school of thought, marketing management to the formation of service phenomena that are outside microeconomics or service marketing. The marketing perspective is centered on a new marketing logic that emphasizes the primacy of services over goods. The initial emergence of *Service-Dominant Logic* thinking was a new way of looking at marketing concepts. This new marketing paradigm shifts the concept of *Goods Dominant Logic* towards *Service-Dominant Logic*. The general/traditional understanding of service is different from the meaning of service in the *Service-Dominant Logic* concept from a marketing perspective which originates from service science. The *Service-Dominant Logic* concept according to S. L. Vargo & Lusch (2017) *Service Dominant Logic (S-D logic)* perspective is a theoretical approach that sees that companies must focus their energy and resources to dynamically integrate special competencies, knowledge and skills to create and deliver service, and must be a basic principle for all business activities, besides that customers must be treated as resources who actively participate in business services (*operand*), bringing their expertise, experience and knowledge into the relationship with the company (S. L. Vargo & Lusch, 2017). In this perspective, value can only be created jointly and contextually by business actors and customers (S. L. Vargo & Lusch, 2011). Overall, *S-D logic* highlights customer-defined and co-created value, operand resources (knowledge and skills) as basic sources of competitive advantage, as well as two-way communication with customers and relationship management (S. L. Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In *S-D logic*, service is defined as the application of specific competencies (operand resources—knowledge and skills), through actions, processes, and results for the benefit of other entities or the entity itself (S. L. Vargo & Lusch, 2008). The definition of goods in this perspective is an instrument (equipment, distribution mechanism), which functions as an alternative to direct service provision. Service is what is always exchanged. Goods, when used, are an aid to the service provision process (Lusch et al., 2010). Due to its customer-oriented nature, the “service” context makes *S-D logic* inherently relational in nature with an emphasis on interactivity and collaboration (S. L. Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

Sales Strategy

A sales strategy is a way of obtaining sales revenue that is structured based on the strengths, strengths and influence of a producer or person which is then converted into an actionable plan to find new consumers or develop existing consumers. In accordance with this definition, it can be interpreted that a sales strategy is a planned activity that aims to increase the volume of product sales, both in the form of goods and services. To increase sales, pharmacies must have a strategy to attract customers. This is done to maintain the continuity of a business. The research results of Sahara and Sazili (2022) state that a sales strategy by providing products that are different from other stores at prices that are affordable for various groups can increase the number of consumers who buy these products.

Marketing strategy

According to Kotler and Keller (2016), marketing is a process of preparing integrated communications which aims to provide information on goods or services in relation to satisfying human needs and desires. Marketing strategy (Kotler and Keller, 2012) consists of 4Ps, namely Product, Price, Promotion and Place. A product is anything that can be offered on the market to gain attention, need, use, or consumption to satisfy consumer desires. Price is defined as the amount required to obtain an item or combination of items, so managers must determine a strategy regarding price because in the marketing mix price is an important factor that can generate profits or income. Promotion is an activity in an effort to convey product benefits and persuade customers to buy the products offered. Promotion is one of the determining factors for the success of a marketing program. Place is an effort to ensure the availability of goods or services that are easy for consumers to purchase wherever they are. According to Assauri (2013), marketing strategy is a combination of goals and objectives, policies and rules for a business that runs from time to time, regarding everything, especially the company's response to the ever-changing environment and competitive conditions. According to Sunyoto (2015), the goal of marketing is to make sellers understand consumer demand so that the product or service will match consumer expectations so that consumers will buy repeatedly. Along with the development of science and information, people's desires also grow. In running a business, every company must have a way so that the products or services provided can be accepted by the wider community. One way that can be implemented is to have a good marketing concept and create a business strategy that suits the product or service being offered. Based on this definition, it can be concluded that marketing strategy is a strategy for finding unmet customer needs, measuring and calculating market size and profit potential, identifying and determining market segments to create and design, improve and market products that suit market desires. Business goals will be able to be realized if the company is able to provide customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction

Nowadays, the priority on customer satisfaction is increasingly greater, because customer satisfaction greatly influences the success of marketing and sales of company products. Every new transaction or experience experienced by a customer will have an influence on customer satisfaction. Satisfied customers will share their satisfaction with the company and even satisfied customers will share their experiences with other customers. The higher the level of customer satisfaction, the greater the profits will be for the company, because customers will make repeat orders for the company's products. However, if the level of satisfaction felt by customers is low, it is likely that customers will switch to competing products. This will cause a decrease in sales and will ultimately reduce profits and even cause losses. According to Abdullah and Tantri (2019), satisfaction is the level of a person's feelings after comparing the product performance or results he feels with his expectations. According to Supranto, quoted by Farisanu et al (2023), customer satisfaction means that the performance of an item is at least the same as what was expected. Customer satisfaction includes the difference between

expectations and performance or results perceived by customers. Customer satisfaction is the accumulated result of consumers or customers in using products or services.

