

Factors Governing Consumer Buying Behavior for Using Herbal and Ayurveda Medicine

Vandana¹, Rajkumar Singh², Dipesh Dasani³

^{1,2,3}Indus University, Rancharda, Thaltej, Ahmedabad-382115, Gujarat, India.

Abstract

Consumer preferences in healthcare are undergoing a significant shift towards natural and herbal remedies. This review delves into the factors that impact consumer buying behavior in the herbal healthcare industry. The analysis begins by examining the various factors that influence the decision-making of consumers for herbal healthcare products. Consumers are becoming more health-conscious and are seeking natural alternatives to conventional pharmaceuticals. The availability of information through digital platforms and the rise of social media influencers have played a pivotal role in disseminating knowledge about herbal healthcare, further influencing consumer choices. Trust and credibility are vital factors driving consumer behavior. Price, packaging, and Social media advertising also significantly influence buying behavior. Personal ideas, values, and perceptions are among the psychological elements that significantly influence consumer preferences. Customers frequently connect herbal goods with ideas of holistic health, safety, and efficacy. The sector of herbal medicinal products is significantly impacted by customer behavior in terms of ethical sourcing and environmentally friendly practices. Customers are looking for items that reflect their values and views and are becoming more conscious of the social and environmental effects of their choices. As the herbal healthcare market grows, competitive pricing and widespread availability become more crucial for consumers. The analysis of consumer buying behavior in herbal healthcare underscores the importance of advertisement, branding, health consciousness, societal impact, price, packaging, behaviour and environment.

Keywords: Consumers behaviour; Herbal healthcare; Social factors; Advertisement; Psychological factors; Environmental factors

Graphical abstract



1. Introduction

Health as defined by WHO, “Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 2006). Healthcare Products are the products used to improve health via prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Healthcare products can be categorized into various types, each serving specific purposes in the context of healthcare and wellness. Broadly Healthcare products are categorized as Allopathy which is treatment-based, and Alternative which are Preventive measures. Allopathy is further divided into Pharmaceuticals, Medical Devices, and Dietary Supplements (WHO, 2021). Prevention in healthcare is a broad subject. Allopathy is raised to achieve that through screening programs, lifestyle modifications, and vaccines, whereas the rest of the medical system takes a holistic approach. Consumer who are patients too, tries to choose healthcare products depending on various factors which mainly is based on Treatment products or preventive products. Ayurveda is the oldest system of medicine, which has a recorded history of practice dating back more than 5,000 years. The terms "ayur" and "Veda," which stand for life and wisdom, respectively, combine to form the name Ayurveda. When combined, they denote the study of life and aging. For the past 5,000 years, this hypothesis has been a part of history. The Ayurvedic knowledge was thoroughly recorded in the Charak and Sushruta Samhitas during 1000 BC. Ayurvedic medicine consists of two types of treatment: curative and preventive. The term "Syasth-Vritt," or preventive part of Ayurveda, refers to the use of rejuvenating substances such as food and medicine, as well as personal hygiene, a regular daily schedule, suitable social behavior, and Rasayana Sevana. The curative regimen includes medication, a particular diet, and changes to one's lifestyle (Dhar and Dey, 2019).

Ayurveda is a comprehensive medical system that addresses social welfare, environmental concerns, mental equilibrium, physical health, and spiritual well-being. Instead of focusing only on the illness, Ayurveda treats the patient as a whole. It also highlights dietary and lifestyle choices that are influenced by seasonal changes and routine habits. By using a comprehensive approach, Ayurveda explains how to cure and manage particular ailments while embracing nature, life, and the empowerment of the person towards sustainable living **(Pulok et al., 2016)**.

Prajapati Daksha learned the study of Ayurveda from Brahma, the Hindu legendary God of Creation, who is regarded as the universe's creator and who used meditation to advance the field. The oldest (5000–1000 BCE) works of Indian literature are the Vedas, which include references to plants and natural resources for a variety of medicinal purposes. These include the Rig Veda, Sam Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda. The two distinct schools of thought founded by the sages Bharadwaja and Devodas Dhanwantari are linked to the original sources of the two Samhitas. Punarvasu Atreya, the founder of the Atreya School or the School of Physicians, learned Ayurveda from Sage Bharadwaja. The Dhanwantari School, also known as the School of Surgeons, was founded by the austere monarch Devodas Dhanwantari, who is believed to have been the embodiment of the physician God Dhanwantari **(Mukherjee et al., 2017)**.

