

## **Purchase Intention in Specialist Dental Services: How Market Knowledge Drives Patient Decisions**

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### ABSTRACT

People tend to treat toothache independently, reflecting low purchase intention towards dental services. This study aims to examine the relationship between market knowledge and purchase intention towards specialist dental services in Indonesia. A total of 304 respondents from West Java participated in an online survey. Data were analyzed using linear regression. The results showed that market knowledge, which includes trust and positive perceptions towards specialist dental services, has a significant effect on patient intention to seek treatment. This finding shows the importance of education and information dissemination as a strategy to increase visits to specialist dentists. This study provides a new contribution in the context of dental health services in Indonesia, especially in the West Java region

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## INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian economy recorded a growth of 5.03% in 2024, and all business sectors experienced an increase. One sector that recorded significant growth was health services, including dental clinics and dental practices, which grew by 8.11%. This figure is higher than the growth in 2023 of 4.67% and in 2022 of 2.75% (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2025). This growth shows an increase in the need for health services, but has not been accompanied by the availability of human resources, especially dentists. The main problem in this sector is the limited number of dentists and dental specialists, most of whom work in the private sector and are concentrated in urban areas. Data from the Indonesian Medical Council (KKI) records more than 38,000 dentists in Indonesia, but around 34,000 of them are general dentists, while only around 4,000 are specialists. Of that number, only six provinces have a sufficient number of specialist doctors (Antaranews, 2023). On the other hand, Indonesia is only able to produce around 2,700 specialist doctors per year, far from the ideal requirement of 32,000 per year. Currently, there are still around 3,285 or 31.6% of health centers that do not have a dentist (Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025).

This limited resource has an impact on the low level of public visits to dentists. The results of the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey showed that 24.8% of people chose to treat themselves or buy painkillers without a doctor's prescription. This reflects the low intention or tendency of the community to use dental services, or what is known as purchase intention. Purchase intention is defined as the tendency of consumers to buy a product or use a particular service, which is reflected in their commitment to make a purchase (Davtyan et al., 2020).

One approach that can be used to increase purchase intention is to strengthen market knowledge. Market knowledge is a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior, industry trends, and competitive dynamics that form the basis for strategic decision making and marketing strategy formulation (Chen & Huan, 2020). Research shows that market knowledge can help consumers better understand health products, including their benefits and risks, thereby increasing trust and confidence in making purchasing decisions (Sarfranz et al., 2022).

In addition, based on data from the 2023 Indonesian Health Survey, the main reasons people do not visit the dentist are because they do not have the money for treatment (76.7%) and do not feel they have a toothache (70.2%). This indicates that public awareness of the importance of dental care is still low, which can be attributed to a lack of market knowledge of this service. The use of dental health services is also influenced by various factors such as income, insurance ownership, education level, age, gender, to social conditions, environment, and the structure of the health service itself.

There are major challenges in the dental health service industry, especially regarding increasing public interest in visiting specialist dentists. Although a number of studies have shown that market knowledge can drive purchase intention (Suganda et al., 2022; Sarfranz et al., 2022), more specific studies are

needed to understand how market knowledge can influence patients' intentions to use specialist dentist services.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the effect of market knowledge on patients' purchase intention in choosing specialist dentist services. In previous studies, no one has studied the interest in visiting specialist dentists. This study contributes to a better understanding of increasing patient purchase intention to visit a dental specialist. This study is structured as follows. First, reviewing relevant literature and developing a theoretical framework and hypothesis. Second, explaining the research method and data collection. Third, conducting data analysis and discussion. Fourth, making conclusions and implications of this study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Market Knowledge**

Market knowledge in the healthcare industry is a comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior, regulations, and patient needs. This knowledge includes not only data collection but also its use in improving health services and outcomes. Evans et al. (2015) emphasized that intellectual capital in healthcare, such as human resource management and stakeholder engagement, is critical to organizational success. Elrod and Fortenberry (2020) also emphasized that effective marketing communications, supported by market knowledge, can drive operational excellence. In addition, Hu et al. (2022) stated that understanding products such as biosimilars can influence treatment decisions, which shows the importance of market knowledge in healthcare.

