

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# Service Quality and Customer Loyalty In Veterinary Clinics from San Miguel district, 2022

### ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to identify the relationship between variables service quality and customer loyalty in veterinary clinics from San Miguel district by demonstrating that the independent variable favors the dependent variable. The sample comprises households with pets. This is a correlational-causal study due to the cause-effect relationship between both variables. The research design is descriptive because it compiles information from facts and perception. It is cross-sectional because it compiles information from a given moment to explain how variables influence each other and interact at a specific moment in time. This research has a non-experimental design because it observes how the variables behave in reality, with no alterations in the sample or unit of analysis, in order to analyze them. As a result of this, it was found that service quality has a significant impact on customer loyalty in veterinary clinics from the above-mentioned district, thereby confirming the general hypothesis. Questionnaires were administered to a sample of 380 households with pets from the district of San Miguel. As a conclusion, service quality has a positive effect on customer loyalty. For that reason, it is crucial to propose strategies to provide and maintain the quality of service and the products on offer, as well as a well-prepared and defined Organization and Functions Manual according to the position occupied in the company.

**Palabras Clave:** service quality; customer loyalty; tangible elements; safety; response capacity.

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## INTRODUCTION

Veterinary medicine is a field whose business profitability has grown because it has reported significant growth in the last few years worldwide. This is because pets are regarded as an additional family member. This worldwide phenomenon is regarded as the humanization of pets, and is leading many people—especially the elderly—to care about them by showing greater sensitivity and concern for them in terms of nutrition, healthcare, and hygiene. For this reason, companies from this field are increasingly looking forward to generating loyalty among their customers and maintaining long-term relationships with them. To this end, they should provide an optimal quality service—hence the importance of this quality standard being reflected throughout the provision of their services, to achieve and maintain loyalty.

The topics of service quality and customer loyalty have been previously addressed in studies such as that of Silva (2022), who states that—for example—generating loyalty among students and encouraging them to complete their higher education courses is linked to the service quality, proceeding to show evidence that the degree of customer loyalty is affected by the dimensions which make up the quality of educational services. It is worth highlighting that Bollet *et al.* (2019) argue that there is a significant relationship between service quality and customer loyalty, after applying the service-profit chain method, which involves associations between customer loyalty, profitability and satisfaction, as well as the implications and effects on individuals. In addition, Tinco (2022) claims that service quality helps achieve customer satisfaction and therefore their loyalty, considering that clients are a priority and their opinion on the products and services is crucial. As a result, they become key factors for companies to reach their goals.

This research evidences its relevance for the business sector due to the need to learn and analyze the variables analyzed on this paper. Therefore, the results obtained have an impact on the role played by a quality service for pets to satisfy their owners' expectations and, as a result, to improve the loyalty processes.

Ahmed *et al.* (2022) aim to determine how the customers of a restaurant rate the service provided to them. The objective is to identify the effect caused by its quality and price equity on customer satisfaction and loyalty. The study based its design, methodology and approach on 326 individuals surveyed, using the PLS-SEM model to analyze the information gathered, and concluding that this study helps orientate service providers to maximize customer loyalty and satisfaction by highlighting price equity and service quality.

The aim of a study by Dubina *et al.* (2020) is to analyze customer loyalty in financial institutions. The results described the main points in the scientific treatise on customer loyalty to banking, and also provided foundations on the progress of communication strategies to increase customer loyalty to bank institutions.

A paper by Slack and Singh (2020) focused on the results for service quality to achieve customer satisfaction and loyalty in the *retail* (supermarket) sector. The study was applied on 480 customers and used descriptive statistics to establish the level of service quality provided in retail shops. Inferential statistics was used to identify the difference between the expectations and perceptions of service quality by clients, and to demonstrate the hypotheses. The results indicated that there is dissatisfaction with the service quality in retail stores, with a significant impact on customer loyalty and satisfaction. This research helped determine an indication as to where supermarkets should target their marketing attention and scarce corporate resources. This may help them improve their service, customer service, satisfaction, retention and attraction in order for them to remain competitive.

The aim of the paper by Rafikul *et al.* (2021) is to research the impact of various dimensions of service quality—reliability, responsiveness, visibility, employee commitment, and access to service—on customer satisfaction in the banking sector of Bangladesh. A total of 320 questionnaires were administered, and confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation modelling, analysis of variance and logistic regression in order to obtain supplementary findings. The research concludes that employee commitment,

visibility, and responsiveness have a positive and highly significant effect on customer satisfaction, while reliability and access to service show an insignificant influence on the satisfaction of private banking service users. The study also concluded that customer satisfaction has a positive and significant relationship with customer loyalty.

## **PURPOSE**

The research conducted was descriptive, non-experimental and correlational-causal. It is based on a study that demonstrates that service quality favors customer loyalty in veterinary clinics from San Miguel district, 2022. Consequently, the first specific objective is to describe how responsiveness favors customer loyalty. The second specific objective is to correlate tangible elements and loyalty as behavior. The third specific objective is to describe how empathy favors customer loyalty. The last specific objective is to determine whether safety improves customer loyalty in veterinary clinics from San Miguel district in 2022.

