



# Challenges and Opportunities of Local Pharmacies in Talavera, Nueva Ecija: A Basis for an Operational Plan

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Received: 23 Mar 2025; Received in revised form: 20 Apr 2025; Accepted: 25 Apr 2025; Available online: 30 Apr 2025  
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**Abstract**— *Local pharmacies play a vital role in delivering essential healthcare services in Talavera, Nueva Ecija, particularly in providing access to medicines and basic health consultations. Despite their importance, these establishments face several operational challenges such as increasing competition from large pharmaceutical chains, financial constraints, regulatory compliance issues, and evolving customer expectations. This study aims to assess the current operational landscape of local pharmacies by identifying key obstacles and opportunities in areas such as location, branding, pricing strategies, and technological adaptation. Utilizing a quantitative research design, data were collected through structured survey questionnaires administered to pharmacy owners, managers, and staff. The results of the study serve as the basis for proposing an operational plan aimed at enhancing sustainability, improving service delivery, and promoting long-term growth. Recommendations derived from the findings are intended to help local pharmacies adapt to industry demands, strengthen their market position, and continue serving the healthcare needs of their communities effectively.*



**Keywords**— *Local pharmacies, Talavera Nueva Ecija, healthcare access, pharmacy operations, pharmaceutical industry challenges, pharmacy sustainability, regulatory compliance, technological advancements, customer service, business strategy.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Local pharmacies play a crucial role in the healthcare system, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas like Talavera, Nueva Ecija. These establishments provide essential medicines, health consultations, and sometimes even basic diagnostic services. In areas where access to healthcare facilities is limited, local pharmacies often serve as the first point of contact for healthcare needs. However, these pharmacies face various challenges and opportunities that can impact their effectiveness and sustainability.

The business environment for local pharmacies is becoming increasingly competitive. They are under pressure from multiple external threats, including the rise of online pharmacies and mail-order services, as well as internal challenges such as reimbursement issues and labor shortages. In this context, the role of pharmacists becomes

even more critical, as they are healthcare professionals responsible for ensuring the proper use, storage, preservation, and dispensing of medicines.

Local manufacturers/traders note their difficulty in competing with bigger ones. Only few products manufactured locally have economies of scale; hence local production is costlier. Reyes, Celia M. and Tabuga, Aubrey D. 2020

While the demand for pharmacists is strong and continues to grow, there are significant challenges associated with their training, development, and integration into the broader healthcare system. As pharmacists become more actively involved in healthcare delivery, their role faces both opportunities and obstacles that shape the future of pharmacy practice.

## Statement of the Problem

Local pharmacies in Talavera, Nueva Ecija, play a crucial role in providing healthcare services to the community. However, they face several challenges that hinder their growth and sustainability. These challenges include competition from larger pharmaceutical chains, limited access to capital, fluctuating customer demand, regulatory compliance, and the rapid pace of technological advancements in the industry. Conversely, there are also opportunities, such as the potential for expanding services, increasing customer engagement through digital platforms, and leveraging partnerships with healthcare providers.

This study aims to assess the challenges and opportunities faced by local pharmacies in Talavera, Nueva Ecija, with the goal of developing an operational plan. The following key aspects will be explored:

1. What are the primary challenges hindering the growth and sustainability of local pharmacies in Talavera, Nueva Ecija?

1.1 Location

1.2 Competition

1.3 Operational Costs

2. How do local pharmacies perceive and respond to competition from larger pharmaceutical chains?

2.1 Branding and marketing

2.2 Availability of Medicine

2.3 Price

3. What are the financial, regulatory, and operational constraints faced by local pharmacies?

3.1 Licensing and Compliance

3.2 Financial Constraints

3.3 Staffing Challenges

4. What opportunities exist for local pharmacies to expand their services and enhance customer engagement?

4.1 Customer Service

4.2 Convenient Location

4.3 Technological Advancements

5. What operational plan can be proposed to enhance the sustainability and growth of local pharmacies in Talavera, Nueva Ecija, based on the findings of this study?