Product quality

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2016), product quality is a product that is able to provide functions, including reliability, accuracy, durability, reliability, as well as other valuable attributes. According to Hasbullah & Muchtar (2022), product quality is the factors contained in an item or result that are suitable for the purpose of the item being produced. According to Cesariana (2022), product quality is an important factor that influences every consumer's decision when purchasing a product. The better the quality of the product, the more interest there will be in customers who want to purchase the product. According to Sinulingga and Sihotang (2021), product quality is a business element that consumers or customers need to pay attention to, but especially for consumers or customers who want to maintain the quality of our products that we want to market. According to Astuti et al (2021), product quality is everything that we can offer by producers that can be paid attention to, can be used, purchased and can also be consumed by consumers and producers according to certain consumer needs. Based on the several definitions described above, it can be concluded that product quality is a totality of characteristics of a product or service which can indicate a measure of how high the level of consumer trust is in the product or service they use and how long that trust can last.

Service quality

According to Kotler in Farisanu et al (2023), service is any activity or action that a party can offer to another party, which is basically intangible and does not result in ownership of anything. According to Tjiptono (2014), service quality is an effort to fulfill consumer desires and needs appropriately in realizing consumer expectations. In other words, in order to increase sales, service quality is a part that cannot be ignored apart from sales strategy and product quality. According to Hamirul (2020), service quality is a comparison between the reality of the service that will be received and the expectations of the service that consumers or customers want to receive. According to Pilo (2023) quality service has various important benefits for business. Good and quality service can increase customer satisfaction. Customers who are satisfied with a brand's service tend to be loyal and are more likely to return to using that brand's products or services. Businesses that provide excellent quality service will also build a good reputation in the eyes of consumers/customers. A good reputation can increase trust and make the business more attractive to potential customers. Through good and quality service, a business can increase customer retention. Satisfied customers will tend to remain subscribed or shop again. Customers who are satisfied with the services provided also tend to give positive recommendations to their friends, family or acquaintances. This can increase word-of-mouth marketing, which is an effective way to attract new customers. Apart from that, good service can reduce the occurrence of complaints and product returns. Customers will feel more satisfied with the solutions offered if problems occur, thereby reducing the burden and costs associated with managing complaints and returns. Quality service can also be an important differentiation factor in a competitive market. If a business provides services that are superior to competitors, the business will have advantages that can increase its market share (Pilo, 2023).

Pharmacy Practice Innovation

Innovation in pharmaceutical practice is any change in the provision of pharmaceutical services that is considered new by consumers and the public. This innovation can be in the form of a service process or service business model (Holdford, 2018). Pharmacy practice is the provision of services by pharmacists and pharmaceutical organizations to respond to community needs regarding medication. Pharmacy practice encompasses the various activities pharmacists perform to serve customers and stakeholders (e.g., other professionals). While in pharmaceutical services it involves; pharmacists or pharmacy organizations, efforts to respond to the needs related to medicines, people including patients and the public can be classified as pharmaceutical practice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research design uses qualitative methods based on phenomenology. According to Sugiyono (2013), the qualitative research method is a research method used to examine the condition of natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument, the data collection technique is carried out in a triangulated (combined) manner, data analysis is inductive, and the results of qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalizations. According to Abdussamad (2021), qualitative research methods are research methods used in natural object conditions, where the researcher acts as a key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out in a triangulated manner, data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalizations. Phenomenological research prioritizes searching, studying and conveying the meaning of phenomena, events that occur and their relationship with ordinary people in certain situations (Sugianto, 2015).

The research was conducted at 3 pharmacies in Pati Regency, namely; Indah Medika, Surya and Cahaya Medika. These three pharmacies are pharmacies that experienced significant changes in sales after the temporary ban on selling syrup products was implemented. Research is carried out in a natural setting, not the result of treatment or manipulation of the variables involved. The research was conducted from October 2023 to November 2023.