In dental services, market knowledge includes insights into patient preferences, developments in dental technology, and competition in the sector. Bairagdar et al. (2021) explained that the right marketing strategy can expand patient access and increase the utilization of clinical services. Khoirunnisa and Marsasi (2020) added that an integrated marketing communications approach is needed to engage patients more effectively. Meanwhile, McColl-Kennedy et al. (2017) highlighted the active role of patients in creating service experiences, so service providers need to understand their expectations and needs well.

Market knowledge consists of various dimensions such as consumer insight, competitive intelligence, and understanding of regulations. McColl-Kennedy et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of patient feedback as a basis for service improvement. Rodríguez et al. (2020) showed that understanding sustainability in healthcare influences market position and strategic decisions. In addition, Salter et al. (2022) emphasized that the creation and management of knowledge greatly influences operational efficiency in healthcare. Thus, the integration of market knowledge is key to dealing with the complexity of the healthcare system and meeting patient expectations more effectively.

### **Purchase Intention**

Purchase Intention is a person's desire or tendency to buy a particular product or service. It reflects the consumer decision-making process, which is influenced by many things such as brand perception, advertising effectiveness, and personal experience. According to Dodds et al. (1991), Purchase Intention can be an important indicator of whether someone will actually buy the product, and

is usually measured through the consumer's attitude towards the product (Bairagdar et al., 2021). In marketing, understanding what influences Purchase Intention is very important so that the strategies used can be in accordance with consumer needs. Usually, Purchase Intention is measured on a scale ranging from "will not buy at all" to "will definitely buy" (Davtyan et al., 2020). In the world of health, especially in dental services, Purchase Intention helps understand how patients choose the services they will use. Factors such as perceived service quality, trust in medical personnel, and the reputation of the dental clinic greatly influence the patient's decision to seek treatment (Zahid & Ruswanti, 2024). For example, when patients are satisfied with the service and trust the dentist who treats them, they are more likely to return for treatment (Olapegba & Monday, 2018).

In addition, social media and recommendations from the surrounding environment also play an important role in shaping patients' intentions to visit, indicating the importance of the right communication and marketing strategies (Chang et al., 2019). Purchase Intention can be seen from several main aspects such as consumer trust, perceived value, and brand awareness. Research shows that trust plays an important role in the relationship between consumer perception and Purchase Intention, especially in healthcare. Patients tend to be more confident in using a service if they trust the service provider and its quality (Afandi & Marsasi, 2023). In addition, perceived value – namely how much benefit is felt compared to the costs incurred – also has a big influence (Mustikasari & Rahmawati, 2023). Brand awareness, especially in the context of a clinic, can increase patients' interest in visiting, because they prefer service providers who are known and have a good reputation (He, 2023). By understanding these aspects, healthcare providers can develop more effective strategies to increase patient engagement and satisfaction.

#### **Market Knowledge and Purchase Intention**

Market knowledge has a major influence on purchase intention in the healthcare industry, including dental care. A deep understanding of products, services, costs, and consumer behavior can increase patient trust and drive decisions to use healthcare services. Research shows that the higher the consumer's knowledge about healthcare services, the more likely they are to purchase (Araújo & Mason, 2021). Even in the context of other products such as green products, market knowledge has been shown to increase purchase intention (Petrovici et al., 2019). This shows the importance of proper education and information to reduce patient doubts.

In dental healthcare, patient purchase intention is significantly shaped by how they perceive service quality, the reputation of the clinic, and their trust in the competence of medical personnel. When patients feel satisfied with their experience and believe in the doctor's professionalism, they are more likely to return for continued treatment and care (Cordero-Ahiman et al., 2022). This ongoing trust becomes a key driver in building patient loyalty and sustaining clinic growth.