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research design was adopted to systematically collect and analyze numerical data. The study was conducted in Talavera, Nueva Ecija, chosen for the accessibility of pharmacy respondents. The respondents

included pharmacy owners, managers, and staff selected through purposive sampling to ensure the accuracy and relevance of information gathered. The primary research instrument was a structured survey questionnaire, designed with both closed- and open-ended questions to capture operational practices, marketing strategies, and challenges. The survey included a brief introduction to inform participants about the study's purpose, enhancing response quality and participation. The data gathering procedures included obtaining approval from academic authorities, selecting pharmacies, administering the survey in person or via email, securing informed consent, and ensuring confidentiality. Data collection spanned approximately two months to capture a comprehensive picture of pharmacy operations. Upon completion, the data was securely organized, anonymized, and prepared for analysis. The study employed quantitative techniques using simple percentage formulas to interpret the data and draw meaningful insights. To maintain research integrity, the study strictly adhered to ethical considerations, including integrity, social responsibility, patient confidentiality, and transparency. These principles guided the researchers in fostering trust and respect among participants while ensuring that the findings would benefit the local pharmacy sector and healthcare services in Talavera. Overall, the methodological framework was designed to ensure reliability, ethical compliance, and relevance to the research objectives.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Primary Challenges

1.1. Location

*Table 1.1.1 Frequency of Location Accessibility*

Location Accessibility	Frequency	Percentage
Very Accessible	32	64%
Accessible	18	36%
Neutral	0	0%
Not Accessible	0	0%
Very Inaccessible	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table 1.1.1 shows that 64% of the respondents (32 participants) rate their pharmacy location as "Very Accessible", while 36% (18 respondents) find it "Accessible". This suggests that location is generally perceived as easy to access, with no respondents reporting the location as difficult to reach. This highlights that the local pharmacies in Talavera, Nueva Ecija, are favorably located in terms of accessibility.

Community pharmacists are the most accessible in the community. They can be found managing and/or supervising community pharmacies or drugstores all over the Philippines ranging from urban, rural and rurban (combination of rural and urban) areas. ( Karina Marie S Batu 2024)

*Table 1.1.2 Frequency of Affects Sales Performance in location*

Affects Sales Performance	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	60%
No	15	30%
Not Sure	5	10%
Total	50	100%

As shown in Table 1.1.2, a majority of respondents (60% or 30 respondents) believe that location affects sales performance. This indicates that the location of a pharmacy plays a crucial role in influencing factors such as visibility, foot traffic, and access to potential customers. However, 30% (15 respondents) disagree, stating that the location does not impact sales, and 10% (5 respondents) are unsure.

This suggests that while location is generally considered a key factor in sales, other elements like product offerings, pricing strategies, or customer service could also play significant roles in determining a pharmacy's overall performance. Graham Pampel (2019) suggests that to determine if location affects profitability, various factors must be analyzed individually to establish correlations.

*Table 1.1.3 Frequency of Location Challenges*

Location Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Limited Foot Traffic	10	22.2%
High Rent/Operating Cost	8	17.8%
Distance From Hospitals or Clinics	15	33.3%
Inadequate Parking Space	12	26.7%
Other	0	0%
Total of Multiple Respondent	45	100%

In Table 1.1.3, various location-related challenges were identified. The most significant challenge, cited by 33.3% of respondents (15 individuals), is distance from hospitals or clinics, suggesting that proximity to medical facilities is highly valued in the pharmacy business.

Pharmacies located far from hospitals or clinics may struggle with fewer customers or lower visibility.

Another challenge highlighted by 26.7% of respondents (12 participants) is inadequate parking space, which could make it difficult for customers to access the pharmacy, especially in areas with limited or congested parking. 22.2% (10 respondents) noted limited foot traffic as a challenge, indicating that low pedestrian activity may affect sales and visibility. 17.8% (8 respondents) mentioned high rent or operating costs as a concern, which could add financial strain on pharmacy operations.

These challenges are consistent with the findings from Ken Research Pvt. (2024), which notes that pharmacies located near hospitals tend to attract higher foot traffic due to the convenience of the location. The segmentation of pharmacies into hospital-based and standalone models is important, as standalone pharmacies generally benefit from higher footfall and more diversified product offerings

The market is segmented into two type of stores Hospital Based Pharmacies and Standalone Pharmacies. Standalone Pharmacies dominated the market in 2019, both in terms of revenue and number of pharmacies. These pharmacies attract greater footfall due to the convenient locations and wider product assortments. Ken Research Pvt. 2024

## 1.2. Competition

*Table 1.2.1 Frequency level of competition in large Pharmaceutical Chains*

Competition Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	0	0%
High	16	32%
Moderate	33	66%
Low	0	0%
No Competition	1	2%
Total	50	100%

In Table 1.2.1, a majority of the respondents (66% or 33 respondents) reported a moderate level of competition with large pharmaceutical chains. Only 32% (16 respondents) perceive the competition as high, and 2% (1 respondent) feel there is no competition at all. No respondents reported very high or low competition.