The global market for medications made from plants and herbs is thought to be worth approximately Rs 2,000,000 million, of which India now contributes less than Rs 20,000 million. India's raw medicine exports increased by 26% year over year to Rs 1650 million in 1994–95 from Rs 1300 million in 1991–1992. The raw material produced each year from aromatic and medicinal plants is valued at approximately Rs 2000 million. India is home to one of the largest concentrations of plant resources, yet its market share in the global herbal pharmaceutical and over-the-counter product markets is very low. With a total of 85 percent of the Indian Ayurvedic market, Sri Baidyanath Ayurvedic Bhawan, Zandu Pharmaceuticals, Dabur India are the leading suppliers in the Ayurveda industry. Himalaya Drug Company, Charak Pharmaceuticals, Emami Group, Viswakerthy Ayurvedic Pharmacy, Vicco Laboratories, Ayurveda Pharmacy, and Ozone Group are some of the other significant suppliers. India at present makes up less than 1% of the world market for ayurvedic products, but it is quickly becoming a major producer of medicinal herbs worldwide. In India, Ayurveda is now an officially acknowledged medical system. The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies it as Traditional Medicine (TMM) on a global scale. There are about 1,500 traditional products and over 30,000 branded products on the market. In India, Ayurveda is currently a recognized medical system. An estimated Rs 80000 millions is the overall market size of the Indian Ayurvedic industry. It is anticipated that the Indian Ayurvedic market will expand at a rate of 12 to 15% annually. The public's perception as a whole is shifting in favor of using herbal medications. Due to negative effects and expensive prices, people have been switching from allopathic pharmaceuticals to Ayurvedic drugs, as seen by the steady increase in trade of herbal drugs throughout the world **(Dhar and Dey, 2019)**.

India, with its rich heritage of Ayurveda and traditional herbal remedies, has witnessed an increasing shift towards these ancient systems of medicine. This shift is influenced by factors such as health consciousness, concerns about synthetic chemicals in pharmaceuticals, and a desire for safer and more sustainable healthcare options **(Shankar, 2017)**. Moreover, the cultural and historical significance of Ayurveda in India plays a pivotal role, in fostering trust in these time-tested remedies **(Gupta et al., 2018)**. As consumers become more informed and health-focused, their purchasing behavior is driving

the herbal and Ayurvedic medicine market's growth, making it a compelling subject for analysis and research.

Consumers increasingly seek natural and holistic healthcare solutions, driven by concerns about synthetic chemicals and side effects associated with conventional medicine. The perceived safety and minimal adverse reactions of herbal and Ayurveda remedies resonate with health-conscious individuals, shaping their preferences. Marketers leverage these trends, emphasizing the natural, organic, and holistic attributes of herbal and Ayurveda products, further influencing consumer choices.

As a result, consumers are not only choosing these remedies for health and well-being but also driving the growth of the herbal and Ayurveda market through their evolving purchasing behavior. Individuals' decisions while making purchases are impacted by a variety of complicated processes known as consumer behavior. The study of consumer behavior focuses on how individuals, teams, or organizations select, obtain, use, or dispose of goods, ideas, services, or experiences in order to satisfy their wants and requirements. (Solomon, 2019).

Understanding these elements is essential for companies looking to develop marketing plans that are successful and satisfy customer demands. The complex phenomena of consumer behavior are influenced by many intrinsic and extrinsic factors. For companies looking to effectively engage with their target audience and increase sales, understanding these elements is essential. The important elements that affect customer behavior include, Psychological Factors (Solomon et al., 2021), Social Factors (Muntinga et al., 2011), Cultural Factors (Solomon et al., 2021), Economic Factors (Dholakia, 2020), Marketing Advertising (Smith et al., 2021) Personal Factors (Schewe and Noble, 2020) Perceived Risk (Keller and Block, 1998) Environmental and Ethical Concerns (Kapferer et al., 2021) Online Reviews and Recommendations (Verhagen et al., 2015).