Moreover, recommendations from trusted social circles – such as friends, family, and community members – play a crucial role in influencing patient choices. These word-of-mouth referrals often carry more weight than conventional advertisements, making effective communication strategies and positive patient

experiences vital. As a result, dental clinics need to invest not only in quality services but also in building strong relationships and engaging marketing approaches to attract and retain patients (Ma & Chang, 2022).

Purchase intention in healthcare is strongly influenced by trust, perceived value, and brand awareness. Trust is essential because healthcare decisions often involve high personal risk, making patients more cautious and selective (Mahmoud, 2018; Hanvanich et al., 2003). Without trust in the provider, patients may delay or avoid seeking care altogether.

Perceived value also plays a key role, as patients weigh the benefits they receive against the costs they incur (Petrovici et al., 2019). When patients feel the service is worth the price, they are more likely to proceed. Additionally, strong brand awareness helps build confidence, as patients are more inclined to choose services from providers they recognize and associate with quality (Araújo & Mason, 2021).

Based on the description above, the hypothesis in this study is as follows.

H1: Market knowledge has an effect on purchase intention in dental specialist patients in Indonesia.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted using a quantitative method that is descriptive and exploratory in nature, and analyzed using a linear regression approach. This approach was chosen to systematically identify and measure the relationship between variables based on numerical data obtained from respondents.

The population in this study included patients who had received services from dentists at various dental and oral health facilities in the West Java region. The number of respondents involved was 304 people, who had met the minimum sample size requirements in quantitative studies, namely a minimum of 50 respondents or around 10 subjects for each variable studied (Hair et al., 2014).

The selection of the location in West Java Province was based on two main considerations. First, this area shows a fairly high gap in the ratio of dental and oral health workers compared to other health sectors. Second, based on national data, West Java is recorded as the province with the largest population in Indonesia (Central Statistics Agency, 2020).

To assess the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a Pearson product-moment correlation test was conducted for each item against the total score of its respective variable. Respondents completed an online questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability. All items showed Pearson Correlation values above the  $r$ -table threshold (0.256), confirming their validity. The questionnaire was also reliable, with all Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.63, meeting the minimum standard of 0.60 (Said, 2018).

Table 1. Dimension of Market Knowledge and Purchase Intention

VARIABLE	DIMENSION
Market Knowledge	Knowledge about Dental Services
	Knowledge about Treatments
	Perception of Cost and Insurance
	Accessibility and Comfort
Purchase Intention	Trust & Credibility
	Social Influence
	Influence of Social Media
	Accessibility & Convenience
	Personal Health Confidence

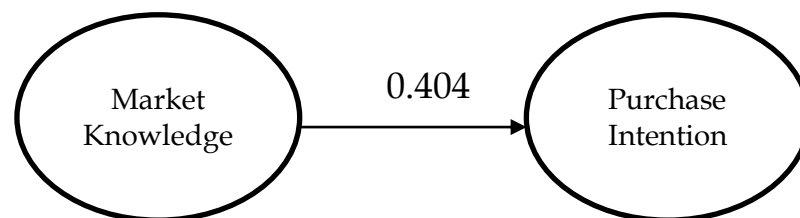
Data collection was carried out through a questionnaire designed to measure indicators of each variable studied, namely market knowledge and purchase intention. After the data was collected, validity and reliability tests were carried out to ensure that the measurement instrument was reliable. Furthermore, data analysis was continued with a correlation test to see the relationship between variables, as well as a regression analysis to test how much influence there is between the variables studied.

## RESULTS

The majority of respondents in this study were female (53 percent) and were in the age range of 25 to 30 years (42 percent). In terms of socio-economic background, 83 percent of respondents came from the upper middle class, who generally have better access to health services. In addition, 49 percent of respondents worked as employees, both in the private and government sectors. Based on this data, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents have adequate financial capabilities and a relatively good level of education, so they tend to have sufficient knowledge and awareness in making decisions related to health services, including in choosing specialist dental services. These demographic characteristics are also relevant in assessing how market knowledge can influence purchase intention in the context of dental health services.

