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## PATRONAGE MOTIVES AND CONSUMERS' CHOICE OF PHARMACY STORES IN OGOJA, CROSS RIVER STATE

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Within the competitive pharmacy market environment in Nigeria today and more specifically in Ogoja, Cross River State, pharmacy stores are required to develop efficient and effective marketing strategies based on current information and data about consumer patronage behaviour in order to attract clients and develop customer positive choice and loyalty to their stores.

This study will assess the effect of patronage motives on consumers' choice of Hilary, Odonah, and Emmy Cool Pharmacy Stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

**Method:** Data collected from customers on their assessment of pharmacy location, drugs quality, pharmacy staff service, price, store atmosphere, and choice of pharmacy store were subjected to statistical analyses

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) hypothesis served as the study's foundation.

324 clients of the three pharmacy outlets provided primary data via a standardized 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. ANOVA, a statistical approach, was used to test the hypotheses and analyze the data obtained from respondents using percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

**Result:** The study's findings indicate that patronage reasons have been linked to location, drug quality, staff service, pricing, and store atmosphere.

**Conclusion:** implication of the findings is that the management of the three pharmacy stores must integrate these patronage motives in their retail store strategies to sustain customers' choice and loyalty to the stores.

**Key words:** price strategy, drugs quality, staff service, patronage motive, store atmosphere and consumers' choice.



## INTRODUCTION

The operation of retail pharmacy stores in Nigeria is an important dimension of the health sector aimed at providing health services to consumers (patients) in the country. Pharmacy stores are spread all over the country located in urban and rural areas which are required to operate in accordance with the regulations prescribed by the Pharmacists Council of Nigeria<sup>1</sup>. In Ogoja, Cross River State many pharmacy stores have been established and are operating in various locations amongst which are Hilary pharmacy, located at No 13 Mission Road Igoli Ogoja, Odonah pharmacy, located at No.11 Mission Road Igoli, Ogoja and Emmy Cool Pharmacy Limited, located at No.7 Ntol Mgbeje street, Igoli, Ogoja. This study on consumer patronage motives and choice of pharmacy stores is focused on these three pharmacy stores.

A pharmacy store or retail pharmacy is a place to purchase medicines and healthcare related products<sup>2</sup>. A pharmacy store is a point of care where patients or clients interact with a drug expert, a pharmacist who offers them adequate and accurate drug information, counseling as well as an opportunity for point of care screening on hypertension, diabetes, malaria, hepatitis, and other conditions<sup>3</sup>. The pharmacist provides patient-centered care while also ensuring to refer patients to a hospital or laboratory for further examination in order to aid accurate diagnosis<sup>3</sup>.

Patronage of pharmacy stores (also called community pharmacies) is very common among many Nigerians, especially in seeking advice for self-care, minor ailments, and treatment of common conditions such as malaria and common cold<sup>4,5</sup>. The successful and effective operation of a pharmacy store requires an in-depth understanding and application of appropriate retail mix variables in terms of

consumers' patronage motives in choosing a particular store to fulfil their needs. It has been shown through previous studies that consumers' patronage motives influence their choice of stores where they purchase products and services<sup>6,7,8</sup>.

Consumer choice is concerned with the notion that consumers make rationed decisions to satisfy their needs and wants. They make the choices that best fit their budget, their preference, and optimize the amount of benefits or value they derive from their choice<sup>9</sup>. Consumer store choice results from a process whereby information on various alternatives is evaluated by the consumer prior to the selection of one of the alternatives (Fotheringham, 1988). Consumers' choice of pharmacy stores is based on patronage motives<sup>8</sup>.

Patronage motives are the reasons or a consideration which makes a buyer to prefer one particular outlet or service provider over others<sup>11</sup>. Ozo<sup>12</sup> states that those influences within the consumers explaining why they purchase from particular firms or outlets are designated as patronage motives. Once the marketer determines or ascertains consumers' patronage motives, he can design or device appropriate marketing strategies aimed at appealing to those motives<sup>11</sup>.

The reasons or motives for patients' choice of pharmacy stores have been studied extensively over the years. Such studies have identified many attributes as salient which include convenient hours, the pharmacist, friendliness of employees, and personalized attention<sup>13</sup>. Location of a store influences its choice by consumers. Easy availability and access to a community pharmacy means that it is often the first point of contact for people in need of advice or information about medical services or healthcare<sup>14</sup>.





Another important aspect widely used in community pharmacy or pharmacy store to attract customers is medication price strategy. It was found to be a strong factor affecting repeat purchase, customer commitment or customer devotion in various business types including community pharmacy<sup>14</sup>. However, customer decision to choose and buy in a particular pharmacy repeatedly did not depend on only the price of medicines but the service quality provided by the pharmacist and other pharmacy sales staff<sup>16</sup>. Also the literature reveals that the most frequently reported antecedents to retail patronage is the level of product assortment and store atmosphere<sup>17,18</sup>. Additionally, Reuttever and Teller<sup>19</sup> and Wong and Dean<sup>20</sup> showed that product quality was the most important attribute which influenced consumers' decision making when choosing a particular store.

Under the current prevailing competitive retail pharmacy business situation in Ogoja, Cross River State, all the pharmacy stores operating in the area must be well acquainted and abreast with the current and changing consumer behaviour in terms of their patronage motives. Hence, this study is timely and pertinent in order to assess the patronage motives of customers of the three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State, namely Hilary Pharmacy, Odonah Pharmacy and Emmy Cool Pharmacy Limited, all located and operating in Igoli, Ogoja in cross river state. The outcome of the study will be helpful to the respective pharmacy stores to determine the right retail mix strategies to adopt in order to attract and retain their customers and thereby sustain or enhance their competitive position, profitability and growth.

A pharmacy store is a point of care where patients or clients interact with a drug expert, a pharmacist who offers them adequate and accurate drug information, counseling, as well as opportunity for

point of care screening on hypertension, diabetes, malaria, hepatitis and other conditions (PSN Young Pharmacist Group Lagos, 2020).