Consumer behavior when purchasing herbal and Ayurveda medicines is influenced by a complex interplay of these factors. Two of the many variables influencing customers' shopping decisions are increased consumer knowledge and health consciousness. Other elements including social, demographic, psychological, and cultural components also influence the customers' purchasing decisions (Sharma and Singh, 2021).

The current review is focusing to determine the major elements influencing customers' decisions to purchase herbal and ayurvedic medicines. It also focus to learn about several individual factors influencing consumers' preferences to purchase herbal and ayurvedic medicines. The purpose of the current review is to give a thorough knowledge of the factors influencing the buying of Herbal/Ayurveda Healthcare products.

2. Materials and methods

The literature for this paper was sought through a systematic quest of scientific journals, libraries, et cetera that were accessible through the library. These included ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar. Key terms like “consumer behavior,” “herbal medicine,” “health consciousness,” “social influence,” and “alternative healthcare” were used to find necessary studies. First preference was given to peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and truthful reports that appeared in the last two decades, so that the analysis could be up to date with the current trends.

Inclusion criteria were based on the relevance of the following items to the consumer buying behavior in the field of herbal healthcare, the methodological rigor, and the presence of empirical data. Articles that were related to conventional pharmaceuticals or that were not linked to consumer behavior were

removed so that the focus of the paper could be maintained. Additionally, only English-language sources were considered, which may have limited the diversity of perspectives.

The underlying source of bias in this review is that secondary data was mostly used. This might have introduced a publication bias since positive results were more likely to be published than those that were negative or conclusive. Moreover, the absence of non-English studies would have resulted in the overlooking of important research in non-Western contexts. To cancel out the biases, the opinions from various writers were all checked, and different studies that looked at the same problem from a different area were included wherever we could.

3. Literature review

Before we move further, let's discuss Consumer behavior. When we discuss various groups, individuals, or organizations and the pattern of their selection, purchase, utilization, and discard of goods/services to satisfy their needs and desires is known as consumer behavior. It includes understanding how consumers behave, think, and act toward goods and services as well as how they use them. While consumer buying behavior focuses on the decision-making process of people to buy goods or services. It includes problem identification, information gathering, alternative evaluation, buying selection, and post-purchase analysis. Consumer purchasing behavior is more specific and describes the choices and actions consumers make while making purchases of goods or services. Consumer behavior begins with the awareness of needs. More or less, today's needs are, necessary to look good, stay in shape, and keep up with current trends to reduce one's risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, and other conditions **(Lakshmi and Lakhani, 2015)**.

People have used medications in various ways for decades to be healthy and protect themselves from deadly diseases **(Iyer et al., 2017)** Apart from these factors, Spiritual leaders also impact the Indians by using spirituality as a marketing strategy in today's scenario **(Raut, 2022)**. Consumers behave differently when purchasing medicines than they do when purchasing other types of goods. The consumer can avoid numerous other things, but they cannot avoid taking medications **(Ayub and Mustafa, 2017)**. Simply said, consumer behavior is the study of people's, social, psychological and physical reactions when they purchase, utilize, and discard goods, services, concepts, and behaviors. It is a complicated pattern and sophisticated understanding for marketing research. **(Solomon, 2006, Peter, 2008)**.

Various factors influence consumers to buy, and different authors have categorized these variables differently and in different ways which are as, internal and external factors **(Lim and Yazdanifard, 2015)**, personal, social, and psychological factors **(Winer, 2009)**, and personal, social, situational, and cultural factors **(Kurajdova and Taborecka-Petrovicova, 2015)**. Personal and psychological variables are seen to be internal, whereas cultural and social influences are thought to be external in their influence on consumer behavior. **(Al-Salamin, 2016)**. Information derived from experience or expertise acquired prior to purchasing a product is considered to be internal. Information obtained from outside sources includes media, advertisements, container labels, and face-to-face conversations with people. **(Paddison and Olsen, 2008)**. However, the various internal and external factors combine to shape the decision-making process of consumers as they consider, evaluate, and finally purchase the products.

