Journal of
Value Creating in Business Management
https://www.jvcbm.ir

Volume 6, Issue 2, Summer 2026, Pages 263 to 293

Original Article (Qualitative)

eISSN: 2980-8359

Presenting a Conceptual Model for Managing Post-Purchase Anomalies in the Pharmaceutical Industry

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Receive:
16 February 2026
Revise:
15 April 2026
Accept:
05 May 2026

Keywords:
Post-purchase anomalies,
Increasing loyalty,
improving satisfaction,
Relation-based Marketing,
Mental image,
Customers' classification

Abstract

The aim of this study is to present a conceptual model for managing post-purchase anomalies in the pharmaceutical industry (Case Study: Darou Mofid Iran Company). This research is applicabel in terms of outcome, qualitative in terms of data type, and developmental–exploratory in terms of purpose. The study population consists of experts in the pharmaceutical industry, among whom 15 individuals were selected as the sample through purposive sampling until theoretical saturation was reached. To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the opinions of professors familiar with the subject were used. Inter-coder reliability was applied to measure the reliability of the interviews, and MAXQDA software was used for data analysis.

The extracted model follows Strauss and Corbin's paradigm model, addressing all its dimensions, including causal conditions, core phenomenon, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences. In the strategies dimension, the components include improving monitoring and control systems, increasing transparency and trust-building, identifying and classifying customers, providing services tailored to the target community, strengthening interaction and continuous communication, and digitalizing processes and communications. In the consequences dimension, the identified components include increased trust, improved satisfaction, strengthened mental image, reduced complaints, increased loyalty, reduced hidden anomaly-related costs, decreased overdue claims, improved supply chain, enhanced competitive advantage, and reduced product bundling.

Please cite this article as (APA): Asili, Z, Danaei, H, Sanavi Groosian, V and Saeedi, H. (2026). Presenting a Conceptual Model for Managing Post-Purchase Anomalies in the Pharmaceutical Industry. *Journal of value creating in Business Management*, *6*(2), 263-293.

https://doi.org/10.22034/jvcbm.2026.578976.1730

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Publisher: Research Center of Resource Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business

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Volume 6, Issue 2, Summer 2026, Pages 263 to 293

Extended Abstract

Introduction

Today, the consumer is considered the key determinant of a company's success or failure. Therefore, understanding and studying consumer behavior is of great importance (Seifi Shojaei et al., 2024). In the pharmaceutical industry, consumer behavior and the way individuals interact with pharmaceutical products after purchase represent a fundamental aspect of the performance of pharmaceutical and healthcare companies (Khaja Mansouri et al., 2024). Consumer purchasing behavior refers to the decision-making process and the choices individuals make during the buying process (Shoa Kazemi et al., 2025).

Given the current competitive environment in which companies seek to attract consumers and maintain their loyalty, paying attention to post-purchase issues and managing the anomalies that may arise at this stage is essential (Azar et al., 2020). Post-purchase anomalies refer to problems that consumers encounter after purchasing a product, which may negatively affect customer satisfaction, trust in the brand, and ultimately the credibility of pharmaceutical companies. Proper management of these issues requires careful and strategic attention (Khang et al., 2024). In addition, in this industry, managing relationships between distribution companies and pharmacies (business-to-business) as part of the pharmaceutical supply chain is critically important. Anomalies that occur in the post-purchase stage between distribution companies and pharmacies can disrupt pharmacy operations, reduce final consumer satisfaction, and even lead to irreparable harm to public health.

The role of distribution companies as a vital intermediary between manufacturers and pharmacies is highly significant, and failure to properly fulfill this role leads to challenges related to post-purchase anomalies. Neglecting timely resolution of such issues can result in disruptions in patient access to essential medicines, bringing about severe socio-economic consequences (Kuo et al., 2020).

Studies conducted in Iran have predominantly focused on end-consumer behavior, and deeper understanding of the complex interactions between distribution companies and pharmacies has been overlooked. To date, no comprehensive or localized framework has been proposed for explaining and analyzing the management of post-purchase anomalies in the relationships between distribution companies and pharmacies in the pharmaceutical industry. This gap presents a serious challenge and underscores the need for further research. Moreover, previous research approaches have mainly examined the effects of variables such as customer relationship management, brand image, and digital marketing on purchasing behavior, while less attention has been paid to designing efficient managerial models for controlling post-purchase anomalies. There is a strong need for studies that, through an exploratory and qualitative approach, systematically and deeply clarify the process of anomaly formation, managerial strategies, and their consequences. Therefore, the main question of the present study is: What is the model for managing post-purchase anomalies in the pharmaceutical industry?