A pharmacy store, also known as retail pharmacy or community pharmacy, is the most common type of the pharmacy that allows the public access to the medications and the advice about their health. Traditionally known or called a chemist, it is the healthcare facility which is responsible for the provision of the pharmaceutical service to a specific community group or a region<sup>3,4</sup>.

Pharmacy stores (or community pharmacies) serve as the first point of call for patients<sup>21</sup>. Their roles range from the traditional role of dispensing of prescription and non-prescription medicines to counseling, provision of effective medicine, drug information to the general public and patients that encourage quality use of medicines as well as different aspects of self-care and health promotions<sup>22,23</sup>.

Pharmacy stores are located close to where the people live, work and play. They stay open for long hours and require no previous appointment bookings to see the pharmacist<sup>1</sup>. The activities of retail pharmacy stores are so vital to the lives of the communities that they are classified as essential services by most governments. Most retail pharmacies provide not just essential, safe, quality and efficacious medicines but also sound professional service by the pharmacist<sup>1</sup>.

Pharmacy stores are typically required to have a qualified pharmacist on duty at all times when they open. It is also often a requirement for the owner of a pharmacy store to be a registered pharmacist, but is not the case in all jurisdictions. Where permitted many retailers including supermarkets and mass merchandisers now include a pharmacy as a department of



their store. Likewise, many pharmacies are now rather grocery store-like in their design. In addition to medicines and prescriptions many pharmacies now sell a diverse arrangement of additional items such as cosmetics, shampoo, office supplies, confections electronics, home décor, snack foods and durable medical equipment<sup>24,1</sup>.

Those influences within the consumer explaining why they purchase products and service from particular firms or outlets are conceptualized as patronage motives<sup>12</sup>. MBA Skool<sup>11</sup> states that patronage motives are the reasons or considerations which make a buyer to prefer one particular retailer, outlet or service provider over others. Thus, behind every buying decision made by the customer there is a motive.

Patronage motives are classified into two categories namely emotional and rational patronage motives. When a consumer patronizes a particular retailer or outlet without any reasoning, he is said to be influenced by emotional patronage buying motive<sup>11</sup>. According to Ozo<sup>12</sup> emotional patronage motives are those which encourage a consumer to patronize a particular store with a minimum of thought as to the reasons for or against doing so.

However, most consumers buy from a store only after some conscious reasoning as to which one they should patronize. When a consumer patronizes a retailer or store by considering the possible benefits through logical reasoning, he is said to be influenced by rational buying motives. These motives include convenience, low price offered by the store, availability of credit facilities, sales persons efficiency, availability of wide options, reputation of the shop and experience in dealing with same shop or retailer<sup>12,11</sup>.

The idea of consumer choice is based on the fact that people make rational

decisions to satisfy their needs and wants. Specifically, consumers want to make the choice that best fits their budget, their preference and optimizes the amount of benefits or value they derive from their choice<sup>9</sup>.

The rational choice theory postulates that individuals make choices using self-interest, choosing what will bring them the most benefit. Basically, they weigh the options and choices and then make decision on what will be best<sup>25</sup>. Personal preferences come into play when deciding on what suits or profits a particular consumer<sup>25</sup>.

To make choices, consumers need to have relevant information. For instance, the price of a product or service which is a very important factor in a consumers' decision-making. Marketers make information available usually through advertising or marketing communication to assist consumers as rational actors in making rational calculations<sup>9,25</sup>. Consumer store choice results from a process whereby information on various alternatives are evaluated by the consumer prior to the selection of one of the alternatives<sup>10</sup>.

Using a series of forty depth interviews focused on store patronage motives, Kelly and Stephenson<sup>26</sup> developed thirty-five criteria for store selection by consumers. A factor analysis of these criteria suggested that there are eight basic dimensions in store choice which include:

- (i) General store characteristics (reputation in community, number of stores).
- (ii) Physical characteristics of the store (décor, cleanliness, check out service).
- (iii) Convenience of reaching the store from the consumers' location (time required, parking).
- (iv) Products offered (variety, dependability, quality).



- (v) Prices charged by the store (value, special sales).
- (vi) Store personnel (courteous, friendly, helpful)
- (vii) Advertising by the store (informative, appealing, believable)
- (viii) Friend's perception of the store (well-known, liked, recommended).

Franic et. al.<sup>6</sup> outlined factors associated with community pharmacy selection to include: Pharmacy location, the attributes of pharmacist, efficiency of treatment given, expeditious service given by pharmacist, and insurance coverage of prescription drugs. Prior research has also shown that price and convenience are two major motives that influence patients' pharmacy choice with proximity and location to a home as strongly important in their choice<sup>6</sup>.

Location and convenience have consistently been identified as important factors that determine a patient's pharmacy choice. This factor seems particularly important to older adults because of the increased number of medications that need to be filled at a pharmacy, the frequent travel to the pharmacy one or more times a month, and increased mobility limitations that comes with old age<sup>6</sup>.

Additionally, it has been shown that the attributes of the pharmacists and staff are major drivers for pharmacy patronage by consumers. More specifically, personnel variables such as professionalism, friendliness, and a caring nature will influence a customer's decision-making process of where to shop. Added to this, a pharmacist's attire is also critical in instilling confidence, trust, and professionalism to patients. Many customers value and desire the personal and focused interaction with pharmacy staff during their visits<sup>7,27,6</sup>.

Franic et al.<sup>6</sup> further showed that service-related features determine pharmacy stores that patients choose to fill their prescriptions. Their study results highlighted the value of pharmacy staff and pharmacists in patient's pharmacy decision-making process.

Holdford<sup>8</sup> points out those important factors which attract consumers to a community pharmacy which include convenient location and liking the pharmacist, price and pharmaceutical services being offered. A Kaiser Family Foundation Study also reported that when consumers think of quality of health care they think in terms of access, costs, choice of health provider, amount of time the provider spends with them and the provider's qualifications<sup>8,28</sup>.

