

Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction? A Case Study of Watsons's Personal Care Store in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Watsons's Personal Care Store has been Asia's top health and beauty retailer since 1828, which strives to satisfy customers' expectations through marketing strategies. Approximately three billion customers shop both in stores and online every year. To remain competitive in the retail business, Watsons is constantly seeking efficient ways to satisfy customers' needs while also overcoming the growing competition's challenges. This study's objective is to determine whether service quality, perceived trust, perceived convenience, and product pricing significantly correlate with customer satisfaction, which may lead to customer loyalty. This research examines approximately 150 Watsons's customers from Malaysia. The respondents were asked to answer a questionnaire via Google Form that researchers have spread through online platforms. SPSS was used to analyze our data. Once the data had been collected, the results from the respondents were expected that service quality does affect customer loyalty and satisfaction. Our results indicate that service quality, perceived trust, perceived convenience, and product pricing have a significant relationship with customer satisfaction. Additionally, customer satisfaction has an approximately complete mediating effect on customer loyalty. The findings will reveal new perspectives on customer satisfaction with Watsons's Personal Care Store.

Keywords: Customer Loyalty, Customer Satisfaction, Malaysia, Retail Industry, Service Quality, Watsons's Personal Care Store

INTRODUCTION

Retailing comprises all operations required to market consumer goods and services to final consumers who purchase for personal or family needs. As a barometer of the economy's health, the retail industry is often recognized as one of the most important for a country's economy. Retail is one of the first industries to collapse during a recession, with immediate drops in consumption and revenue leading to job losses. Analysts often cite the retail industry as an instance of all the other advantages that may be expected from using big data, making it an excellent environment for such a discussion (Dekimpe, 2020). For many years, Malaysia's retail industry was a major source of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Watsons's Personal Care Store has been successful in Malaysia, with various retail locations. However, despite numerous new store openings and a vast retail network, Watsons's Personal Care Store experienced a sluggish growth rate during the research period due to the COVID-19 outbreak, which dropped dramatically in 2019.

Customer satisfaction and loyalty are critical components of a company and its products. Customer satisfaction is a primary business characteristic in sustaining an organization (Yo et al., 2021). Perceived service quality affects the customer's mind, according to Mehta and Tariq (2020). Consumer satisfaction is driven by the same desire to succeed economically as is the pursuit of economic success. Because of this, customer satisfaction serves as an important business indicator (Avgeli, Smarianakis, & Sotiriades, 2020). Moreover, the degree to which a customer is satisfied with the goods and services offered is influenced by their interactions or experiences with the company. Customer satisfaction may be expressed in a variety of ways, along with contentment with the primary contact, pleasure with the service, and pleasure with the business.

Customer loyalty is a very important priority for the company to be solid and competitive. Customer satisfaction can be achieved when consumers' expectations can be adequately met (Pandey et al., 2021). A high level of customer satisfaction can impact consumer loyalty and set the company apart from its competitors. This could help companies avoid the negative consequences of bad customer service, like customer defection and bad word of mouth (Szyndlar, 2023). Several factors, such as service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty, are interdependent and must be evaluated as a whole. Almost all businesses face the same fundamental challenge when attempting to run a successful enterprise in determining how to accommodate and meet the demands and desires of the consumer. This is consistent with Watsons' mission, which is to achieve Watsons' purpose "*To put a smile on our customers' faces*" and "*To deliver our promise, we bring More to Life*" to the customers, colleagues, communities, and shareholders. It involves developing a reputation for surpassing consumer expectations and then maintaining a top position in the wellness, cosmetics, and style retail market.

Watsons cares about its work environment, and they need to be positive to help its customers feel good and comfortable to improve its service quality. Service quality is something that companies do to meet the expectations of consumers. Moreover, service is defined as something the service provider offers as a representation of easiness, speed, and hospitableness shown through attitude in meeting customer expectations (Prasilowati, Suyanto, Safitri, & Wardani, 2021). Watsons has made some service improvements to improve their customer satisfaction. For instance, they trained employees to provide the best service, such as telling their customers what is best for customer needs. Additionally, Watsons's physical and online stores are open daily to provide the best service for their consumers. Recent studies have demonstrated that there may be systemic differences in the behavior and perceptions of consumers who choose online or offline services (Pei, Guo, Wu, Ahou, & Yeh, 2020). Watsons's mission is to be appointed as the top worldwide healthcare, wellness, and beauty retailer, a goal that is accomplished through various efforts to provide the best customer service.

