

SURVEY ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN VETERINARY PHARMACEUTICAL UNITS

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Abstract

Customer satisfaction and loyalty measurement are tools that allow veterinary practitioners to survey their customers in a professional manner, giving them results that allow managers to take decisions on the direction and content of veterinary services. The main goal of customer satisfaction evaluation surveys is to identify the causes that led to customer dissatisfaction and to eliminate them in the future. The aim of this study was to evaluate the satisfaction of 150 customers of 15 veterinary pharmaceutical units (pharmacies and pharmaceutical points), using questionnaires. The survey research was composed of a series of 10 written questions, logically and psychologically sequenced, by which to obtain from the respondents answers to be recorded in writing. The questions focused on the following aspects: the quality of products, the ratio between quality and price, collaboration with veterinary pharmaceutical units' staff, key decision makers in purchasing a product (price, commercial aspect, popularity or producer/country of origin), the necessity of implementing systems to reward loyal customers. The obtained results showed that customer's satisfaction is influenced mainly by the quality of products, low prices, and the quality of the relationship with the veterinary pharmaceutical units' staff.

Key words: customer satisfaction, survey, veterinary pharmaceutical units.

INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction and loyalty measurement are tools that allow veterinary practitioners to survey their customers in a professional manner, giving them results that allow managers to take decisions on the direction and content of veterinary services (Cernea, 2004; Mudie and Cottam, 2010). Customer opinions are examined by veterinary pharmaceutical unit's manager, so then he could act accordingly. Customer's identity is not important; the emphasis is on identifying the problems encountered in dealing with employees or in the use of pharmaceutical products. The main goal of customer satisfaction evaluation surveys is to identify the causes that led to customer dissatisfaction and to eliminate them in the future (Ceresia et al., 2009; Haleem et al., 2015; Kayne and Jepson, 2004).

The main methods for evaluating customer satisfaction are the systems for receiving complaints and suggestions, customer

satisfaction surveys and spy or fake customer.

The most common methods to receive the suggestions and complaints are: book of suggestions and complaints, forms, and telephone service. The book of suggestions and complaints consists of using a notebook with white sheets where customers address a suggestion or complaint to the veterinary pharmaceutical unit. Forms are structured so that customers can tick what they liked and what they did not like or provide a mark to the used product or service. Telephone service - pharmaceutical unit offers its customers a phone number where they can call to make a suggestion or a complaint. This telephone line can serve also to take orders or to provide information (Dragulanescu, 2012).

Customer satisfaction is mainly measured through questionnaires. Depending on the communication between clients and veterinary pharmaceutical units, there are four types of surveys: personal surveys, telephone surveys, surveys by regular mail, and Internet surveys. Personal surveys consist of customers direct

interviewing. Questionnaires can be printed on paper, or can be made on the computer. Telephone surveys consist in an operator asking questions on the phone. Mail surveys consist of sending questionnaires by regular mail to customers and receiving the answers also by regular mail. In the case of Internet surveys, questionnaires are sent to customers either by e-mail, or are placed on the website of veterinary pharmaceutical unit (Manolache, 2008).

Spy or fake customer is a person trained to observe whether staff behaves with customers according to the instructions given by managers. He has the role to identify both the positive and the negative aspects involved in the buying process. Following the interaction with the spy customer, employees can be put in different unusual situations, specially designed to test their skills and abilities. The same person can be employed also to study the behaviour of competing veterinary pharmaceutical units and to identify their weaknesses and strengths in relationships with clients (Dragulanescu, 2012).

The aim of this study was to evaluate the satisfaction of 150 customers of 15 veterinary pharmaceutical units (pharmacies and pharmaceutical points), using questionnaires.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, the method used to assess customer satisfaction was represented by a personal survey with written questionnaires, including both open and closed questions.

Filling in the questionnaires by the clients of veterinary pharmaceutical units took place in Bucharest, between 2014 and 2015. Customer satisfaction questionnaire was applied to 150 customers, at the exit from veterinary pharmaceutical units (veterinary pharmacies and veterinary pharmaceutical points).

The survey research was composed of a series of 10 written questions, logically and psychologically sequenced, by which to obtain from the respondents answers to be recorded in writing (Table 1).