Franic et. al.<sup>6</sup> researched on pharmacy patronage: Identifying key factors in the decisions making process using the determinant attribute approach. The objective of the study was to evaluate customer pharmacy choice when having a prescription order filled in different pharmacy settings such as grocery store, community independent, community chain, and discount store pharmacies in Georgia. The study was based on a convenience sample of 175 adult pharmacy consumers. The survey measured consumer preferences on 26 attributes which included general pharmacy site features (16 items), pharmacist characteristics (5 items), and pharmacy staff characteristics (5 items) which all together yielded 26 potential determinant attributes for pharmacy selection. The results of the study established that the attributes of pharmacist and staff at all the four pharmacy settings affect pharmacy patronage motive, although consumers frequenting non-community independent pharmacies were also motivated by secondary convenience factors such as



hours of operation and prescription coverage.

Pharmacy staff attributes constituting one of the factors influencing consumers' pharmacy choice as indicated from the results of the above study will be verified in our current study on patronage motives and consumers' choice of pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

Merks et. al.<sup>29</sup> carried out a study on factors influencing patient choice of community pharmacy and components of pharmaceutical care. The objective of the study was to compare factors that influence a patient's choice of pharmacy in Poland and in the UK, and to identify which of them are components of pharmaceutical care as well as to relate them to patient loyalty to the same pharmacy. The research was a cross-sectional study which utilized a self-administered questionnaire distributed to clients during their visit to a community pharmacy in Poland and in the UK. Thirty-six pharmacies in Poland and 56 pharmacies in the UK located in areas of different socioeconomic characteristics were included in the study. The number of respondents who were sampled in the study is 417 in Poland and 405 in the UK. In analyzing data collected from respondents from both countries, comparisons were performed using chi-square test and Logistic Regression. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS version 20.0. The findings of the study established that in Poland, the factors that influence choice include location, professional and high-quality service, good quality of medicines, while in the UK the choice factors include professional and high quality service, location, good quality advice from the pharmacist and option of discussing and consulting all health issues in a consultation room.

The variables of location and pharmacy staff service confirmed as influencing factors for pharmacy store choice in the foregoing study have been adopted to be verified as salient variables in our current study in Ogoja, Cross River State.

Nikolova, Dyankova and Petkova<sup>30</sup> undertook a study on factors of customer loyalty in pharmacy retail. The study was an empirical sociological research conducted among 433 adult citizens in Varna in February 2017 using a structured questionnaire. The aim of the study was to investigate the main and supplementary factors of customer loyalty in the pharmaceutical retail market. The questionnaire included questions about the leading factors for customer loyalty, customer preferences and attitudes when choosing a pharmacy. The results of the study revealed that customer loyalty to a particular pharmacy depends on the range of products it offers, low prices, and competent and friendly personnel. The results further showed that range of product offered by pharmacy was the most important factor for men (73% of male respondents) and women (68% of female respondents) mostly stated competent service by pharmacy staff. The low price attracted mainly pensioners and people with lower income.

Based on some of the factors confirmed as influencers of store choice in the foregoing study, our current study will test drugs variety and quality, price and pharmacy staff service variables to determine their effects on consumers' pharmacy store choice in Ogoja.

The study of Nitadpakom, Farris and Kittiscope<sup>31</sup> was on factors affecting pharmacy engagement and pharmacy customer devotion in community pharmacy. The research objective was to assess conceptual customer perceptions about pharmacists, perceived quality of pharmacy structure, medication price,



customer engagement and customer devotion. An additional objective was to assess and measure if there is a direct or indirect relationship between these variables. The study population was Thai citizens who lived in the Bangkok metropolitan area and received service from community pharmacies in Bangkok and Vicinity in the past three months. The research was a quantitative study conducted by using self-administered questionnaire. Two hundred and fifty-three (253) customers who regularly visited the pharmacy were randomly recruited from a purposively selected 30 community pharmacies in Bangkok. To assess the direct and indirect relationship between the variables, the structural equation model (SEM) was adopted. The result of the study revealed that only perceptions about pharmacist in customers receiving professional pharmacy services were statistically significant in terms of pharmacy engagement. The result confirmed the indirect positive influence of customer perception about pharmacist in providing service on pharmacy customer devotion via pharmacy engagement. It was customer perceptions about pharmacist that influenced customer retention, positive word of mouth and constructive advice to pharmacies, not quality of pharmacy structure and medication price. The study concluded that to create a long term impact on community pharmacy business, pharmacist is the key success factor.

Like in the above study, our current study is examining the role of the pharmacist as one of the critical motives determining consumers' choice of a pharmacy store in Ogoja, Cross River State. The professional medical knowledge and competency of the pharmacist is highly valued by customers who seek medical advice, counseling and in appropriately filling their prescriptions.

Kevrekidis<sup>32</sup> conducted a study on community pharmacy customer

segmentation. The objective of the study was to investigate consumer's preference concerning the selection of pharmacy and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, as well as to identify customer segments in relation to these preferences. The cross-sectional study was conducted between February and March, 2016 using a convenient quota sample of 300 participants recruited in the metropolitan area of Thessalonika, Greece. Structured questionnaire comprising of close-ended, multi-choice questions was used to collect data from respondents. To identify customer segments, a two-step cluster analysis was conducted. The result of the study produced three distinct pharmacy customer cluster groups. Customers of the largest cluster (convenience customers) making up 49%, were mostly younger consumers who gave moderate to positive ratings to factors affecting the selection of pharmacy and OTC's, convenience, previous experience, and the pharmacist's opinion received the highest ratings. Customers of the second cluster (loyal customers) making up 35% were mainly retired. Most of them reported visiting a single pharmacy. They gave high ratings to all factors that influence pharmacy selection especially the pharmacy staff, and factors influencing the purchase of OTC's, particularly previous experience and the pharmacist's opinion. Customers of the smallest cluster (convenience and price-sensitive customers) making up 16% were mainly retired or unemployed with low to moderate education, and low personal income. They gave the lowest ratings to most of the examined factors like convenience among factors influencing pharmacy selection, while previous experience, the pharmacist's opinion and product price among those factors affecting the purchase of OCT's received the highest ratings. The study concluded that the community pharmacy market comprised of distinct customer segments that varied in terms of the factors





they preferred in selecting pharmacy and OCT's.