Background of Watsons's Personal Care Store

Health and beauty products can be found at Watsons's Personal Care Store, which was established in 1828 by the U.S. Watsons Group. There are 8,100 Watsons stores and over 1,500 pharmacies in 16 Asian and European countries, including Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates, Macau, the Philippines, Turkey, Ukraine, and Russia. In Johor Bahru's Holiday Plaza, Watsons's Personal Care Stores (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd was established in 1994. An important accomplishment for Watsons in the pharmacy industry was acquiring the 18-location Apex Pharmacy chain in 2005. A quarter of a century after it was founded, Watsons Malaysia has more than 600 stores and serves more than 6 million customers daily (The Star, 2021).

Watsons carries over 200 international cosmetics, skincare, and hair care brands. In addition to Target Pro by Watsons, nearly half of its products will be available exclusively through Watsons. This company offers customized assistance and counseling in healthcare, wellness, and beauty, in addition to its market-leading product lines, in an attempt to create a benchmark in the healthcare, wellness and beauty retail industry by enhancing its customers' "*Look Good, Do Good, Feel Great*" experiences. Campaign Asia- "*Top Pacific's Asia's 1,000 Brands*" has placed the brand as the No. 1 drugstore since 2009.

This research aims to determine whether perceived trust, perceived convenience, and product pricing significantly correlate with customer satisfaction, which influences customer loyalty. The roles of perceived trust, perceived convenience, and product pricing as factors will be examined in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction encompasses a customer's perceptions, evaluations, and emotional responses to a product or service experience. Thus, it is possible to assert that happiness is relative. Consumers may only determine a product's level of satisfaction by using or consuming it (Benoit, Kienzler, & Kowalkowski, 2020). When there are non-standard expectations for each advertised product, customer satisfaction becomes a dynamic that marketers find intriguing. Additionally, consumer satisfaction refers to the consumer's experience throughout the purchasing decision-making process. Customer satisfaction is an essential aspect of the business world, as it is directly proportional to the success of Watsons. Customer satisfaction could also be described as how well customers' opinions of their buying experience match their

desires. Customer satisfaction data can be used to determine not to strengthen or modify the service and product for customers (Tang et al., 2022). Customers' purchasing behavior is influenced when their expectations are met. In contrast, discontent is negatively correlated with these four variables. The satisfaction of customers and the quality of services provided are the parts of a company's marketing strategy that are the most significant, which lead to customer loyalty. For the company to remain robust and competitive, maintaining the loyalty of its customers is a fundamental objective. Customer satisfaction may be attained if customers' expectations are satisfied effectively (Pandey et al., 2021).

Service Quality

Numerous publications have widely acknowledged the significance of service quality to business performance. It is a subjective and intricate concept with distinguishing characteristics that distinguish it from Watsons's product. Due to intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability, service quality differs from the products. Service quality was defined as evaluating how well delivered services meet customer expectations (Gaunker & Gaonkar, 2020). Another research has looked at service quality components that significantly impact real quality evaluation in the field. Regional, national, and international revenue for Watsons's Personal Care Stores is becoming increasingly reliant on services that are viewed as revenue-generating. Watsons's current ability to gain a competitive edge and increase its competitive strength is contingent on the calibre of its services. In addition, Watsons's customer service quality concerning service acquisition is not merely quantified and conceptualized. Since Watsons's customers' interests and assumptions about goods continually evolve, the goods' value should also be updated or modified. Product's quality is proportionate to its price, resulting in customer loyalty. Watsons should develop a positive reputation for the quality of service in order to attract potential consumers and enhance service quality to keep present clients. Improving all parts of service quality to accomplish customer-perceived service quality is the way to accomplish the objective to generating and maintaining customer loyalty (Pérez-Morón et al., 2022). Watsons must consistently improve its service quality to gain a competitive advantage, and customer satisfaction will help it generate its revenue by providing quality service (Ogiemwonyi et al., 2020). This will lead to customer loyalty.

H1: Service quality is positively related to customer satisfaction.