The aim was to collect data in order to meet the research objectives (Cozma, 2011).

The survey was intended to provide a clear picture of how customers consider important or

not different aspects related to veterinary pharmaceutical units, which can lead to their development.

In drafting questions, several aspects were taken into account: their content (questions must match the theme and be relevant for the objectives of the research), symmetry (each question must relate to a specific aspect of the research), simplicity (questions should be simple, clear, and precise), language (questions must be understood by people surveyed) (Trasa, 2010).

Table 1. The questionnaire used in the study

No.	Question	Possible answers
<i>I. Give a rate from 1 to 5, where 1 means very poor and 5 means very good:</i>		
1	How would you rate the quality / price ratio for the product you chose?	1 2 3 4 5
2	How would you rate the interaction with veterinary pharmaceutical unit staff?	1 2 3 4 5
<i>II. Choose one of the response options below:</i>		
3	Which is the reason you chose this veterinary pharmaceutical unit?	a) it is close to home; b) convenient prices; c) staff well trained; d) another reason.....
4	Which is the most important factor to choose a particular product for your pet?	a) commercial aspect; b) price; c) its popularity; d) producer / country of origin.
<i>III. Select YES or NO:</i>		
5	Do you consider it is useful to implement a reward system for loyal customers?	YES NO
6	Pharmaceutical unit staff gets involved in providing information on your request?	YES NO
7	Do you follow the advice and recommendations of staff in choosing a certain product?	YES NO
8	Would you be willing to try a new product instead of the usual one on staff recommendation?	YES NO
9	Are you tempted to buy other products just because you liked the approach of the pharmaceutical unit's staff?	YES NO
10	Do you intend to return as a customer in this particular veterinary pharmaceutical unit?	YES NO

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Question no. 1. After processing the data, the following results were obtained: 29 customers (19.33%) considered the quality/price ratio for the chosen product as satisfactory, 56 (37.33%) as good and 65 (43.33%) very good. The quality of chosen products is appreciated by customers according to their own judgments and criteria. Besides the quality of a product, its price plays an important role because it suggests quality. Some customers believe that if a product is more expensive compared to another product with approximately the same benefits, the more expensive product is better. The customers who evaluated the quality / price ratio as satisfactory explained that financially they cannot afford more, but they are aware that there are better products in terms of quality, but with higher prices.

Question no. 2. After processing the data on the quality of interaction with veterinary pharmaceutical units' staff, the following results were obtained: 23 customers (15.33%) opted for a satisfactory interaction, 48 customers (32.00%) appreciated as a good interaction, and 79 customers (52.67%) indicated a very good interaction. The relationship created between the customers and veterinary units' staff is very important for both sides. Some customers easily accept the advice coming from the unit staff, while other customers are bothered by staff involving more than necessary. Thus, it may happen that a satisfactory interaction for one customer to be considered good or very good by another customer.

Question no. 3. 49 customers (32.67%) said that they chose the veterinary pharmaceutical unit because it is close to home, 71 customers (47.33%) chose the advantageous prices, while 30 customers (20.00%) opted for well trained staff. In the opinion of some customers, the fact that a veterinary pharmaceutical unit is close to their home is considered an asset, allowing them to save money and time. Affordable prices are highly appreciated in any field, and customers tend to buy products from the place that sells the cheapest products compared with the competition. Some customers believe that well-trained staffs are an added advantage received together with the product, being easier

to ask for advice than to inform themselves on the products they want to purchase.

Question no. 4. Of the 150 customers surveyed, 12 customers (8.00%) responded that the most important factor in choosing a product is the commercial aspect, 73 customers (48.67%) opted for price, 23 customers (15.33%) for popularity, and 42 customers (28.00) for the producer / country of origin. Commercial aspect is considered an important factor in purchasing a product because customers are inclined to purchase commercial products that are visually pleasant, with cheerful colours, but also have a practical pack. Price is one of the deciding factors in choosing a veterinary pharmaceutical product. Depending on the price, the value of a product is determined, which will subsequently lead to the purchase of the products necessary for each client. Products with an acceptable price in relation to their quality, quantity, or benefits, will be preferred to the more expensive products, which are not accessible to all customers. The popularity of a product depends on its publicity - advertisements and feedbacks from people who have tried that product. As for producer/country of origin, customers tend to buy products whose producer / country of origin is valued on the market.