This indicates that, overall, the competition with large pharmaceutical chains in Talavera, Nueva Ecija, is moderate, with most respondents experiencing some degree of competition but not overwhelming pressure. The local pharmacies appear to be managing well in a competitive

environment, with a healthy level of competition contributing to the industry's dynamism

According to research, 68 percent of people opt to enhance their self-care, 38 percent use medication for better health, 35 percent make sure they buy their medications, and 60 percent are already preparing to improve their wellbeing. As a result, the number of pharmacies open for business in the country is rapidly increasing. (Ken Research, 2021).

*Table 1.2.2 Frequency of effects of larger Pharmaceutical Chain in Market Shares*

Affected by Larger Pharmaceutical	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, Significantly	15	30%
Yes, Moderately	34	68%
No Impact	0	0%
Not Sure	1	2%
Total	50	100%

As shown in Table 1.2.2, 68% (34 respondents) of participants believe that larger pharmaceutical chains affect the market shares moderately, while 30% (15 respondents) feel their impact is significant. Only 2% (1 respondent) were unsure about the influence of larger chains, and no respondents indicated that there was no impact.

This suggests that while larger chains do affect the market, their impact is generally seen as moderate rather than overwhelming, with a significant portion of local pharmacies feeling that larger players have a noticeable, but not dominating, influence on market share.

Kong (2019) also notes that the market share of the brand-name product also plays an important role in the price differential of generic and brand name products.

*Table 1.2.3 Frequency of competing with larger Pharmaceutical Chains*

Compete With Larger Pharmaceutical	Frequency	Percentage
Offering Lower Prices	36	49.32%
Providing Personalized Customer Service	24	32.88%
Offering Additional Services (e.g., health consultations, delivery)	10	13.70%
Stocking Niche Product	0	0%
Other: Presence Of Registered Pharmacist	3	4.10%

Total of Multiple Respondent	73	100%
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Table 1.2.3 presents the strategies used by local pharmacies to compete with larger pharmaceutical chains. The most common strategy is offering lower prices, with 49.32% of respondents (36 participants) using this approach. 32.88% (24 respondents) focus on personalized customer service, and 13.70% (10 respondents) add additional services such as health consultations or delivery. Only 4.10% (3 respondents) emphasize the presence of a registered pharmacist as a competitive advantage, and none reported competing through niche products.

This data suggests that price competition and personalized service are the primary tactics for local pharmacies, while offering additional services and leveraging the expertise of registered pharmacists are also seen as valuable, though less commonly used. These strategies highlight the efforts of local pharmacies to differentiate themselves from larger chains by offering more individualized service and value beyond just selling pharmaceuticals.

According to [ Republic Act No. 9502 ] AN ACT PROVIDING FOR CHEAPER AND QUALITY MEDICINES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8293. It is the policy of the State to protect public health and, when the public interest or circumstances of extreme urgency so require, it shall adopt appropriate measures to promote and ensure access to affordable quality drugs and medicines for all. Pursuant to the attainment of this general policy, an effective competition policy in the supply and demand of quality affordable drugs and medicines is recognized by the State as a primary instrument. In the event that full competition is not effective, the State recognizes as a reserve instrument the regulation of prices of drugs and medicines, with clear accountability by the implementing authority as mandated in this Act, as one of the means to also promote and ensure access to quality affordable medicines.

### 1.3 Operational Cost

*Table 1.3.1 Frequency of Operational cost affecting the pharmacy*

Key Operational Cost	Frequency	Percentage
Rent	34	23.61%
Employee Wages	30	20.83%
Inventory Management (stocking medicines)	31	21.53%
Utilities (electricity, water, etc.)	23	15.97%
Licencing and Permits	23	15.97%
Marketing and Advertising	3	2.09%



Others	0	0%
Total of Multiple Respondent	144	100%

In Table 1.3.1, 68% (34 respondents) identified rent as the most significant operational cost, followed by employee wages (60% or 30 respondents) and inventory management (62% or 31 respondents). Other costs, such as utilities and licensing, were also highlighted by 46% of respondents, while marketing and advertising were considered a minor cost by 6% (3 respondents).

The data suggests that rent, wages, and inventory management are the most pressing operational expenses for local pharmacies, with these areas likely consuming a significant portion of their budgets. In contrast, marketing costs are relatively low, indicating that local pharmacies may rely more on word-of-mouth, customer relationships, or other low-cost marketing strategies.