Perceived Trust

All social relationships would disintegrate or function improperly in the absence of trust. Trust is when one side in a transaction is persuaded of the other's trustworthiness and honesty. Trust could impact the urge to engage in purchase behavior by increasing favorable impressions of consumer engagement regarding service quality and customer satisfaction (Lăzăroiu, Neguriță, Grecu, Grecu, & Mitran, 2020). Customer satisfaction is an accurate predictor of perceived trust. This transdisciplinary character has resulted in a plethora of research on trust. Many fields, including business, distribution, economics, and tourism, are increasingly interested in perceived trust. The concept of trust is currently described as a multi-dimensional quality that includes emotional, intellectual, and behavioral aspects, as well as a single-dimensional attribute along with an attitude, conviction, or anticipation (Park, 2021). In terms of customer loyalty, the customer's trust is the most important factor in distribution because it positively influences their purchasing decisions and behavioral intent. Company trust is the socio-psychological state of placing one's faith in others who are at risk (Natalya, Cho, & Lee, 2020). Long-lasting and dependable interpersonal relationships demand a high level of trust.

Therefore, the following hypotheses were presented in this study:

H2: Perceived trust is positively related to customer satisfaction.

Perceived Convenience

Customers' impressions of the effort and time necessary to obtain or use a service are referred to as perceived convenience in a service-based economy. The four dimensions of purchasing convenience that drives consumer loyalty and retention in retail are decision, accessibility, search, transactions, and after-sales convenience. The greater the level of customer satisfaction in retail establishments, the greater the convenience felt by consumers. Therefore, customer satisfaction with an online retailer will positively influence their purchasing behavior. Furthermore, ownership is the most important factor in determining perceived convenience. This research identifies various factors, including selection convenience, accessibility convenience, easiness, gain convenience, and post-benefit convenience in Watsons. A service company may prioritize offering convenience to its consumers to boost customer experience and perceptions of service quality. Yo et al. (2021) reported that perceived convenience is positively related to online customer satisfaction. Therefore, this research hypothesizes:

H3: Perceived convenience is positively related to customer satisfaction.

Product Pricing

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2020), the only component of the mix marketing that produces revenue is pricing; every other factor is a reflection of expenses. There are four dimensions to the price: affordability, price conformance with product quality, price compliance with product benefits, and power-based price or purchasing power. Pricing is an effective strategy to persuading price-sensitive consumers to acquire a product at a lower price or to receive greater value for their money. Buyers usually look for low prices so they can purchase many goods with the money they have. On the other side, the seller seeks a high price in order to generate a substantial profit (Prasilowati, Suyanto, Safitri, & Wardani, 2021). Customers will consider the prices paid by other consumers, as nobody desires to pay more than others. Since a customer attentively evaluates the cost-effectiveness of a product, pricing is a significant factor in customer satisfaction, leading to customer loyalty. Pricing will affect customers' perceptions and, ultimately, their purchasing decisions. In conclusion, it is hypothesized that:

H4: Product pricing is positively related to customer satisfaction.

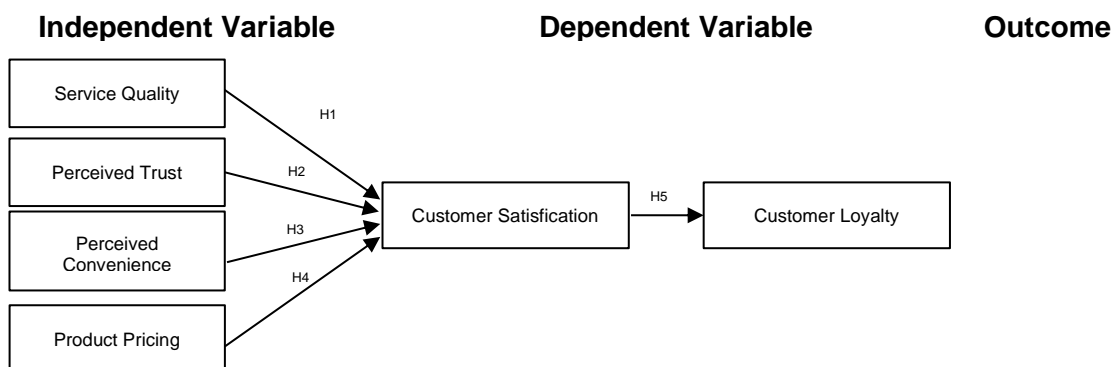
Customer Loyalty

This research has highlighted a number of factors that can lead to customer loyalty, with customer satisfaction being one of the most significant. Employees' ability to convey trust and confidence has been proven to be a significant factor in customer loyalty. There are a variety of ways to define the concept of customer loyalty. According to Ranade (2020), customer loyalty is the continued perspective on a company's services or goods. Customer loyalty will endure for a long time if suppliers make their customers feel valued and implement their suggestions. Loyal customers not only contribute to a company's growth in Watsons but also provide competitive advantages and augment their value. It encourages consumers to purchase products with greater stability if customer satisfaction is high. Customers who are devoted to a single product or provider also recommend that product or business to others. Emotional satisfaction is also necessary to increase customer satisfaction because it expands the company's customer base. A study argues that a stronger customer base can be developed by handling customer complaints more effectively, and the company's profitability can be increased.