Question no. 5. Related to the implementation by veterinary pharmaceutical units of a system to reward loyal customers, affirmative answers were obtained in a proportion of 98.67% (148 out of 150 customers). This question was highly appreciated by customers because many of them would like veterinary pharmaceutical units to adopt the system of loyalty found in the human pharmacies, and which is very successful due to the benefits obtained. Many of the respondents were owners of several animals (more than 2), with an average financial situation, and thus it would be easier for them to buy more but also to be rewarded for this, and their animals to be treated properly.

Question no. 6. After processing the data on staff involvement in providing information to customers, the following results were obtained: 132 customers (88.00%) said "yes", while 18 customers (12.00%) said "no". If between the customer and the veterinary pharmaceutical unit staff a good relationship is built, both sides

will benefit. The customer will be satisfied, knowing that in that unit he will receive advice and recommendations and he can turn from an ordinary customer into a loyal one; the staff will be motivated by rewards such as manager's trust, financial rewards or promotion, the percentage of loyal customers will increase, profits will increase and employees will be happy, creating an enjoyable workplace. If the employees do not get involved in solving the problems encountered by customers, the managers of the veterinary pharmaceutical units can sanction them.

Question no. 7. The obtained results showed that customers follow the advice and recommendations of veterinary pharmaceutical units' staff in choosing a particular product in proportion of 78.67% (118 customers), while 32 customers (21.33%) do not accept suggestions. Most customers easily accept advice and recommendations as they consider that the staff is well trained, so it is an added advantage, but there is also another category of customers, those who buy incognizant or for the first time certain products and who believe that advice and recommendations are very important. Customers who responded "no" are actually the ones who typically buy the same products, already knowing their advantages and disadvantages, or are those customers who do not accept in principle the help offered by veterinary pharmaceutical staff.

Question no. 8. 114 customers (76.00%) declared that are willing to try a new product instead of the usual one on staff recommendation, while 36 customers (24.00%) answered "no" to that question. This question is closely linked to the previous one, because those customers, who easily accept advice or recommendations, will accept to try alternatives to the product that they already know. Those customers who responded negatively are reluctant; they do not accept any help, preferring to purchase what interests them, not allowing anyone to change their point of view. In these circumstances, staff may withdraw the discussion, leaving the customers to make their own decisions, which are not always the best ones.

Question no. 9. After processing the answers related to the buying of products other than those already planned, the following results

were obtained: 62.67% (94 out of 150) of respondents said "yes", while the other 37.33% (56 customers) said "no". This is due to several factors, such as the customer's financial situation, his real need for certain products, the relationship between customer and veterinary pharmaceutical unit staff. If the staff will address the customer in a gentle manner by which to capture his attention, then the chances by which the staff can persuade the customer to purchase other products grow.

Question no. 10. After processing the data on customers' return in the pharmaceutical unit, positive answers were obtained in a proportion of 88.67% (133 customers), and negative answers in a proportion of 11.33% (17 customers). This question is in accordance with question no. 6, because when staff is committed to solving customer's problems, to provide advice or recommendations, the customer will appreciate the involvement of staff, and will want to return to the veterinary pharmaceutical unit because he knows he is treated fairly and with patience. Customers who have given a negative answer are those who did not need information, or those who did not live in the area, but were just passing through.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, a customer satisfaction survey was performed based on written questionnaires. The results obtained showed that the surveyed veterinary pharmaceutical units comply in a large extent with the fundamental principles related to ensuring customer satisfaction.

Based on the obtained answers, it was concluded that customer's satisfaction is influenced by the quality of products, better prices, and the strengthening of the relationship with the veterinary pharmaceutical units' staff.

The obtained data revealed that the most important factor that determines the choice of a veterinary pharmaceutical unit is the price of the sold products. Also, a good relationship between the manager, staff and customers was indicated as being very important because all three parties are satisfied. The manager benefits from loyal customers, sales and profits grow, the staff is rewarded, and the customer is satisfied with the quality of products, convenient prices and the advice and

recommendations received from veterinary pharmaceutical units' staff.

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