According to Sugiyono (2013), a research informant is a resource person who refers to someone who understands the research object and is able to provide an explanation regarding the research topic raised. In this research, informants are people in the research setting who can help researchers in collecting the necessary qualitative data. The criteria for selected informants are; have knowledge and experience in accordance with the phenomenon being studied, be able to tell stories well and correctly and be able to assist researchers in the data collection process. Therefore, the informants chosen in this study were 1 owner who also acted as a pharmacist in charge of the pharmacy and 1 pharmacy officer at each pharmacy. In this research, data collection used in-depth interview techniques, observation and documentation. The purpose of data collection techniques using triangulation is to find

out whether the data obtained is convergent, inconsistent, or contradictory. One procedure to increase the credibility of qualitative research is triangulation (Sugiyono, 2013).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION RESULTS

The Relationship between On The Job Training, Use of Information Technology and Superior Service

Superior service is the best service pattern that prioritizes customer care. Therefore, in providing service to customers, pharmacy staff must serve with the best actions and satisfy customers. Success in providing superior service depends on aligning the abilities, attitudes, appearance, attention, actions and responsibilities of the pharmacy staff who carry it out. In its implementation, pharmacies experience obstacles including product knowledge, implementation of SOPs and product inventory. Based on the S-D Logic concept (Vargo & Lusch, 2008) in the service process internal and external factors together play a role in value creation (value cocreation) so that when looking at service obstacles it must be seen from both sides because they are those who integrate the operant resources they have in collaboration. in the service ecosystem to create value co-creation. The internal factors that play a role are internal resources in supporting services including human resources and physical pharmacy resources. In order to overcome existing obstacles, one of the efforts made by pharmacies is to carry out on-the-job training. On the job training is needed to provide knowledge, skills and competencies to employees so that all pharmacy employees can carry out their duties and responsibilities properly and correctly. On the job training will increase productivity and work motivation for employees in pharmacies. In pharmacies there is a self-medication service, namely a service to treat complaints from pharmacy customers with medicines that can be given without a doctor's prescription. Sufficient knowledge about the product (product knowledge) including indications, contraindications and side effects will optimize self-medication services in pharmacies. Communication skills are also very necessary in pharmacy services. Good communication and information can provide new knowledge to customers, and can be a solution to health problems that customers are experiencing. A combination of good knowledge, communication and competence will improve service to customers.

Information Technology (IT) is an important part of running a pharmacy business in order to improve service to customers. Information technology is used by pharmacies to increase knowledge by finding the latest information regarding developments in pharmaceutical products. Apart from that, the development of information technology is used by pharmacies to introduce and promote certain products such as supplements, cosmetics, etc. to support pharmacy sales. Pharmacies also use Information Technology to build good relationships with customers. Pharmacies can interact with customers regarding drug orders, information on drug use and the effects customers feel after using the drug. In the current era of Information Technology development, people expect ease of service, including getting medicine at the pharmacy. To provide easy service to customers, pharmacies utilize Information Technology to innovate by providing consultation services, purchasing, drug delivery and online payments such as payments via m-banking, shopee pay etc.

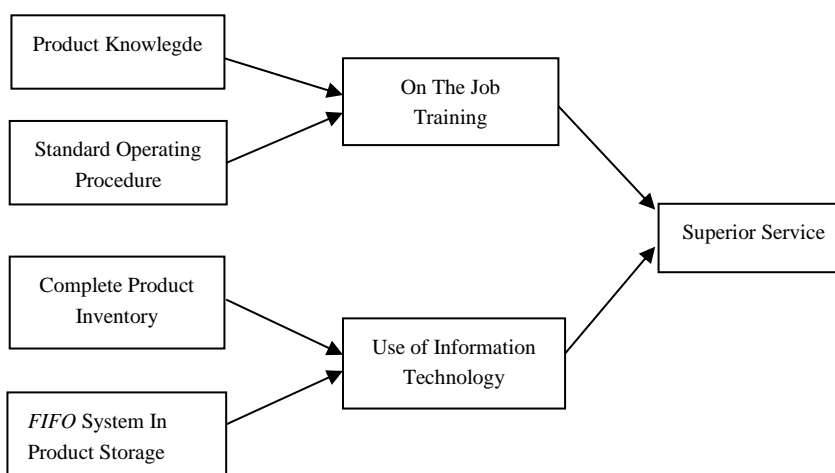
The use of technology in pharmacies can be an illustration of the pharmacy's ability to carry out updates and then the pharmacy can apply it to achieve the goal of increasing competitiveness. Without the ability to update, pharmacies cannot improve competency and excellence in service. The use of appropriate technology will improve good relations with customers and have an impact on convenience and improved service to customers.