H5: Customer satisfaction is positively related to customer loyalty.

The objective of this research is to investigate the connection between service quality, perceived trust, perceived convenience, and product pricing. Moreover, this study suggests that customer loyalty is the result of customer satisfaction. Figure 1 is an illustration of the research model that we use.

Figure 1. Our Research Model



RESEARCH METHOD

An online survey has conducted among Watsons’s customers from Malaysia. This survey questionnaire was used to explore Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction in Watsons. This survey included a sample size of 150 Malaysian Watsons consumers. A Google Survey Form questionnaire was used to gather the data. In addition, we utilize SPSS software to analyze the collected data.

Measure

This survey has eight sections: demographics, brand awareness, service quality, perceived trust, customer loyalty, perceived convenience, product pricing, and customer satisfaction. Each of these factors is included in the survey. Customers’ satisfaction was measured on a Likert scale, with “1” indicating strongly disagree and “5” indicating strongly agree.

Demographic Characteristics

One statement item is used to gather information about the respondents’ gender, ethnicity, age range, and educational attainment, as well as their employment 98tat us and their personal monthly income.

Brand Awareness

This section contains a series of multiple-choice questions designed to assess brand recognition for Watsons’s Personal Care Store in Malaysia. An example of a questionnaire is “Have you heard about Watsons’s Personal Care Store before?”. “Have you purchased at Watsons’s Personal Care Store before?”. “How often do you go to Watsons’s Personal Care Store?” and “How do you know about Watsons’s Personal Care Store?”.

Service Quality

Watsons's Personal Care Stores devised a three-point scale to measure customer satisfaction. The two main components of service quality are customers' expectations and a company's ability to deliver on those expectations. A business that delivers high-quality service is more likely to be willing to fulfill its customers' requirements while being financially viable. The items are based on feedback from customers about their experiences with Watsons.

Perceived Trust

Perceived trust was measured using a four-item scale we devised. To gauge their level of confidence in the perceived service, participants were asked to answer four statements. Based on the number of purchases customers have made and their faith in the values of Watsons, the measurement scales were created based on Watsons consumers' comfort levels when making purchases at Watsons.

Customer Loyalty

According to Fatmawati and Fauzan (2021), customer loyalty plays an important role in maintaining company competitiveness. This research created 4-item scale to assess customer loyalty at Watsons's Personal Care Store. Here are some examples of sample items: "I will add Watsons's Personal Care Store as one of my favorite retail stores", "I will choose and shop at Watsons's Personal Care Store frequently in the future", "I intend to continue buying products from Watsons's Personal Care Store in the future", and "I intend to recommend Watsons's Personal Care Store to my friends".

Perceived Convenience

Convenience is a term used to describe how customers feel about their shopping experience at Watsons's. This research devised a four-item scale to measure how easy it is to use the product. Based on factors such as Watsons's ability to meet customers' needs, Watsons's proximity to customers' homes and whether Watsons's customers feel safe and secure making purchases in Watsons's Personal Care Store, the scale items were developed.

Product Pricing

To determine whether Watsons' product prices are fair, this research devised a five-point scale. To determine whether Watsons' product prices are fair, this research devised a five-point scale. The price of a product or service is the amount it costs. Consumer willingness to pay is a major factor in determining a product's retail price (Twin, 2021). On the basis of the price and quality of products, whether Watsons' prices are lower than those of other retail stores, and whether Watsons has a high-discount promotion during its event, the scale items were developed.

Customer Satisfaction

Watsons customers' satisfaction was measured on a four-item scale. When it comes to a customer's overall experience, including their satisfaction with the product and the service, customer satisfaction is the metric to use. On the basis of Watsons' quality of products and customer satisfaction, as well as the recommendation of Watsons to others, scale items were created.