High fixed costs (rent and personnel costs), few recruitment possibilities, and a reduced space took much work to organize screening and vaccination. Par Geoffroy d'Argenlieu 2021

*Table 1.3.2 Frequency Operational Cost Impact*

Operational Cost Impact	Frequency	Percentage
Significantly Impact	19	38%
Moderately Impact	31	62%
Slightly Impact	0	0%
No Impact	0	0%
Total	50	100%

As shown in Table 1.3.2, 62% (31 respondents) report that operational costs moderately impact their business, while 38% (19 respondents) feel that these costs significantly impact their operations. No respondents indicated that operational costs had only a slight or no impact.

This highlights that managing operational costs is a critical issue for most pharmacies, with the majority feeling that these expenses play a significant role in their overall business performance. Effective management of costs, particularly rent, wages, and inventory, will be key to ensuring financial stability

In our experience, inventory and payroll and DIR fees are the three biggest expenses that a pharmacy incurs. With payroll, it's important to understand how to schedule your staff for maximum efficiency. Sykes & Company, P.A 2022

2. How do local pharmacies perceive and respond to competition from larger pharmaceutical chains

## 2.1. Branding and Marketing

*Table 2.1.1: Frequency of Branding Strategy*

Branding Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	45	90%
No	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Table 2.1.1 shows that the majority of respondents (90%, or 45 respondents) use a branding strategy, indicating its high popularity. A small proportion (10%, or 5 respondents) does not use a branding strategy

Thus, branding is key to marketing as it creates a perception of added value linked to the brand image thus steering a continuous competitive advantage. (Davis, 2007; Haigh, 2014; Fahy and Jobber, 2015; Munyoro and Gorejena, 2020)

*Table 2.1.2 Frequency of Branding Strategies Used*

Branding Strategies Used	Frequency	Percentage
Logo and Pharmacy Design	30	28.30%
Customer Loyalty Programs	35	33.02%
Promotions and Discounts	23	21.70%
Social Media Marketing	7	6.60%
Community Outreach/Health Campaigns	11	10.38%
Others	0	0%
Total of Multiple Respondent	106	100%

Table 2.1.2 reveals that Customer Loyalty Programs (33.02%) are the most commonly used branding strategy, followed by Logo and Pharmacy Design (28.30%) and Promotions and Discounts (21.70%). Social Media Marketing and Community Outreach/Health Campaigns are less common but still employed by a significant portion of respondents. This indicates that while traditional methods like loyalty programs are highly valued, digital marketing and community engagement remain secondary strategies.

Brand loyalty is more critical than ever in the highly competitive pharmaceutical industry. With countless medications battling for the attention of healthcare professionals and patients alike, fostering a loyal customer base can significantly impact a company's market position and long-term success. Teodora Corbu 2024

## 2.2. Availability of Medicine

*Table 2.2.1 Frequency of Shortage in Medicine*

Face Shortage	Frequency	Percentage
Very Often	6	12%
Occasionally	27	54%
Rarely	17	34%
Never	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table 2.2.1 shows that 54% of respondents experience occasional shortages of medicine, with 34% reporting rare shortages. Only 12% report frequent shortages, suggesting that while shortages are a common concern, they are not pervasive.

Unlike high-income countries, low-middle income countries (LMICs) have several new causes for drug shortage, including licensing of manufacturers/products, shortage of raw material for a local manufacturer, drug smuggling, and lodging tax government policies (Khan, 2019).

Table 2.2.2 *Frequency of competition affect the ability to maintain stock of essential medicines*

Affect the Ability to Maintain Stock	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Affects	18	36%
Moderate Affects	31	62%
Does Not Affects	0	0%
Not Sure	1	2%
Total	50	100%

Table 3.2.2 indicates that competition has a moderate to strong effect on the ability to maintain stock of essential medicines, with 36% of respondents strongly agreeing and 62% moderately agreeing.

Competition in the pharmaceutical industry is shaped by a complex interplay among market exclusivity, the entry of generic competitors, and ongoing innovation. Unfortunately, the current pharmaceutical patent system has been increasingly exploited in ways that stifle competition and keep drug prices artificially high rather than living up to the patent system's original promise of promoting innovation. Wayne Brough 2024.