Our current study in Ogoja is not concerned with segmenting pharmacy customers but rather examining factors that determine their store choice such as the ones used in the foregoing study which include price, pharmacy staff service, and location as a factor of convenience.

Ghattas and Al-Abdallan<sup>33</sup> undertook a study on community pharmacies. The aim of the study was to identify and evaluate different factors influencing the customer decision in selecting a community pharmacy in the city of Amman. The study also sought to verify the possible impact of branded pharmacy on the selection process. The study was based on five main factors driving pharmacy store choice which were selected from the literature review undertaken which included convenience, physical environment, sales promotion, qualified and experienced pharmacists, and customer service. The study used a descriptive, quantitative survey approach. The population of study consisted of customers who decide to choose a community pharmacy estimated at 934.5 thousand households. To collect the primary data required in the study, a self-administered questionnaire was used. One thousand and seventy (1070) copies of questionnaire were distributed in different, community pharmacies using the convenience sampling and intercept approach in Amman. Eight hundred and seven (807) copies of well filled and screened questionnaire were used in analysis. The result of the analysis indicated that customer service factor had the highest effect on customers' selection of pharmacies followed by qualified and experienced pharmacists and convenience respectively. Sales promotions and physical environment had the least impact on customer's decision.

The factors from the above study that will be replicated in our current study are physical environment (in terms of store atmosphere), convenience (in terms of store location), and qualified and experienced pharmacists (in terms of pharmacy staff service).

Chijioke-Nwauche and Ogoro<sup>14</sup> researched on distribution pattern of community pharmacies in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Niger Delta, and Nigeria. The objective of the study was to examine the distribution pattern and accessibility of community pharmacies in Port Harcourt Metropolis to the populace. The material and method used in the study include high resolution Google Earth Image, Geographical Information System, and the Global Positioning System which were employed in data collection. The study area was limited to Port Harcourt Metropolis and the design consisted of a Cross-sectional observational study. The sampling technique adopted was convenience sampling. A total of 219 community pharmacies were sampled in the study which represents more than half of the total community pharmacies of 362 within the study area. The data sources for the study were primary and secondary sources using the Global Positioning System to extract the coordinate of the pharmacies across the study area. The distribution pattern of community pharmacies across the study area was analyzed using the nearest neighbor analytical tool which was used to examine the location of community pharmacies and determine the pattern of these locations whether they are clustered, random or dispersed across the study area. The result obtained from the study showed that the spatial location of pharmacies in Port Harcourt metropolis is clustered and located within developed neighborhood of the city or where persons of higher financial capacity reside. The study concluded that to ensure better distribution of pharmacies in terms of

location and ensure comprehensive healthcare coverage, emphasis should be paid by government on geo-location in the approval of operating licenses.

The above study shows that location of pharmacies is very critical in meeting the medical needs of patients. Thus, the current study is using this variable to determine whether it is a patronage motive consumers' use in choosing pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

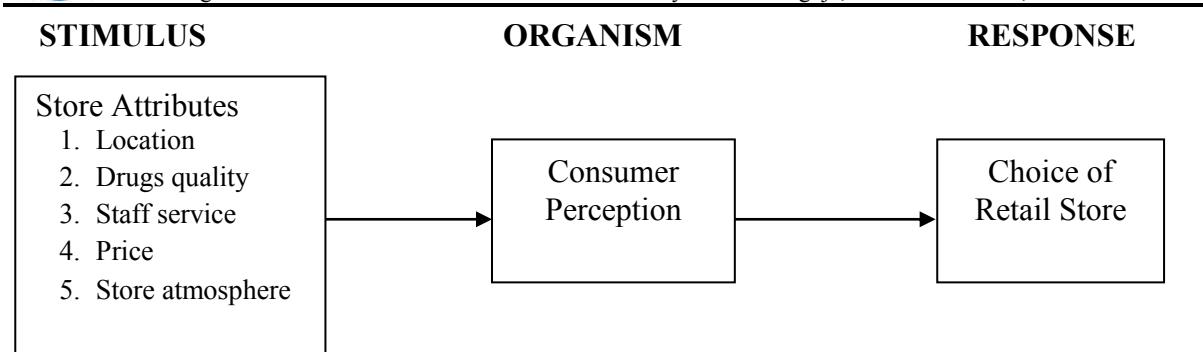
Rohova, Dimova, Atanasova and Rangelova<sup>34</sup> conducted their study on consumer preference for pharmacy in a highly competitive environment. The objective of the study was to examine the factors influencing consumer choice of a pharmacy in a highly competitive environment. This survey research was conducted based on a sample of 433 consumers in the city of Varna. The method of study adopted was a direct anonymous inquiries used to ascertain consumer opinion with respect to factors affecting the choice of a pharmacy and over-the-counter medicines. Data collected with copies of questionnaire were analyzed with regression analysis. The results of the study indicated that majority of the respondents attend relatively regular pharmacies at least once a month or more frequently. The study established that geographical proximity and price level are the most important factors in pharmacy choice. Counseling by qualified staff is important to 65% of respondents. Product range and competitive price also have an impact on loyalty and choice of pharmacy stores.

The salient factors for pharmacy choice adopted from the foregoing study to be replicated in our current study are price, location (geographical proximity), staff service (counseling), and product (drug) range.

This study is anchored on Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory. The theory was propounded by Woodworth<sup>35</sup> who analyzed the effect which stimulus (S) has in producing different responses (R) depending on the emotional state of the organism (O). The theory was later introduced into marketing context by Kakkar and Lutz<sup>35</sup> which has been applied in various retail setting to explain consumer decision-making process as well as the relationship between store environment and consumer perception on the one hand, and instore patronage intentions on the other hand.