RESULTS

Table 1. Summary of Respondent's Demography (N = 150)

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	54	36
Female	96	64
Ethnicity		
Malay	91	60.7
Chinese	32	21.3
Indian	22	14.7
Siamese	2	1.3
Punjabi	1	0.7
Dusun	1	0.7
Bajau Suluk (Bumiputera Sabah)	1	0.7
Age		
Age 10-25 (Gen Z: Born 1997-2012)	130	86.7
Age 26-41 (Millennials: Born 1981-1996)	15	10
Age 42-57 (Gen X: Born 1965-1980)	4	2.7
Age 58-76 (Boomers: Born 1946-1964)	1	0.7
Education Level		
Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia	14	9.3
Diploma/ Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia / Foundation/ Matriculation / A-Level	33	22
Bachelor's Degree	96	64
Master's Degree	6	4
Doctoral Degree	1	0.7
Employment Status		
Student	131	87.3
Employed	14	9.3
Unemployed	0	0
Self-Employed	5	3.3
Retired	0	0
Personal Monthly Income		
No income	122	81.3
RM1,000 and below	6	4
RM1,001-RM3,000	9	6
RM3,001-RM5,000	10	6.7
Above RM5,000	3	2

The Respondent Demographics of Watsons's Personal Care Stores are summarized in Table 1. Most respondents (64 percent) are females between the ages of 10 and 25. (86.7 percent). In terms of ethnicity, many respondents are Malay (60.7%), and the vast majority are still students (87.3%) pursuing bachelor's degrees (64 percent). In addition, the Personal Monthly Income of 81.3% of respondents has no income.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Coefficients Alpha, and Zero-order Correlations of All Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Service Quality	0.774					
Perceived Trust	0.519**	0.781				
Perceived Convenience	0.578**	0.541**	0.755			
Product Pricing	0.583**	0.650**	0.711**	0.866		
Customer Satisfaction	0.614**	0.625**	0.704**	0.774**	0.837	
Customer Loyalty	0.519**	0.739**	0.635**	0.700**	0.699**	0.838**
Mean	10.231	14.235	14.455	18.121	14.35	14.285
Standard Deviation	1.318	1.966	1.744	2.62	1.83	1.965
No. of Items	3	4	4	4	5	4

Note: N = 150; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0,001; Diagonal entries in bold indicate Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha

Table 2 shows the factors' means, standard deviations, correlations, and Cronbach alpha for the factors. The correlation between variables was analyzed by using Pearson product-moment correlation. An approach for assessing the effectiveness of a survey question is reliability, although it is a variable indicator. The coefficient alpha for the four independent variables ranges from 0.75 to 0.86, which is greater than 0.70, indicating that all variables have a relatively high level of internal consistency reliability. For all variables, the minimum Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.519, and the maximum is 0.774, which are all greater than 0. This implies that two variables have a positive correlation, meaning that a rise in the value of one variable would guide to a rise in the value of the another.

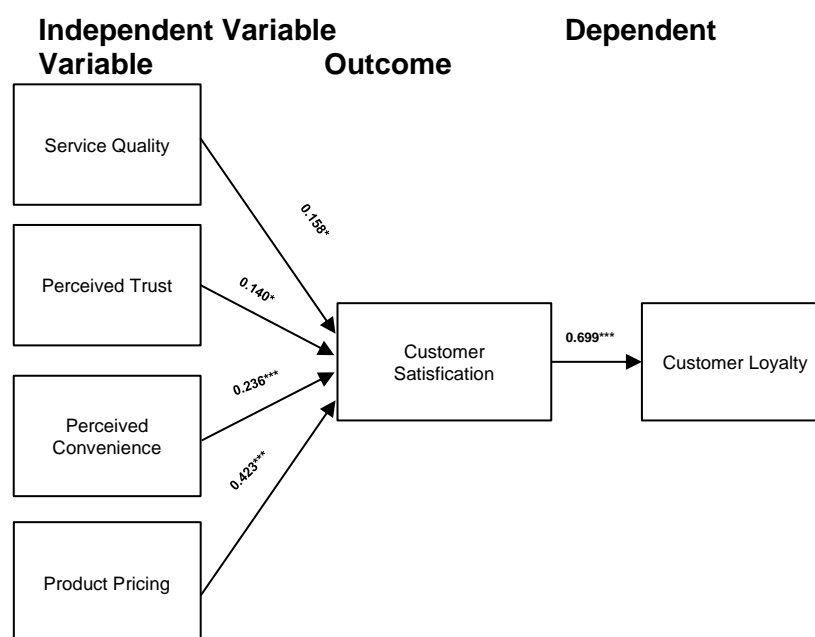
Table 3. Summary of Regression Analysis

Variables	Customer Satisfaction	Customer Loyalty
Service Quality	0.158*	
Perceived Trust	0.140*	
Perceived Convenience	0.236***	
Product Pricing	0.423***	
Customer Satisfaction		0.699***
R ²	0.67	0.49
F value	76.506	141.677
Durbin-Watsons Statistic	1.832	1.919
Note: N = 150, *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001		