### 2.3. Price Strategy

Table 2.3.1 *Frequency of Adjusting Price to competition*

Adjust Prices	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	45	90%
No	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Table 2.3.1 reveals that 90% of respondents adjust their prices in response to competition, indicating a strong market sensitivity to competitive pricing.

Competition-driven prices are often market-oriented and are set based on how others are pricing products and services in the marketplace. So, the seller makes a decision based on the prices set by its competitors. Prices between competitors may not necessarily be the same; one competitor may end up lowering its price. Will Kenton 2024.

Table 2.3.2 *Frequency of Adjust Pricing Strategy*

Adjust Pricing Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Lower Prices On Popular Product	36	66.67%
Offer Bundle Discounts	12	22.22%
Provide Seasonal Promotions	2	3.70%
Other (Demands of Sale, Availability of Stocks)	4	7.41%
Total of Multiple Respondent	54	100%

Table 2.3.2 shows that 66.67% of respondents lower prices on popular products as a pricing strategy, while 22.22% offer bundle discounts. Seasonal promotions and other adjustments related to demand and stock availability are less commonly used.

According to Research by Jose Cielito Reganit 2024, Wilbert Lee filed a resolution asking the appropriate House committee to look into the implementation of Republic Act (RA) No. 9502, or the Cheaper Medicines Act of 2008, and RA 6675, or the Generics Act of 1988. Lee said this is to help Filipinos make informed medical purchases and improve access to affordable and effective medications for all.

### 3. Financial, Regulatory, and Operational Constraints

#### 3.1 Licensing and Compliance

Table 3.1.1 *Frequency Face Challenges with Maintaining Regulatory Compliance*

Face Challenges with Maintaining Regulatory Compliance	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, Frequently	12	24%
Yes, Occasionally	14	28%
No	19	38%
Not Sure	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Table 3.1.1 shows that a significant proportion of respondents (52%) face challenges with maintaining regulatory compliance, either frequently or occasionally.

According to Taylor Armerding. That doesn't mean organizations don't care about compliance. The recent 2019 Cloud Security Report by Cybersecurity Insiders and supported by Black Duck found that organizations during cloud migration felt a top challenge was maintaining regulatory compliance.

Table 3.1.2 Frequency of Regulatory Challenges Faced

Regulatory Challenges Faced	Frequency	Percentage
Obtaining and Renewing Licenses	13	32.5%
Health and Safety Regulations	14	35%
Taxation and Accounting Requirements	13	32.5%
Others	0	0%
Total of Multiple Respondent	40	100%

Table 3.1.2 highlights that health and safety regulations (35%) and obtaining and renewing licenses (32.5%) are significant regulatory challenges faced by pharmacies.

This guarantees that pharmacy staff members may concentrate on providing the best possible treatment for patients without sacrificing their health. Fostering a culture of occupational health and safety that is by the particular issues faced by pharmacy professionals in the region requires the implementation of safety rules and guidelines that are specifically designed for the pharmacy setting (Abuosi et al., 2022)

### 3.2 Financial Constraints

Table 3.2.1 Frequency of Financial Challenges

Financial Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Cash Flow Issues	30	50.85%
Difficulty Accessing Capital	14	23.73%
Low Reimbursement Rates From Insurance Companies	5	8.47%
High Inventory Cost	10	16.95%
Others	0	0%
Total of Multiple Respondent	59	100%

Table 3.2.1 indicates that cash flow issues (50.85%) are the primary financial challenge faced by pharmacies, followed by difficulty accessing capital (23.73%) and high inventory costs (16.95%).

For independent pharmacies, cash flow has become a huge point of concern. Pharmacy cash flow problems might be long term, or short term. Caused by low profits, high expenses or just the timing of when you receive money from your insurances compared to the due dates on your bills. Karen Deckard 2021

### 3.3 Staffing Challenges

Table 3.3.1 Frequency of Staffing Challenges

Staffing Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, Often	24	48%
Yes, Occasionally	15	30%
No	8	16%
Not Sure	3	6%
Total	50	100%

The table presents the frequency of staffing challenges faced by a group of 50 respondents. Almost half of the respondents (24 out of 50) indicated that they frequently face staffing challenges. 15 respondents mentioned that they sometimes encounter staffing challenges. A smaller group of respondents (8 out of 50) reported that they do not face staffing challenges. 3 respondents were uncertain about whether they experience staffing challenges or not. Overall this data suggests that staffing challenges are a significant concern for a large proportion of the group, with nearly 78% (48% + 30%) facing these issues either often or occasionally.