Theoretical Framework

Consumer Behavior

Definitions of consumer behavior in the scientific literature are diverse; however, the American Marketing Association defines consumer behavior as "the study of the processes individuals and groups apply to select, purchase, use, and dispose of goods, services, ideas, or experiences." This definition emphasizes that when making decisions, the consumer is not merely a passive buyer but an active agent influenced by psychological factors (attitudes, perceptions, motivations), social factors (culture, reference groups), and economic factors (income, price) (De Mooij, 2019).

Post-Purchase Anomalies

"Post-purchase anomaly" is a psychological state that arises after an important or high-cost purchase decision is made regarding a product or service. This phenomenon is especially significant in marketing and consumer behavior because of its considerable impact on customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and repeat purchase behavior (Kuo et al., 2020).

Okok et al. (2024) examined the effect of marketing capability on the performance of pharmaceutical companies in Kenya. Their findings indicate that marketing capability has a positive and significant effect on the performance of pharmaceutical firms. The study emphasizes the necessity of using modern marketing techniques and paying close attention to customer feedback to enhance the performance of pharmaceutical companies.

Sarafarazi et al. (2023) investigated the role of customer relationship management (CRM) quality and brand image in customer trust and loyalty. The results showed that high-quality CRM and a strong brand image significantly increase customer loyalty in this industry.

Research Methodology

This study is applicable in terms of its outcomes, qualitative in terms of data type, and developmental-exploratory in terms of purpose. The study population consists of experts in the pharmaceutical industry, from whom 15 individuals were selected as the sample through purposive sampling. Interviews were conducted with these experts until theoretical saturation was achieved.

Research Findings

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the opinions of experts familiar with this field were utilized. To measure the reliability of the interviews, inter-coder reliability was applied, and MAXQDA software was utilized for data analysis. The extracted model was developed based on Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory approach, covering all elements of the model, including causal conditions, the central phenomenon, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, strategies, and consequences.

In the strategies dimension, the study found that improving monitoring and control systems, enhancing transparency and trust-building, identifying and classifying customers, providing services tailored to the target audience, strengthening continuous interaction and communication, and digitalizing processes and communications are the key strategic actions for managing post-purchase anomalies in the pharmaceutical industry.

In the consequences dimension, the results revealed that implementing these strategies leads to increased trust, improved customer satisfaction, a stronger brand image, reduced customer complaints, higher levels of loyalty, a reduction in the hidden costs associated with anomalies, a decrease in overdue receivables, improved supply chain performance, enhanced competitive advantage, and a reduction in product-bundle selling practices.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of presenting a conceptual model for managing post-purchase anomalies in the pharmaceutical industry (case study: Darou Mofid Iran Company). The findings of this research are consistent with the results of previous studies including Okok et al. (2024), Pourheidari et al. (2023), Raman Akar Reddy (2023), Soltani (2023), Sarafarazi et al. (2023), Khosravi Laqb et al. (2022), Khojeh et al. (2022), Taherpour et al. (2021), Mohammadipour et al. (2021), Mousavi Nasab et al. (2021), Lob et al. (2020), Khankhiro et al. (2021), Kuo et al. (2020), Majd et al. (2020), Mirnezami et al. (2020), Asadi et al. (2019), Hult and Sharma (2019), Fatemi Moghaddam (2016), and Pujari et al. (2016). Okok et al. (2024) demonstrated that marketing capability has a positive and significant

impact on the performance of pharmaceutical companies. Their study emphasizes the necessity of employing modern marketing techniques and paying close attention to customer feedback in order to improve the performance of pharmaceutical firms.
Based on the results of this study, several suggestions are proposed for future research. These include examining the impact of digital transformation on operational processes and transparency in the pharmaceutical industry with a focus on analyzing its effects on anomaly management, as well as investigating the role of customer relationship management systems in increasing customer satisfaction and managing anomalies through a case study in the pharmaceutical industry.

Acknowledgments
The authors gratefully acknowledge all individuals, institutions, and organizations that provided scientific, technical, administrative, or advisory support throughout this research and the preparation of this manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare that they have no financial or non-financial, personal, professional, or institutional conflicts of interest relevant to this work.

Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability Statement
The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Use Statement
The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were used in the preparation, writing, or editing of this manuscript.

Funding
The authors declare that no funds, grants, or other financial support were received during the conduct of this research or the preparation of this manuscript.

Ethics Approval
All procedures performed in this study were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible institutional and national research committee.