3.1 Social factors

It involves responsibilities, status, families, and groups consumers have (such as member groups, reference groups, and ideal groups). This shows how other people's opinions might have an indirect or direct impact on consumers to decide to make a purchase. In other words, a behavior is influenced, either

directly or indirectly, by society and peer groups (Kotler and Keller, 2016). Family, friends, and reference groups show an influence on someone's behavior which can be discussed thoroughly and understood using the theory of reasoned action (Ha, 1998). Professional pieces of advice and recommendations from family and friends come under social factors (Lodorfos, et.al. 2006). Further elaborating Professional advice as, "advice from a person who was considered to be an expert on the subject and who would also be consulted in the normal course of daily routine" (Schaafsma, et al., 2005). Healthcare professionals like Physicians and pharmacists who are the most informed about medications and their applications, side effects, precautions, and contraindications also affect the decision made by the customer (Lodorfos et al., 2006; Villako, 2012).

Family and friends are recognized as the person's main reference group with whom they regularly and comfortably connect (Lodorfos, et.al. 2006; Winer, 2009). Family members of the buyer play a big role in the decision to buy. Parents are important consumers of certain items. From one country to the next, it will be different. Even though a customer has turned off communication with his family, his subconscious attitude is still influenced by them. In a household, the wife can spend more money than the husband, and they both have an equal chance (Tyagi, 2018). Talking about household, Income, nuclear family structure, and factors affecting consumers' purchasing decisions are all significantly correlated (Kamaruniza, 2022).

The use of alternative medicines is also influenced by patients' families and healthcare providers. Social networks may have motivated populations in Asia and Australia to use CAM because of their potential for having a tight-knit family or community structure. In Asian populations, a person's social network is more likely to have an impact on their decision-making about CAM. Therefore, healthcare professionals should instruct patients' friends and family members as well as themselves on how to utilize CAM safely (Tangkiatkumjai, 2022). Beyond what is expected, people prefer self-medication, they take their family and friends counsel, and they also choose to use the internet, commercials, literature, and other sources to decide whether to buy medications (Pujari, et al., 2016). The most powerful element that affects consumer purchasing behavior is word-of-mouth. More than other people, like salespeople for a corporation, a person might be influenced by their family or friends. An individual has greater faith in their relatives or friends than in strangers. The advice of relatives or friends is more frequently followed. Any person's family comes first in their life. Family members have more power to influence buyers. The impact of the private remarks and referrals of trustable friends, family, colleagues, and other consumers on purchasing behavior, is greater. After family and friends, most people like to spend or get influenced by social media sites (Kotler, 2017).

3.2 Advertisement and media

In the marketing of pharmaceuticals, direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) is a well-known phenomena in which the advertisement is aimed at patients rather than healthcare providers. (Allison-Ottey, 2003). The USA and New Zealand are the only two nations in the world that allow DTCA of pharmaceuticals, including prescription drugs; DTCA is regulated by health authorities in each of these nations (Mintzes, 2003; Gellad and Lyles, 2007). The adult population was quite familiar with DTC advertising, however, the majority of people felt that it lacked adequate information regarding the benefits and hazards of using various medicinal products (Friedman and Gould, 2007). DTC advertising has a greater ability to influence low-income consumers than high-income ones. They had a practice of recognizing symptoms based on what was depicted in the advertising and then seeing the

doctor as a result. Additionally, regardless of their wealth, people chose to purchase branded pharmaceuticals over their generic competitors (**Joseph et al., 2008**).

Other sources of information regarding non-prescription medications include family and friend suggestions user testimonials, company advertising campaigns, and past product experience. Social media have a substantial effect on the behavior of consumers through online reviews and advertisements, search engine outcomes, feedback from users, and online advertising campaigns (**Kharisma et al., 2022**). Peer communication via social media is a new way for consumers to interact with one another, and it has a significant impact on marketing tactics as well (**Simona, et al., 2013**). The growth of e-commerce websites has caused consumers to develop a habit of purchasing online. Customers' ability to engage with other customers—i.e., individuals just like them is the key pull of online social networks and markets. Consumers are open to arguments when interacting with others (**Avda and Wei, 2012**).