According to Jones et al. (2021) shows that the high turnover of employees in the health care workforce affects the quality of care provided. Studies estimate that nearly 50% of behavioral health care providers feel overburdened due to high job stress, lack of leadership support, low salaries, and high caseloads.

Table 3.3.2 Frequency and Percentage of Staffing Challenge Faced

Staffing Challenges Faced	Frequency	Percentage
Difficulty Finding Qualified Staff	23	58.97%
High Employee Turnover	1	2.56%
Lack of Employee Training	6	15.38%
Staff Absenteeism	9	23.09%
Other	0	0%
Total of Multiple Respondent	39	100%

Table 3.3.2 highlights that difficulty finding qualified staff (58.97%) is the most common staffing challenge.

According to Keith Loria. (2023) During the COVID-19 pandemic, many businesses started to experience labor issues due to an increased number of workers wanting to work from home, and pharmacies were no exception. Things haven't changed much since then, as people have grown accustomed to this new way of working. This has made finding qualified people to work in a

pharmacy difficult. After all, working at a pharmacy requires in-person work for practically every component of the job.

4. Opportunities exist for local pharmacies to expand their services and enhance customer engagement

#### 4.1. Customer Service

*Table 4.1.1 Frequency of Importance of Customer Service*

Importance of Customer Service	Frequency	Percentage
Very Important	43	86%
Important	7	14%
Neutral	0	0%
Not Important	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table 4.1.1 shows that 86% of respondents view customer service as very important, emphasizing its role in business success.

According to Shamsah Noorani 2024. In the world of healthcare, pharmacies play a crucial role as the frontline of patient care. They are not just places where medications are dispensed but also environments where patients seek advice, information, and reassurance. The nature of pharmacy work involves daily interactions with individuals who may be dealing with various health challenges, making customer service an essential component of the overall experience. High-quality customer service in a pharmacy environment can significantly impact patient outcomes, satisfaction, and the overall reputation of the pharmacy.

*Table 4.1.2 Frequency of Improve Customer Service*

To Improve Customer Service	Frequency	Percentage
Staff Training	36	43.90%
Personalized Service	16	19.51%
Online Consultations	3	3.66%
Providing Health Educations	25	30.49%
Other (Patient Counselling)	2	2.44%
Total of Multiple Respondent	82	100%

Table 4.1.2 suggests that staff training (43.90%) is the most common strategy to improve customer service, followed by providing health education (30.49%).

Due to the evolution in the healthcare sector, the role of pharmacy staff goes beyond traditional dispensing; it extends to ensuring patient safety, regulatory compliance, and efficient operations. One key element that underscores success in these areas is comprehensive staff training. According Virtual Rx 2024.

#### 4.2 Convenient Location

*Table 4.2.1 frequency and Percentage of Accessibility*

How Accessible	Frequency	Percentage
Very Accessible	40	80%
Accessible	9	18%
Neutral	1	2%
Not Accessible	0	0%
Total	50	100%

Table 4.2.1 shows that 80% of respondents consider their pharmacy to be very accessible, indicating good geographic location as a factor in business success.

A pharmacy located in a high-traffic area, near hospitals, clinics, or shopping centers, is more likely to attract walk-in customers. Easy accessibility for both foot and vehicle traffic is crucial for growth. Evcor 2023

*Table 4.2.2 Frequency of Changes Pharmacy Location*

Changes Pharmacy's Location	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	32	64%
No	15	30%
Not Sure	3	6%
Total	50	100%

Table 4.2.2 shows the sixty for percent (64%) which is thirty two respondent says Yes. While the thirty percent (30%) of fifteen (15) respondent response to No. Somehow the three (3) respondents of six percent (6%) response Not Sure. Overall, this data suggests that a majority of pharmacies are actively evaluating or planning to change their locations, while a smaller group is content with staying where they are, and a very small percentage remains uncertain.

According to FDA Circular No 2014-028 , Transfer of Location should need the approval of LTO (License to Operate) as drug RONPD (Retail Outlets Selling non Prescription Drug)

#### 4.3 Technical Advancement

*Table 4.3.1 Frequency and Percentage of Using Technology*

Using Technology	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	60%
No	20	40%
Total	50	100%

Table 4.3.1 shows that online ordering systems, electronic medical records, digital marketing, inventory management software, automated dispensing machines, and



others are widely recognized in pharmacy operations. However, automation dispensing is underemphasized. This highlights the need for comprehensive digital transformation to improve operational efficiency.