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory holds that the retail store environment and attributes (Stimulus) has an impact on the emotional states of the consumer (Organism) in terms of giving pleasure or causing his arousal. The emotional states act as mediators on the behaviour (Response) of the consumer which is characterized as avoiding or approach toward a store. In other words, the store stimulus (attributes) which a consumer receives will make him either to approach (choose) or avoid (not choose) to patronize a retail store<sup>35</sup>. The assumption of the theory is that the consumer or customer (O) will respond positively in choosing to patronize (R) a particular retail store depending on the nature of the attributes or stimulus (S) which the store manifests.

Mehrabian and Russel<sup>35</sup> who were environmental psychologists suggested that environmental stimulus of store atmosphere (S) lead to an emotional reaction (R) which in turn drives consumers' response approach and avoidance behaviour in terms of store patronage (R). Thang and Tan<sup>19</sup> used the S-O-R model as a framework to study consumers' preferences regarding store choice (see Figure 1 below).



**Figure 1:** An S-O-R Model of Consumer Retail Patronage Behaviour

**Source:** Adapted from Thang and Tan<sup>18</sup> in Nilsson<sup>35</sup>.

As shown in figure 1, the stimulus pertaining to store attributes (patronage motives) include location, quality of drugs, staff service, price and store atmosphere. These attributes (S) impact on consumers (O) decision to patronize (R) a particular store or not. Therefore, in order to become a customer-oriented business, the management of pharmacy stores needs to be familiar and work strategically with each of the elements in the model<sup>18</sup>.

The S-O-R theory is appropriate for the current study on patronage motives and consumers' choice of pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State because it shows the critical importance of store attributes to influence the consumers in choosing a particular pharmacy store to patronize. The implication is that every pharmacy store can formulate its retail strategies based on store attributes (patronage motives) which impact on consumers' choice of their retail stores.

Within the competitive pharmacy market environment in Nigeria today and more specifically in Ogoja, Cross River State, pharmacy stores are required to develop efficient and effective marketing strategies based on current information and data about consumer patronage behaviour in order to attract clients and develop customer positive choice and loyalty to their stores<sup>32</sup>. It has been shown that

certain store attributes induce or motivate consumers (patients) in their choice or preference of pharmacy stores. It is therefore imperative that pharmacy stores operating in a competitive environment such as Ogoja, Cross River State, should assess, ascertain and address those store attributes which constitute patronage motives for consumers. These store attributes include store location and accessibility, quality of drugs, pharmacy staff service, pharmacy pricing strategies, and pharmacy store atmosphere.

The performance of a pharmacy store in achieving its marketing and business objectives depends on whether it understands and applies the right retail mix in terms of patronage motives aimed at influencing consumers (patients) to choose their retail outlets. This entails that those who own and operate pharmacy stores should understand the critical role of consumer patronage motives in determining the choice of pharmacy stores. Many pharmacy stores in Nigeria and more specifically in Ogoja, Cross River State, may not be currently focusing on consumer patronage motives in devising their marketing strategies. Also they may not have carried out studies to assess and ascertain the patronage motives of their customers so that they can utilize the research findings to improve or device

new strategies that will impact positively on consumer patronage behaviour. Therefore, this study was critical and essential to determine consumer patronage motives for the three selected pharmacy stores operating in Ogoja, Cross River State.

A number of previous studies had examined competitive advantages in pharmacy practice. Some of those studies focused on identifying determinant attributes of pharmacy patronage and patients' choice for pharmacy stores<sup>8</sup>. However, no study exist in the marketing literature which was undertaken in Ogoja, Cross River State focused on consumers' patronage motives and choice of pharmacy stores. This current study is aimed at filling the research gap to enable operators of the three selected pharmacy stores determine how to effectively and strategically influence customers towards choosing and patronizing their retail pharmacy.

Pharmacy school stores must create effective marketing strategies based on data and current information about consumer patronage behavior in the competitive Nigerian pharmacy market, particularly in Ogoja, Cross River State, if they hope to draw customers and foster positive customer choice and loyalty<sup>32</sup>. Research indicates that specific shop characteristics can influence or encourage

patients to select or favor particular pharmacy businesses. Thus, it is essential that drugstores functioning in a cutthroat setting like Ogoja, Cross River State, evaluate, identify, and resolve those aspects of their establishment that serve as reasons for customers to return. These shop characteristics include the location and ease of access, drug quality, staff service, and drugstore pricing tactics.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive survey design to collect primary data from customers of pharmacy stores. The descriptive design enabled the researcher to assess customers' patronage motives with respect to their choice of pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

### Area of the Study

Three pharmacy stores all located in Igoli, Ogoja cross river state, constitute the area of the study. The pharmacy stores include Hilary Pharmacy, Odonah Pharmacy, and Emmy Cool Pharmacy Ltd.

### Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised all customers who patronize the three pharmacy stores that were studied. However, the total number of customers making up the population is unknown.

### Sample Size Determination

To determine the sample size, the researcher undertook a pilot survey by randomly sampling 50 pharmacy store customers in Ogoja. Twenty-two (22) responded positively that they patronize the three pharmacy stores being studied, while 28 do not patronize them. From this result we obtained the following:

$$P = \frac{22}{50} = 0.36 \text{ i.e probability of positive response}$$

$$q = \frac{28}{50} = 0.64 \text{ i.e probability of negative response}$$



The sample size is calculated using Toman's formula as shown below

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

Where

n	=	required sample size
p	=	probability of positive response
q	=	probability of negative response
z	=	normal distribution at 95% level of confidence
e	=	error margin
p	=	0.36
q	=	0.64
z	=	1.96
e	=	5% or 0.05
		$\frac{(1.96)^2 \times 0.36 \times 0.64}{(0.05)^2}$
n	=	354

## Sampling Technique

Both cluster and convenience sampling techniques were adopted. In terms of cluster sampling, the researcher distributed copies of questionnaire to customers who came to the three pharmacy stores to purchase drugs. In terms of convenience sampling, copies of questionnaire were administered only to those who accepted to participate in the study both at the pharmacy stores location and in other locations in Ogoja.