Based on this description, the first proportion can be taken as follows:

"To build a superior service strategy, pharmacies need to provide on-the-job training for employees, so they are able to increase product knowledge and implement existing Standard Operating Procedures, supported by utilizing information technology."

Pictographically, this relationship can be presented in Figure 1:

Figure 1. Building Superior Service



Source: Primary data processed

The Relationship between Customer Trust, Customer Education and Pharmacy Sales.

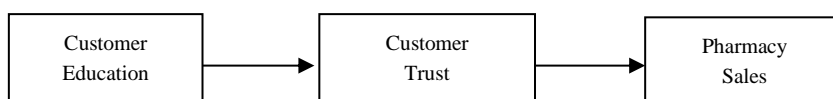
Customer service is the company's benchmark for building trust and encouraging customer loyalty. Meeting customer expectations is a strategy for a larger goal, because customers are more likely to make repeat purchases after having a good service experience. Customers buying products not only assess quality or price, but also assess the customer service they receive. Bad customer service will result in dissatisfaction and provide a bad experience for customers. This can be detrimental to the pharmacy business, such as reducing loyalty and increasing the likelihood that customers will switch. In the pharmacy business, efforts to increase customer trust have experienced many obstacles, both from internal factors such as unfriendly pharmacy staff, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, as well as from external factors such as regulations limiting sales of syrup products. Efforts to overcome obstacles are made by pharmacies by maintaining good communication and providing the right information to customers. When you get the right information, it will be easier for customers to accept offers from pharmacies and this will have an impact on increasing pharmacy sales.

Based on the description explained, the second proportion can be taken as follows :

“To increase sales, pharmacies need to build customer trust by providing customer education”.

Pictographically, this relationship can be presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Increasing Pharmacy Sales



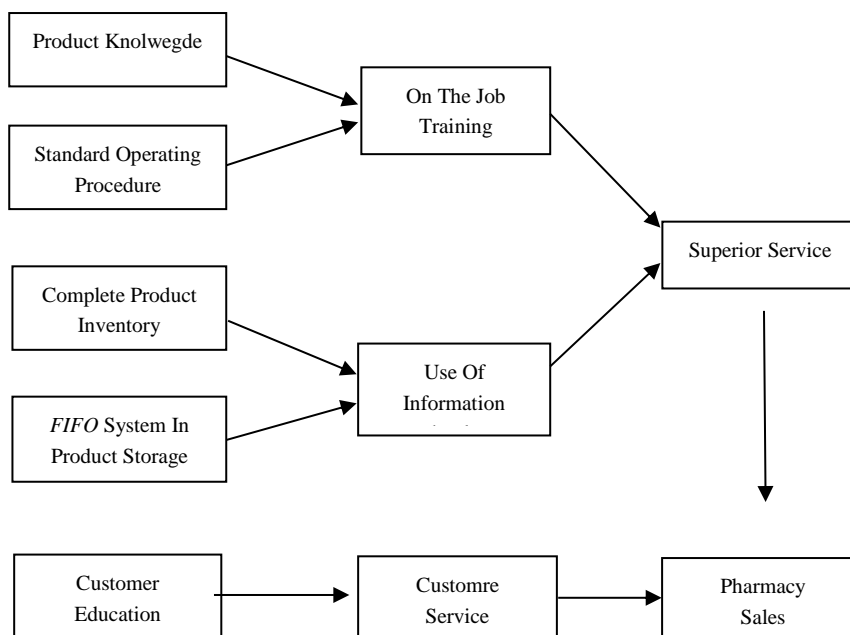
Source: Primary data processed

The relationship between all concepts that describe building superior service to increase pharmacy sales resulting from this research is as follows:

“To increase sales, pharmacies need to implement superior service strategies, supported by utilizing information technology and providing on-the-job training for employees to be able to increase product knowledge, and implement existing Standard Operating Procedures. Apart from that, pharmacies must be able to build customer trust by providing customer education”.

Pictographically, this relationship is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Theoretical Model For Increasing Pharmacy Sales



Source: Primary data processed

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research that has been carried out regarding strategies to increase pharmacy sales, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. In an effort to increase pharmacy sales, it is necessary to implement superior service strategies.
2. In its implementation, pharmacies still experience problems, including; HR competency, compliance in implementing SOPs and applicable regulations.

3. To implement superior service strategies in pharmacies, this can be done by utilizing information technology and providing on-the-job training for employees to be able to increase product knowledge and implement existing Standard Operating Procedures..
4. To build customer trust, pharmacies need to communicate and educate customers.

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