Based on the result of multiple regression analysis, the beta coefficients among the independent and dependent variables are listed in Table 3. Service quality, perceived trust, perceived convenience, and product pricing all influence customer satisfaction at Watsons's Personal Care Store, with standardized coefficient beta values of 0.158, 0.140, 0.236, and 0.423, respectively; the beta value for customer satisfaction and customer loyalty is 0.69.

Customer satisfaction is the dependent variable, whereas service quality, perceived trust, perceived convenience, and product pricing are the independent variables. The initial R-squared value is 0.67, or 67 percent. Furthermore, customer loyalty serving as the dependent variable and customer satisfaction serving as the independent variable, the R-squared value is 0.49, or 49%. When these two R-squared values are compared, the model with the best fit to the data has an R-squared value of 0.67. Customer satisfaction has a F value of 76.506, whereas customer loyalty has a F value of 141.677. Customer satisfaction and loyalty have Durbin-Watsons values of 1.832 and 1.919, respectively. Both of these values remain between 0 and 2, suggesting a positive autocorrelation in the sample.

Figure 2. Hypothesized Model



The interdependencies between all dependent and independent variables are depicted in Figure 2. Customer satisfaction is the dependent variable, whereas service quality, perceived trust, perceived convenience, and product pricing are the independent variable. Customer loyalty is a result of customer satisfaction. Hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 are accepted based on the importance of all analysis results. Service quality, perceived trust, perceived convenience, product pricing, and customer loyalty all had beta values of 0.158, 0.140, 0.236, 0.423, and 0.423, respectively, indicating a positive association between independent and dependent variables.

DISCUSSION

Service quality, perceived trust, perceived convenience, and product pricing are all factors that influence customer satisfaction and loyalty at Watsons's Personal Care Store in Malaysia. A regression analysis was used to evaluate our hypothesis. Figure 2 shows the research's independent variables, which include service quality, perceived trust, customer loyalty, perceived convenience, and product pricing, as well as the dependent variable, customer satisfaction, which would be influenced by these independent variables. Customer loyalty leads to customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction has the biggest impact on customer loyalty since the standardized beta coefficient has the largest absolute value. Customer satisfaction is the dependent variable, while service quality, perceived trust, perceived convenience, and product pricing are the independent ones. High customer satisfaction is correlated with higher service of quality, whereas low customer satisfaction has the opposite effect at Watsons's Personal Care Store would result in a decrease in customer loyalty. Realizing that the relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality are reciprocal relationship and inseparable where every company needs to pay attention to both sides. Giving the best products and services to each customer would lead Watsons' customers feel satisfied with the brand, which is beneficial for the company.

Therefore, it is strongly suggested to provide outstanding customer service. Excellent service can help to create customers for life. The administration of Watsons should solicit customer feedback or determine their needs to fulfil their request. In addition, Watsons should thank customers for their business with special offers and discounts. To increase conversion rates, the special offer or discount must be relevant to each consumer's needs. Always try to make them feel valued, regardless of the approach you choose.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the most important factors in determining customer satisfaction with Watsons products and services are perceived ease of use and accessibility. Customer satisfaction is based on service quality, perceived trust and convenience, and product pricing, according to data research. Most customers who are already purchasing at Watsons for further than a year will not consider to change to another health and beauty retailer, according to our research, make up the vast majority of those who responded. The vast majority of those who took the survey are eager to spread the word about Watsons and plan to visit the store again in the future. Maintaining and improving customer satisfaction is more cost-effective and less time-consuming than acquiring new customers.

Every business wants to have a long-term connection with its customers. Customer satisfaction has a huge influence on overall business operations and should be acknowledged to attract new consumers. In order to operate a successful business, the Watsons must understand what their customers want and how to earn their loyalty. Among a firm's most precious assets is customer loyalty. They provide a steady cash flow, consistent recommendations, and strong social proof, which are essential to the success of any business. Customer serves a significant aspect in the market chain process.

LIMITATION

We faced limitations when doing this project where we were required to search for references in the range of 3 years article or journal which are between 2020-2022 only. Thus, limited references available as few journals were published during the year.

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N/A

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest.

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