

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

From the pharmacy owners' survey it can be concluded that while most pharmacies are open at least six to seven days a week, there are certain days in a week (especially Mondays and weekends) when the numbers of customers patronizing the stores are much higher. In terms of age groups, the majority of shoppers are between the age of 30 and 49 years old. The major product category purchased was found to be prescription items followed by toiletries. The number of customers visiting pharmacies does not appear to vary very much throughout the day but a greater number was usually observed in the mornings (9.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon) and evenings (6.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.).

In terms of patronage factors for customers, service, especially advice from pharmacists, courtesy and waiting times are deemed to be the most important factors. Other factors that are considered important are a wide range of products available and adequate stock levels. Factors of prices and location do not appear to be very important in a customer's patronage choice.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since Mondays and weekends appear to be the most busy days in a week, the pharmacy management should ensure adequate staffing for these days. Furthermore pharmacies should open on Saturdays and Sundays whenever possible as these days are peak shopping days for pharmacy customers. The mornings and evening periods should be properly staffed as these periods normally have higher customer load.

However, due to staffing reasons, some of the smaller pharmacies may have difficulty in opening up to seven days a week. As an alternative the pharmacy concerned may choose one of the week days as a rest day while opening on Saturdays and Sundays. In this way, the customers who prefer to visit the pharmacy on weekends will be able to do so. This would help to increase the number of customers per week for the pharmacy concerned.

Service factors such as courtesy was also observed to be important to the customers.

Therefore pharmacies management should seriously consider the proper training of staffs in term of courtesy and service to project a good image for the store. The presence of a trained and competent pharmacist to

provide patient counselling is critical to the customers' satisfaction. The common practice of most chain pharmacies that require the pharmacist to be mainly involved in administrative and managerial duties may be short sighted as the customer service factor will be compromised. The other pharmacy staff should also be trained to provide advice to customers on the common medications used.

Although prices and the location of the pharmacy do not appear to be the most critical criteria in a customer's patronage choice, pharmacy managers have to bear in mind that customers do shop around for the best prices and a store that charges consistently high prices may lose its customers in the long term. Prices of products should be correlated with quality and the pharmacy which can offer consistently high quality products at reasonable prices should be able to retain customers' loyalty. The location factor is important as most customers will prefer a store with convenient location and easy access. Shops located too far away from the main shopping areas will have to rely on loyal and regular customers for the major portion of their business.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

This study may open the way to future possible studies in various areas of consumers behavior and patronage behavior in other retailing environments. The results of this study may be supported by other studies on the various important factors or determinants that affect patronage behavior. The limitations of this study in terms of sampling size and methods can be eliminated by larger scale studies. Further studies of retail customers behavior in other parts of the country (both urban and rural areas) will help to shed light on whether consumer behavior in a rural setting differ from that of an urban area.