## **ARGUMENTATIVE REVIEW**

### **Service Quality**

Juran (1995) explains that this concept derives from the word quality, which is understood as satisfaction related to the clients' needs and expectations. Albrecht (1994) refers to service quality as part of a new economy where customer relations are more important than product commercialization.

### **Responsiveness**

According to Liao *et al.* (2003), responsiveness is related to the effort made by employees to perform their duties, the speed and coordination with which actions are implemented and periodically reviewed. Responsive companies are usually more competitive and better recognized for their speed and their ability to learn from their mistakes (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995, Jansen *et al.* 2005).

### **Empathy**

The Real Academia Española (2022) defines empathy as feeling identified with an individual mentally and affectively at a specific moment

in time. Empathy is related to the concern that someone feels in relation to what another individual may be feeling. It is also related to decision-making as it involves understanding and listening to the opinion of another individual (Davis, 1996).

### **Customer loyalty**

Kotler and Keller (2006) state that customer retention and loyalty begin with marketing because it involves identifying and compensating the needs of clients in society. In addition, marketing is a tool that helps meet expectations in a profitable manner; it helps establish a bond of trust with clients to subsequently create a different, personalized group with powerful planning, in which more individuals will want to obtain the goods or services simply due to their belonging to said group.

Alcaide (2010) defines it as the concept used by organizations that wish to be chosen by their own clients, in order to maintain the company-customer bond and make it sustainable by generating profit for the organization.

### **Veterinary Doctors**

The main function of veterinary doctors is to heal animals and prevent them from contracting disease. They are professionals whose duty is to prevent, diagnose and treat disease, and—if necessary—to perform surgery on animals. They can work in both the public and private sectors (Fingermann, 2012).

### **Customer Value**

Retaining old customers or consumers is from 5 to 7 times more costly than to attract a new customer; hence the great importance of customers (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Currently, customers expect to receive unique and personalized treatment, a great deal of attention, kindness and effort. These high expectations help organizations identify and implement more powerful relationships with them (Palafox, 2012).

### **Loyalty**

Oliver (1999) states that loyalty has two components: behavioral and attitudinal. They show a mental relationship over time and are directed to the product, brand or company. As

a result, repetitive purchases occur, involving mental, emotional, value and determination elements. Dick and Basu (1994) state that loyalty is a behavior related to constant purchases made by customers. However, this repetitive purchasing does not guarantee true loyalty because customers can continue their relationship with the company only because they have no other alternatives.

### Quality Control Systems

ISO 9000 is a quality assurance method that enables companies to direct and control quality. Certain key points should be considered as a guide: control processes, testing, employee training plans, work instruction steps and others, which will help create high-quality goods and services as required by the customer.

The feedback given to customers in relation to the frustration or satisfaction they felt is the starting point for a service with appropriate quality inspection. For this reason, the actions adopted are essential for each of the cases mentioned—either because it is necessary to restore trust and confidence and correct the mistake, or to maintain and strengthen the relationship with customers (Palafox, 2007).

### CONCLUSIONS

- This research was conducted in the district of San Miguel, targeting households with at least one pet, providing descriptive results that helped reach a number of conclusions and recommendations.
- Regarding the general objective, 56.62% of the survey respondents stated that service quality is crucial for veterinary clinics in the district of San Miguel. Statistically, it is possible to demonstrate that the p-value is equal to 0.00, which is below 0.05. In addition, the correlation coefficient is 0.533; therefore,  $H_0$  is rejected because service quality favors customer loyalty.
- With regard to the first specific objective, 41.3% of the survey respondents believe that responsiveness is essential for customer loyalty. Statistically, it is demonstrated that the p-value is equal to 0.00, which is below 0.05. In addition, the correlation coefficient is 0.276; therefore,  $H_0$  is rejected

because responsiveness favors customer loyalty in the veterinary clinics from the district of San Miguel.

- The second specific objective shows that 45.06% of survey respondents believe that tangible elements have a favorable impact on loyalty as behavior. Statistically, it is demonstrated that the p-value is equal to 0.00, which is below 0.05. In addition, the correlation coefficient is 0.497; therefore,  $H_0$  is rejected because responsiveness does relate to loyalty as behavior in the veterinary clinics from the district of San Miguel.
- The third specific objective shows that 53.43% of survey respondents believe that empathy significantly affects customer loyalty. Statistically, it is demonstrated that the p-value is equal to 0.00, which is below 0.05. In addition, the correlation coefficient is 0.354; therefore,  $H_0$  is rejected because empathy favors customer loyalty in the veterinary clinics from the district of San Miguel.
- Finally, the fourth specific objective shows that 77.53% of survey respondents believe that safety is crucial and improves customer loyalty. Statistically, it is demonstrated that the p-value is equal to 0.00, which is below 0.05. In addition, the correlation coefficient is 0.416; therefore,  $H_0$  is rejected.

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#### Competing interests

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

#### Authors' Contribution

María Kathia Paredes Matos (lead author): Conceptualization, research, supervision, writing (original draft, review and editing).