In the pharmacy industry, a number of significant factors are hastening this digital transition. Important concerns include the desire for cost-effectiveness, enhanced patient care, and more transparency and efficiency in medication development and manufacture. This change has been made even more rapid by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has highlighted the necessity for digital solutions to address the difficulties associated with providing healthcare in emergency situations. Pharmaceutical Technology 2021.

*Table 4.3.2 Frequency of Using Technology*

Used Technology	Frequency	Percentage
Online Ordering System	13	23.64%
Electronic Medical Records	13	23.64%
Digital Marketing (social media, website)	23	41.82%
Inventory Management Software	5	9.09%
Automated Dispensing Machines	1	1.81%
Others	0	0%
Total of Multiple Respondent	55	100%

The table presents the frequency and percentage of the use of various technologies in the pharmacy business. This indicates that 23.64% of the pharmacies surveyed or analyzed use an online ordering system. The same percentage (23.64%) of pharmacies are using electronic medical records (EMRs). This suggests that many pharmacies are utilizing EMRs for better record-keeping, patient management, and compliance with healthcare regulations. Digital marketing tools, such as social media platforms and websites, are the most widely used technology in the pharmacy business, with 41.82% adoption. This suggests that nearly half of the pharmacies are leveraging digital marketing to promote their services, products, and engage with customers online. Only 9.09% of the pharmacies use inventory management software. This indicates that the adoption of such software is less common. Automated dispensing machines are used by just 1.81% of the pharmacies. This is the least adopted technology in the pharmacy business. Overall, pharmacies are most invested

in customer engagement through digital marketing, followed by online ordering and patient record management systems. However, more specialized technologies, such as inventory management and automated dispensing, are less commonly used. Digidotes- Healthcare Digital Marketing Co. 2023

Pharmacies can use digital marketing tools and techniques such as search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, email marketing, online advertising, and content marketing to reach their target audience and promote their products and services.

## 5. Operational Plan Strategies

### 5.1. Future Business Strategies

*Table 5.1.1 Frequency of Strategies to Enhance Growth*

Strategies To Enhance Growth	Frequency	Percentage
Expanding Service Offerings (e.g., health screenings, vaccinations)	36	38.29%
Investing In Marketing and Branding	18	19.15%
Leveraging Technology To Improve Customer Service	15	15.96%
Strengthening Partnerships With Healthcare Providers	25	26.60%
Other	0	0%
Total of Multiple Respondent	94	100%

Table 5.1.1 indicates that expanding service offerings (38.29%) is seen as the most promising strategy for growth, with strong emphasis also placed on strengthening partnerships (26.60%) and investing in marketing and branding (19.15%).

Health screenings are an important tool for pharmacists to provide as part of medication therapy management (MTM) services. Screenings pharmacists can offer as part of preventive care, include those for blood glucose and pressure readings, cholesterol levels, opioid use disorder (OUD), and mental health (Figure<sup>1-5</sup>). Using technology can also alert pharmacists to look for risk factors.<sup>1</sup> Pharmacists are in a unique position to provide screenings in their MTM practice settings to improve patient health outcomes and reduce racial disparities. Jennifer Gershman, PharmD, CPh, PACS 2022.

## Operational Plan

Focus Area	Objectives	Strategies and Action Plan	Responsible Unit	Timeline	Resources Needed
Location Optimization	Ensure seamless operations by meeting legal requirements.	- Establish a pharmacy near in the hospital and clinics. -Maintain a regulatory checklist and schedule for renewing licenses and permits.	- Business Owner Operator, Local Government Unit	-Q1 2025	Location Survey/s, Government Agencies.
Improvement in Staffing and Employee Training	Resolve staffing challenges by finding qualified personnel and enhancing customer service skills.	-Partner with local universities/colleges to recruit pharmacy graduates.  -Provide regular training sessions for employees on customer service and health education.	-Pharmacy owners, HR managers  -Pharmacy owners, HR managers	-Q1 2025  Q1 and Q2 2025	-Partnership agreements, recruitment materials.  -Training materials, external trainers, budget.
Addressing Financial and Regulatory Challenges	Overcome cash flow issues, reduce operational costs, and ensure compliance with regulations.	-Implement financial management tools to improve cash flow tracking and inventory management.  -Negotiate rental agreements to reduce rental costs or seek co-located spaces.  -Conduct regular audits to ensure regulatory compliance with health and safety standards.	-Pharmacy owners, Accountants  -Pharmacy owners, Landlords  -Pharmacy owners, Auditors	-Q2 2025  -Q1 2025  -EVERY QUARTER	-Financial software (e.g., QuickBooks), IT support.  -Negotiation skills, contracts.  -Audit checklist, external audit support.
Enhancing Customer Service and Expanding Offerings	Improve customer satisfaction and create new revenue streams.	-Introduce health education programs and workshops (e.g., diabetes management, vaccination awareness).  -Launch additional services such as health screenings, vaccinations, and minor diagnostic services.  -Collect regular customer feedback to identify areas for service improvement.	-Pharmacy owners, Healthcare trainers  -Pharmacy owners, Healthcare providers	-Q1 2025  -Q1 2025  ONGOING	-Educational materials, venue setup.  -Medical equipment, trained personnel.  -Feedback forms, customer surveys.

