

DIRECTIONS FOR INCREASING THE PHARMACY'S COMPETITIVENESS

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Competitiveness is the characteristic or ability of any company or organization to achieve its mission and goals more successfully than competing organizations. In business, competitiveness can be defined as the ability to deliver better value to customers than competitors. According to the theoretical economics, five competitive forces influence each industry: threat of new entrants, power of suppliers, power of buyers, availability of substitutes, and competitive rivalry in the industry. A key part of any business activity is the search for sustainable competitive advantage that is difficult to copy or neutralized.

The aim of this work is to analyze directions for increasing the competitiveness of a pharmacy.

In each country, many independent pharmacies and pharmacy networks offer approximately the same set of goods and services, that is, they are interchangeable. In such conditions, it is important to find durable competitive advantages and develop them to form customer loyalty. Competitive advantage is a function of positioning a pharmacy innovation's relative to competitors. Many factors can provide a competitive advantage for a pharmacy. It can be favorable location, wide and deep product range, services, good prices, marketing support, good management, customer relations, innovative technologies and so on.

Each owner of the pharmacy dreams about its favorable location, for example in a densely populated area of the city or a shopping center. In the first case, the assortment of the pharmacy can be aimed at the local population, patients with chronic diseases, and mothers with children. In the second situation, it is advisable to offer low-cost premium products, cosmetics, hair care products, etc. In the case of locations near specialized hospitals, the pharmacy's product range should meet the specific needs of individual patient groups (e.g., gynecological, urological, or cardiac patients). The service of booking goods on the pharmacy website with the subsequent delivery of the order to the patient's home allows to expand the geography of the pharmacy's customers, although it requires additional costs.

The pharmacies are most appreciated by customers because of attractive offers (discounts), special offers (loyalty programs for regular clients and chronic patients), additional services, convenient location, long working hours, professional consultations, cozy atmosphere, and self-service department. Some of pharmacy services are directed on health improvement (blood pressure measurement, blood glucose testing, cholesterol testing etc.), others for beauty and self-care (skin-type and problem-solving tests, hair condition tests, cosmetic testing, etc.).

Hence, competitive advantage in pharmacy sector gives the company a preference over its competitors and the opportunity to gain greater benefits for the pharmacy and its shareholders. The stronger the competitive advantage, the more difficult it is for competitors to neutralize it.