

Exploring Customer Experience in Online Medicine Buying: A Netnographic Approach

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Background: This study reveals three main findings. For customer experience, four themes emerged: cognitive journey, emotional rollercoaster, behavioral actions, and systemic failure. The core theme introduces a new concept, “Trust Bankruptcy,” describing a permanent collapse of consumer trust. Regarding trust and risk mechanisms, five themes were identified: trust formation, multidimensional risk perception, risk mitigation strategies, platform roles, and consequences of trust erosion. Indonesian consumers appear proactive, developing “personal safety protocols” such as BPOM verification and analyzing negative reviews to navigate weak regulatory environments. For satisfaction and loyalty, three critical concepts were found: single failure catastrophe effect, service recovery paradox, and transparency-trust mechanism. Although limited to the Indonesian context, this research offers deep insights into the psychological and social dynamics underlying consumer trust and loyalty in online pharmacy services.

Purpose: This study aims to explore in depth the customer experience in online drug purchases through a netnography approach, uncover the mechanisms of trust building and risk management, and identify the main determinants of customer satisfaction and loyalty to online pharmacies.

Methodology: This qualitative research employs the netnography method as its main strategy, observing digital platforms (forums, social media, e-commerce, reviews, and blogs) over 3–4 months. Seventeen data sources were analyzed using thematic content analysis with NVivo and sentiment analysis to explore customer experience patterns. Data, source, and method triangulation ensured the study’s credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Finding: The study answered three research questions. It identified four customer experience themes and introduced “Trust Bankruptcy,” a state of irrecoverable consumer trust collapse. For trust and risk, five themes emerged, showing Indonesian consumers as proactive actors developing personal safety protocols. In satisfaction and loyalty, key effects include single failure catastrophe, service recovery paradox, and transparency-trust mechanism. Despite contextual limits, qualitative depth reveals new psychological and social insights.

Limitation: The study is limited to the Indonesian context and consumer perspectives only. The new concept of Trust Bankruptcy—though original—has not been quantitatively or experimentally tested, limiting its generalizability and empirical validation across different regulatory and cultural settings.

Originality: This study is an original work independently developed by the authors and has not been published elsewhere. The concepts of “Trust Bankruptcy” and “personal consumer safety protocols” are novel intellectual contributions derived from empirical data through netnographic observation, sentiment analysis, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). All sources used have been properly cited following academic and ethical standards.

Keywords: Keywords: online pharmacy, consumer trust, customer loyalty, netnography