Respondents in this study were asked to fill out an online questionnaire. The questionnaire used has passed the reliability test, indicated by the Cronbach Alpha coefficient value, all of which are above 0.63. According to Said (2018), a construct is considered reliable if its Cronbach Alpha value exceeds 0.60. Thus, all variables in this study are declared reliable. In addition, all question items are proven valid, because the Pearson Correlation value of each question is greater than the r-table value (0.256). In this study, hypothesis testing was carried out using regression with IBM SPSS software version 25.0.

The results of the regression analysis show that there is a positive relationship between market knowledge and purchase intention. The correlation coefficient (R) value of 0.404 indicates a fairly strong relationship between the two variables. Meanwhile, the determination coefficient (R Square) value of 0.164 indicates that 16.4% of aspects in purchase intention can be explained by market knowledge. In other words, the level of respondents' knowledge about the ease, confidence, and trust in specialist dental clinic services has a contribution of 16.4% to increasing their intention to undergo dental care. The rest, which is 83.6%, is explained by other factors not included in this model. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.160 confirms that this model remains stable and does not experience overfitting, even though the model only involves one independent variable. In addition, the standard error of the estimate value of 0.31 shows the average deviation of the predicted results from the actual purchase intention value, which is quite low and shows that the model has adequate precision.



Source: Researcher Data Processing Results (2025)

Figure 1. Research Results

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the higher the market knowledge of respondents, the greater their tendency to have the intention to undergo dental treatment at the clinic. This result is in line with various previous theories and findings which show that understanding of health services, especially in terms of ease of access, trust in medical personnel, and perceptions of the reputation of service providers, has a direct influence on purchase intentions (Araújo & Mason, 2021; Cordero-Ahiman et al., 2022). This finding is in line with research by Araújo & Mason (2021) and Petrovici et al. (2019) which states that market knowledge, which includes consumer understanding of services, costs, and service quality, can directly increase purchase intentions, especially in the health sector. In the dental services sector, perceptions of the trustworthiness and reputation of the clinic are an integral part of market knowledge, and when this information is managed properly, it will strengthen patients' intentions to use services (Cordero-Ahiman et al., 2022). This is also in line with McColl-Kennedy et al. (2017) who emphasized the importance of patient feedback and experience as a form of market intelligence that has a direct impact on healthcare purchasing decisions.

However, there are also interesting contradictions or differences in results when compared to several theories. Theoretically, as stated by Mahmoud (2018) and Hanvanich et al. (2003), market knowledge should be a dominant factor in shaping purchase intention, especially in high-risk sectors such as healthcare. However, the empirical results in this study show that although significant, market knowledge only explains a small part of purchase intention, thus indicating that there are other factors that are more dominant in influencing patient decisions – such as personal trust in doctors, previous experiences, or social factors such as recommendations from family and friends. These results deviate slightly from the expectation that market knowledge will make a greater contribution to purchase intention in the healthcare sector.

In addition, according to Davtyan et al. (2020), purchase intention is also influenced by emotional aspects, such as anxiety about medical procedures and previous traumatic experiences, which cannot always be answered only through market information. In Indonesia, especially in West Java, there is a tendency for people to rely more on informal recommendations and personal opinions than just formal information from service providers. This makes the effectiveness of market knowledge dependent on how the information is packaged personally and persuasively. Thus, although market knowledge is proven to be important and influential on purchase intention, its effectiveness is highly dependent on the patient's social, cultural, and psychological context. Communication strategies based on education, emotional approaches, and strengthening reputation through social media and customer testimonials are important to optimize the influence of market knowledge on purchase intention. This study shows that informative information and communication management needs to be combined with relational and reputational approaches to increase its effectiveness in the context of dental health services.

### **Implication**

The results of the study show that public knowledge of dental health services plays an important role in forming purchase intention or the intention to use the service. This applies not only to general dentist services, but also to specialist dentist services. The more people understand the benefits of comprehensive dental care, both in terms of health, aesthetics, and prevention, the higher their tendency to access health services regularly.