## Type and Source of Data

The primary data required in the descriptive study was sourced from customers of the three pharmacy stores in Ogoja.

## Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire based on 5-point Likert Scale was used to collect primary data from the respondents. The questionnaire was vetted and validated by the researcher's supervisor. The instrument's reliability was also verified and confirmed based on Cronbach Alpha Index using SPSS software.

## Analytical Techniques

To analyze data sourced from pharmacy stores customers, tables, frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used, while hypotheses were tested with Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

## Ethics and Permission:

The ethical considerations for this research include the following principles:

**Informed Consent:** All participants who were part of the research are informed of the nature of the study, and they were required to sign a consent form before participating.

**Confidentiality:** The privacy and confidentiality of the participants were upheld. The data collected was treated with strict confidentiality, and participants are not identified by names.

**Data Protection:** Adequate measures were taken to protect the data collected from unauthorized access or manipulation. This includes the encryption of data, storage in



secure locations, and limiting access to authorized personnel only.

Transparency: The research process was transparent, and all participants were informed of the research findings. Additionally, the research report is made available to the public.

Permission was sought from the management of the three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja Cross River

State, on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, 2023 and signed by each stores pharmacist on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, 2023 before conducting this research. The management was informed of the research objectives and how the data will be used. The research work commence only after obtaining written consent from the management of the three selected pharmacy stores.

## RESULTS

### Questionnaire Distribution and Return

**Table 1: Number of copies of Questionnaire Distributed and Returned**

Pharmacy Store	Number Distributed	Number Returned	Number not Returned	Percentage Rate of Return
Hilary Pharmacy	118	106	12	29.9
Odonah Pharmacy	118	110	8	31.1
Emmy Cool Pharmacy	118	108	10	30.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>91.5</b>

**Source: Abua Survey Data, 2023**

A total number of 354 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the three pharmacy customers in Ogoja, Cross River State. Three hundred and twenty four (324) copies were returned well filled, while 30 copies were not returned. This gave a response rate of 91.5 percent.

### Analysis of Patronage Motives Affecting Choice of Pharmacy Stores

**Table 2: Customers' Assessment of Location Attribute as Patronage Motive for Choosing Pharmacy Store**

S/N	Statements on Pharmacy Shop Location	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	The pharmacy store has a convenient location	324	2.8364	.82216	A
2	The pharmacy store is easily accessible to me	324	2.8395	.90690	A
3	The pharmacy store has a parking space	324	2.6852	.78273	A

**Source: Output from SPSS**



Result in Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of customers' assessment of location as a patronage motive for choosing a particular pharmacy store in Ogoja, Cross River State. The mean ratings for items 1, 2, and 3 are above 2.5 set as criterion. The three pharmacy stores have a good location, are easily accessible, and have a parking space. These locations attributes constitute customers' patronage motive for choosing the pharmacy stores.

**Table 3: Customers' Assessment of Drugs Quality as Patronage Motive for Choosing Pharmacy Store**

S/N	Statements on Pharmacy Product Offering	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	The drugs sold in the pharmacy store are reliable and effective	324	2.7469	.88895	A
2	The pharmacy offers variety or assortment of drugs	324	2.8364	.86617	A
3	The drugs I want to buy are always available	324	2.7963	.86299	A

**Source: Output from SPSS**

Result in Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations of customers' assessment of drugs quality as a patronage motive for choosing a particular pharmacy store in Ogoja. The mean ratings for items 1, 2, and 3 are above 2.50 set as criterion. This indicates that drugs quality constitute customers' patronage motive for choosing the three pharmacy stores since the result shows that quality of the drugs offered by the three pharmacy stores are reliable and effective, the stores offer variety or assortment of drugs, and drugs customers want to buy are always available.

**Table 4: Customers' Assessment of Pharmacy Staff Service as Patronage Motive for Choosing Pharmacy Store**

S/N	Statements on Pharmacy Staff Service	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	The pharmacy staff provide prompt service to customers	324	2.9012	.87064	A
2	The pharmacy staff are courteous friendly and helpful	324	2.8395	.79014	A
3	The pharmacy staff are competent and effective	324	2.7593	.82384	A

**Source: Output from SPSS**

Result in Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations of customers' assessment of pharmacy staff service as a patronage motive for choosing a particular pharmacy store in Ogoja. The mean ratings for items 1, 2, and 3 are above 2.50 set as criterion. This indicates



that the customers' patronage motive for choosing the three pharmacy stores is because the pharmacy staffs provides prompt service to customers, are courteous, friendly and helpful, and are competent and effective in performing their medical service.

**Table 5: Customers' Assessment of Price as Patronage Motive for Choosing Pharmacy Store.**

S/N	Statements on Pharmacy Pricing	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	The pharmacy store sells drugs at low prices	324	2.7068	.77329	A
2	The pharmacy store sells drugs at moderate prices	324	2.7006	.87263	A
3	The pharmacy store sell drugs at prices lower than its competitors	324	2.6512	.85765	A

**Source: Output from SPSS**

Result in Table 5 shows the means and standard deviations of customers' assessment of price as a patronage motive for choosing a particular pharmacy store in Ogoja. The mean ratings for items 1, 2, and 3 are above 2.50 set as criterion. This indicates that price constitutes customers' patronage motive for choosing the three pharmacy stores. The result shows that the pharmacy stores sell drugs at low or moderate prices or at prices lower than those offered by other competitors.

**Table 6: Customers' Assessment of Store Atmosphere Patronage Motive for Choosing Pharmacy Store**

S/N	Statements on Pharmacy Atmosphere	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	The pharmacy store is clean and neat	324	2.8086	.83673	A
2	The pharmacy staff are well dressed and neat	324	2.7963	.87369	A
3	Drugs are well organized and displayed in the pharmacy store	324	2.7500	.81158	A

**Source: Output from SPSS**

Result in Table 6 shows the means and standard deviations of customers' assessment of store atmosphere as a patronage motive for choosing a particular pharmacy store in Ogoja. The mean ratings for items 1, 2, and 3 are above 2.50 set as criterion. This indicates that store atmosphere constitutes customers' patronage motive for choosing the three pharmacy stores in Ogoja. The analysis result shows that the three pharmacy stores are clean and neat, the pharmacy staffs are well dressed and neat, and drugs are well organized and displayed in the stores.