			-Pharmacy staff, Customers		
Leveraging Technology for Operations and Marketing	Enhance operational efficiency and customer outreach through technology adoption.	-Utilize digital marketing platforms (e.g., social media, Google Ads) to promote services.  -Develop online ordering systems for customers to increase accessibility.	-Pharmacy owners, Marketing team  -Pharmacy owners, IT developers	-Q1 2025  -Q1 2025	-Digital marketing budget, content creation  -E-commerce platform, IT resources
Strengthening Competitive Strategies Against Larger Chains	Mitigate competition by focusing on affordability and personalized customer care.	-Offer competitive pricing strategies for key products to attract price-sensitive customers.  -Enhance personalized services such as free consultations and medication reminders.	-Pharmacy owners, Suppliers  -Pharmacy staff, Pharmacists	-Q2 2025  ONGOING	-Price analysis tools, supplier negotiations  -Training, customer relationship management tools.

Fig.3. A basis for enhance business development plan

This figure provides a structured approach to address the strategies for maximizing the opportunities and sustainable growth of the Local Pharmacy Business in Talavera, Nueva Ecija.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, several important conclusions were drawn regarding the operational landscape of local pharmacies in Talavera, Nueva Ecija. Firstly, location accessibility plays a vital role in customer engagement. While many pharmacies are conveniently situated for general access, those located far from hospitals and clinics face challenges in attracting consistent foot traffic, which may negatively impact sales performance. Competition from larger pharmaceutical chains exists at a moderate level, but it remains a persistent concern for smaller local players. Secondly, branding and marketing efforts are essential in establishing a unique identity. Personalized services, customer loyalty programs, and competitive pricing—especially for commonly purchased medicines—are key strategies currently employed by local pharmacies. Thirdly, regulatory compliance, cash flow management, and staffing remain significant operational hurdles. The lack of qualified personnel and the burden of maintaining compliance standards hinder efficiency and growth. However, notable opportunities exist in enhancing

customer service, upgrading staff training, and adopting modern technologies such as digital platforms and online ordering systems. These initiatives offer potential for increased market reach, customer retention, and improved service quality. Lastly, local pharmacies can achieve sustainable growth by expanding their service offerings, building stronger partnerships with healthcare providers, and executing effective, tech-driven marketing strategies.

#### RECOMMENDATION

1. Strategic Location Planning: Pharmacy owners should prioritize establishing branches near hospitals, clinics, or health centers to maximize visibility and customer convenience. Competing with large pharmaceutical chains can be achieved through unique, personalized services that foster customer loyalty.
2. Branding and Digital Marketing: A strong, recognizable brand identity is crucial. Marketing managers are encouraged to develop a distinct brand name, logo, and value proposition. Incorporating digital marketing tools such as social media advertising, SEO, and online customer engagement will significantly enhance brand visibility.
3. Financial and Human Resource Solutions: To overcome cash flow and staffing issues, owners should consider

implementing cost-efficient strategies, exploring alternative funding sources, and investing in staff recruitment and professional development. Offering competitive compensation and maintaining a supportive work environment will help attract and retain competent employees.

4. **Technology Integration:** Embracing technological innovations such as online ordering systems, mobile apps, and e-commerce platforms will allow pharmacies to serve customers more efficiently. Leveraging digital tools not only improves operations but also strengthens customer relationships.
5. **Expanded Services and Partnerships:** Pharmacies should consider offering value-added services such as health screenings, medication counseling, vaccination drives, and wellness programs. Establishing collaborative partnerships with local healthcare providers will not only improve service quality but also increase referral opportunities and customer trust.

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