In the socio-economic context, there is a significant gap. People from the middle to upper economic groups tend to have better access to information and more adequate resources to obtain health services, including specialist dentists. They tend not to wait until they are sick, but proactively seek advanced dental care services, such as orthodontics, prosthodontics, periodontics, or oral surgery, even for reasons that are preventive or aesthetic in nature.

In contrast, lower-middle-class people more often make visits to the dentist as a last resort when they have serious complaints, and rarely realize the importance of advanced care from specialists. Lack of knowledge, limited funds, and minimal exposure to the importance of specialization in dental care are inhibiting factors. In fact, many dental and oral conditions are actually more effectively treated by specialists than by general dentists.

In West Java, this dynamic is increasingly evident. As one of the provinces with a large population and high urbanization rates, there are striking differences between urban and suburban areas. In big cities like Bandung, access to specialist dentists is relatively easier, especially in private clinics or large hospitals. However, in suburban or remote areas, many people still do not know the important role of specialist dentists. Specialist services are also less common, and if they exist, they are not necessarily utilized optimally due to the lack of socialization and dental health literacy in the community.

In addition, the work environment also has an influence. People who work in the formal sector tend to be more accustomed to health services because they are supported by facilities such as insurance, and they are also more open to recommendations to see a specialist. On the other hand, informal workers or people with daily incomes are more likely to postpone treatment for reasons of cost and time.

Given these conditions, one of the strategic implications of the results of this study is the need for educational interventions that are specifically aimed at increasing awareness of the role of specialist dentists. This education not only explains the differences between general dentists and specialists, but also shows the long-term benefits of follow-up care and prevention carried out by specialists. These efforts can be done through outreach programs, social media campaigns, and collaboration between clinics and communities, educational institutions, and health facilities. In addition, dental clinics in West Java, both in big cities and in rural areas, need to strengthen their service communication, especially in explaining the availability of specialist services and their advantages. When the public begins to understand that specialist services are not something exclusive or only for serious cases, then the purchase intention for these services can increase significantly. Thus, the goal of equalizing dental health and improving the quality of life of the community is easier to achieve.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the analysis results, it can be concluded that market knowledge has a significant influence on purchase intention for dental health services, including specialist dentist services. When people have a good understanding of the benefits of services, treatment procedures, and trust in service providers, they are more motivated to make regular visits. However, there is a striking difference in this behavior between the upper and lower middle classes. The upper middle class tends to be more aware of the importance of preventive and aesthetic dental care, while the lower middle class still positions dental services as a need that is only accessed when complaints occur.

This gap is influenced by economic factors, education level, and work environment. Community groups with access to insurance or health facilities from the workplace more often use specialist services regularly. On the other hand, limited information and costs make some people hesitate to use specialist dentist services, even though their medical needs are urgent. This shows that increasing public understanding of dental specialist services, including education about the

benefits of routine check-ups and early detection, is still very much needed, especially in areas that have not been optimally reached.

As a recommendation, it is necessary to implement a more massive, even, and easily understood dental health education strategy for the wider community, especially those from lower to middle socioeconomic backgrounds. Dental clinics and local governments in West Java can develop a community-based approach, collaborate with local figures, and strengthen communication channels through social media and public services. In addition, developing affordable financing schemes and expanding the scope of specialist services through partnerships with BPJS or subsidy programs, as well as formal and non-formal insurance owned by an institution, will be important steps to increase accessibility and affordability of services, while encouraging increased preventive behavior in the field of dental health.

### FURTHER STUDY

This study has several limitations. First, the focus area is only in West Java, so the results are not necessarily representative of other areas with different social and cultural conditions. Second, the relationship between indicators in the dimensions of market knowledge and purchase intention has not been discussed in depth. Third, the object of the study is limited to specialist dentist services, so the findings cannot be generalized to other health services. Further research is recommended to examine the role of service quality in shaping purchase intentions and patient satisfaction, which according to Shabbir et al. (2016) has a positive influence on patient satisfaction and the sustainability of health service institutions. In addition, innovation is also an important thing that can be utilized to improve company performance (Danarahmanto et al, 2020) and health service facilities (Danarahmanto & Pratami, 2022).

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