**Table 7: Assessment of Customers' Choice of the three Pharmacy Stores in Ogoja**

S/N	Statements on Pharmacy Choice	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Decision
1	I will buy from this pharmacy store any time I want to buy drugs	324	2.8348	.86612	A
2	I will continue to buy drugs from this pharmacy store in the near future	324	2.7963	.86299	A
3	I say positive things about this pharmacy	324	2.7963	.86299	A
4	I will recommend this pharmacy store to others who will seek my advice	324	2.9012	.87064	A

**Source: Output from SPSS**

Result in table 7 shows the means and standard deviations of assessment of customers' choice of the three pharmacy stores in Ogoja. The means showing customers agreement to items 1, 2, 3, and 4 are above 2.50 set as criterion. This result suggests that the customers will buy from the three pharmacy stores any time they want to buy drugs, they will continue to buy from the pharmacy stores in the near future, they say positive things about the pharmacy stores to their friends, colleagues, and relatives, and they will recommend the pharmacy stores to others who may seek their advice.

**Test of Hypotheses****Hypotheses One**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Store location has no significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

**H<sub>A1</sub>:** Store location has significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

**Table 8: ANOVA of the significant effect of Store location patronage motive on consumers' choice for three pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.274	3	3.091	4.732	.003
Within Groups	209.056	320	.653		
<b>Total</b>	<b>218.330</b>	<b>323</b>			

**Source: Output from SPSS**

Result in table 8 shows the ANOVA result of the significant difference in the mean ratings effect of location patronage motive on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State. Result shows that an f-ratio of 4.732 was obtained with a

probability value of 0.03. This probability value was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance and it was found to be significant. This means that hypothesis one which stated that store location has no significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State is not accepted. The alternate hypothesis is therefore accepted. Our conclusion is that store location patronage motive has significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

## Hypotheses Two

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Drugs quality has no significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacystores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

**H<sub>A2</sub>:** Drugs quality has significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

**Table 9: ANOVA of the significant difference in the mean ratings of drug quality patronage motive on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.535	3	3.512	4.592	.004
Within Groups	244.712	320	.765		
Total	255.247	323			

## Source: Output from SPSS

Result in table 9 shows the ANOVA result of the significant difference in the mean ratings effect of drug quality patronage motive on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State. Result shows that an f-ratio of 4.592 was obtained with a probability value of 0.04. This probability value was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance and it was found to be significant. This means that hypothesis two which stated that drugs quality patronage motive has no significant positive effect on consumers' choice for three pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State is not accepted. The alternate hypothesis is therefore accepted. The conclusion is that drugs quality patronage motive has significant positive effect on consumers' choice for three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

## Hypotheses Three

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Pharmacy service staff patronage motive has no significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State

**H<sub>A3</sub>:** Pharmacy staff service has significant positive effect on consumer' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

**Table 10: ANOVA of the significant difference in the mean ratings effect of pharmacy staff service patronage motive on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State**



	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	18.857	3	6.286	8.901	.000
Within Groups	225.982	320	.706		
<b>Total</b>	<b>244.840</b>	<b>323</b>			

#### Source: Output from SPSS

Result in table 10 shows the ANOVA result of the significant difference in the mean ratings effect of pharmacy staff service patronage motive on consumers' choice for three pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State. Result shows that an f-ratio of 8.901 was obtained with a probability value of 0.00. This probability value was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance and it was found to be significant. This means that hypothesis two which stated that pharmacy staff service has no significant positive effect on consumers' choice for three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State is not accepted. The alternate hypothesis is therefore accepted. The conclusion is that pharmacy staff service patronage motive has significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

#### Hypotheses Four

**H<sub>04</sub>:** Price has no significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected

Pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State

**H<sub>A4</sub>:** Price has significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

**Table 11: ANOVA of the significant difference in the mean ratings of price patronage motive on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.493	3	1.498	2.540	.050
Within Groups	188.652	320	.590		
<b>Total</b>	<b>193.145</b>	<b>323</b>			

#### Source: Output from SPSS

Result in table 11 shows the ANOVA result of the significant difference in the mean ratings effect of price patronage motive on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State. Result shows that an f-ratio of 2.540 was obtained with a probability value of 0.05. This probability value was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance and it was found to be significant. This means that hypothesis two which stated that price has no significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State is not accepted. The alternate hypothesis is therefore accepted. The conclusion is that price has significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.



## Hypotheses Five

**H<sub>05</sub>:** Store atmosphere has no significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

**H<sub>A5</sub>:** Store atmosphere has significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

**Table 12: ANOVA of the significant difference in the mean ratings effect of store atmosphere patronage motive on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	28.280	3	9.427	15.246	.000
Within Groups	197.856	320	.618		
<b>Total</b>	<b>226.136</b>	<b>323</b>			

### Source: Output from SPSS

Result in table 12 shows the ANOVA result of the significant difference in the mean ratings effect of store patronage motive on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State. Result shows that an f-ratio of 15.246 was obtained with a probability value of 0.00. This probability value was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance and it was found to be significant. This means that hypothesis two which stated that store atmosphere has no significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State is not accepted. The alternate hypothesis is therefore accepted. Our conclusion is that store atmosphere patronage motive has significant positive effect on consumers' choice of three selected pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State.

## Discussion of Findings

This study was undertaken in Ogoja, Cross River State to assess the effect of patronage motives on consumers' choice of pharmacy stores. Specifically, five patronage motives were examined to verify their effect on customers' choice of pharmacy stores. The results from data analysis are discussed in this section.

From the data analysis, the indicators of location that have effect on consumers' choice of pharmacy store include convenient location, accessibility of the pharmacy store, and availability of parking space. The test of hypothesis one indicates that location patronage motive has significant positive effect on consumers' choice of the three pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State. This finding

conforms to what Merks et. al.<sup>29</sup> found in their study that location of pharmacy stores influence choice of a community pharmacy in both Poland and UK. Kevrekidis<sup>32</sup> in his study on community pharmacy customer segmentation conducted in Thessalonika also found out that pharmacy location was one of the patronage motives that influence choice of pharmacy stores. Additionally, Ghattas and Al-Abdailam<sup>33</sup> established in their study that convenience in terms of location impacted positively on consumers' choice of community pharmacy stores.

The indicators of quality of drugs analyzed in the study include variety or assortment of drugs offered by the pharmacy store, reliability and efficacy of the drugs and availability of the drugs required by consumers. From data analysis, the result showed that drugs quality patronage



motive has significant positive effect on consumers' choice of the three pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State. This result is the same with the finding of Rehova, Dimova, Atanasova and Ranyelova<sup>34</sup> in their study on consumer preference for pharmacy in a highly competitive environment in which they confirmed that product range or variety among other factors impact on choice and loyalty to pharmacy stores. Similarly, Merks et al.<sup>29</sup> found in their comparative study in Poland and UK that good quality medicines influence choice or selection of pharmacy stores by consumers.

The indicators of pharmacy staff service as analyzed in the study include provision of prompt service to customers, courtesy, friendliness and helpfulness of the pharmacy staff, and competency and effectiveness of the staff. The test of hypothesis three capturing these variables indicated that pharmacy staff service has significant positive effect on consumers' choice of the three pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State. This finding is in tandem with what Ghattas and Al-Abdallam<sup>33</sup> found in their study. They established that customer services had the highest effect on customer selection of pharmacies in the city of Amman. Franic, Haddock, Tucker and Wooten (2008) also found that one of the critical factors influencing choice of pharmacy stores in Georgia is attributes of pharmacist and staff especially in terms of their service to customers. Nitadpakom, Farris and Kittiscope<sup>31</sup> found that professional service performed by pharmacy staff influenced consumers in their prior engagement which ultimately led to their devotion to a pharmacy store.

The indicators of price variable analyzed in the study include selling at low prices by the pharmacy store, selling at moderate prices, and selling at prices lower than those of competitors. The test performed on hypothesis four established that price

has significant positive effect on consumers' choice of the three pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State. A similar finding was made by Nikolova et al.<sup>30</sup> in their study in Varna. They reported that customers' choice and loyalty to a particular pharmacy in Varna was influenced by low prices charged on their products. Kevrekidis (2018) also found out that price was a salient patronage motive that influenced choice of pharmacy stores. The price level was also confirmed by Rehova et al.<sup>34</sup> as an important patronage motive that impacts on choice and loyalty towards pharmacy stores.

The indicators of store atmosphere as analyzed in this study include cleanliness and neatness of pharmacy store, pharmacy staff being well dressed and neat, and drugs marketed being well organized and displayed in the pharmacy store. The test of hypothesis five capturing these indicators shows that pharmacy atmosphere has significant positive effect on consumers' choice of the three pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State. This finding is in agreement with that made by Ghattas and Al-Abdallam<sup>33</sup> who established in their study of community pharmacies in Amman that physical environment impacted positively on consumers' decision to choose a community pharmacy store in the city of Amman.

### Strength of the study

This study has relevance for various groups. First the pharmacy stores operating in Ogoja and other places will benefit as the outcome of the study will help them to improve their provision of products and healthcare services to customers, thereby attaining enhanced profitability and business growth.

The findings and recommendations of the study will equally be of benefit to consumers since they will receive

enhanced value and satisfaction as the pharmacy stores integrate their patronage motives into their retail store strategies.

The stock of literature information relating to patronage motives and consumers' choice of pharmacy stores will be increased and this will become available to academics and researchers who may undertake research related to the current study.

### Limitations of the study:

**Limited geographical scope:** The study focuses only on one specific area within Ogoja, it may not capture the diverse experiences and perspectives of consumers in other parts of Cross River State. This could limit the applicability of the findings to a broader context.

**Self-reporting bias:** As this study likely involves collecting data through surveys, there is a risk of participants providing inaccurate or biased responses. This could affect the reliability and validity of the findings.

### Conclusion

This study was undertaken to assess the effect of patronage motives on consumers' choice of Hilary, Odonah, and Emmy Cool Pharmacy Stores in Ogoja, Cross River State. Primary data collected from customers on their assessment of pharmacy location, drugs quality, pharmacy staff service, price, store atmosphere, and choice of pharmacy store were subjected to statistical analyses. The test of hypotheses based on Analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical technique established that location, drugs quality, pharmacy staff service, price and store atmosphere have significant positive effect on consumers' choice of the three

pharmacy stores. In other words, these store attributes constitute the salient patronage motives for consumers' choice of the three pharmacy stores in Ogoja, Cross River State. The implication of the findings is that the management of the three pharmacy stores must integrate these patronage motives in their retail store strategies to sustain customers' choice and loyalty to the stores.

### Recommendations

The current locations of the pharmacy stores should be well managed and controlled especially the parking space. As the pharmacy business grows and expands, new branches of the pharmacy store should be opened and sited in convenient and accessible locations to attract or capture customers' patronage.

The stores should purchase and stock variety or assortment of drugs and other products to ensure that the exact brands of products desired or recommended by doctors for patients are available.

The pharmacy staff should continue to upgrade and update their professional skills and competence to ensure that they provide satisfactory service and value to customers.

The pharmacy stores should sustain or enhance their competitive position through adopting appropriate pricing strategies that appeal to customers such as low and moderate prices or periodically using sales promotional prices.

The store atmosphere and physical environment should be made appealing and attractive. Re-organization of the in-store space could be effected to make it better. Both inside and outside of the store should be kept impeccably clean and neat.



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