The rise of e-commerce is a result of both the quick advancement of information technology and lifestyle change. COVID-19 also played a major role in the growth of e-commerce. Theatres have been replaced by Netflix, Hotstar, and other OTT platforms. Television has been replaced by social media like Facebook, and Instagram, for entertainment. Likewise, superstars are replaced by social media influencers who may change the behavior of their followers and affect their purchasing decisions. Modern social media and social networking sites (SNSs) have significantly changed how individuals acquire news and information. People are now bombarded with thousands of advertisements every day, the vast majority of which come from social media platforms. (**Ganguly, 2015**). Millennials and younger generations in particular are becoming conditioned to relying on social media (**Gottfried et al., 2016**).

As a result, they are more eager than ever to get data from social media as well as other clients. Information provided, Credibility, Entertainment factor, and Interactivity seems to be the most reliable measure of attitudes toward social media advertisements. (**Arora et al., 2020**). One of the main reasons people use social media is to get reliable, prompt, and complete information. (**Papacharissi and Rubin., 2000**). Consumers can choose a more effective product and make a risk-free purchase with the aid of the information offered. (**Punj and Staelin, 1983**). Whether on a daily or hourly basis, the majority of people used social media often.. The most cited social media platforms are Facebook and YouTube. Studies have stated that youngsters under the age of 18 want to always be engaged on social media, making it an essential informational tool for this group. People who fall between the ages of 18 and 40 are in young adulthood (**Al-Alsamydai et al., 2020**).

They consequently pay attention to what other people think of them. They are more preoccupied with pleasing their family and friends, feel more pressure to be "the best," and worry more about what other people think of them. Up to 91 percent of social media accounts are known to belong to users between the ages of 18 and 40; these users are the ones who are most impacted by social media daily. (**Noel, 2019; Al-Samaray et al., 2020**). In contrast, statements from enterprises still have an impact on buyers over the age of 60 (**Al-Alsamydai et Al., 2020**). Many organizations and industries adjusted their strategies in response to social media to better represent the model of customer behavior. The previous theory of consumer behavior presented a linear stream of possible purchases. Earlier the steps began with requirements identification, concern awareness, information gathering, alternative assessment, and, finally, after the purchase assessment. Positive after-purchase reviews would increase the likelihood of developing brand loyalty. A consumer's assessment cycle is now significantly shorter than it formerly

was, going from days or hours to minutes or even seconds, due to the plethora of information they receive daily through social media (Yousif, 2019; Al-samydai, 2019; Al-alsamydai et al., 2020).

The most significant sources of information on herbal remedies were the mass media, which included newspapers, radio, television, magazines, and the Internet in the Thai population. The bulk of the individuals had high levels of media exposure (55-70%), indicating that media was more likely to have an impact on consumers' knowledge and behavior (Satyapan et al., 2010). Two of the top preferred sources for information regarding herbal items are the media and family/friends. Accordingly, the top three sources of information for herbal products are doctors, family/friends, and the media. The mainstream media, banners and posters, and retail facilities are the primary sources of information about herbal brands and goods. The respondents trusted the advice of doctors, family members, and the media as trustworthy sources when deciding which fresh herbal products to purchase. (Ali et al., 2019).

The majority of herbal Ayurvedic medications are available over-the-counter (OTC). Similar to the fast-moving consumer goods market, the OTC product market involves most customers purchasing items on their own, most prescriptions being purchased without a prescription, and the end-user taking on all decision-making and product-consumption responsibilities (Dickov, 2012; Kim and King, 2009). People are drawn to OTC (over-the-counter) Ayurvedic goods because numerous Ayurvedic manufacturing companies heavily influence the public's opinions through their advertising (Deepa and Nalina, 2018). People began emphasizing prevention over treatment, which increased sales of organic goods and the popularity of herbal Ayurvedic companies. (WHO, 2002). Additionally, it has been shown that attractive packaging enhances brand equity in addition to helping consumers make decisions in the over-the-counter market (Keller, 2013). After Advertisement, packaging comes next when consumers are influenced by the above factors.

3.3 Packaging

The product's container determines its external look and comprises the materials used as well as the design, *labeling, shape, and color*. Customers' purchasing intentions are significantly influenced by packaging aspects, including color, picture quality, and labeling (i.e., information type and font); this study suggests that brand packing attracts more attention when consumers are not familiar with the brand. (Olawepo and Ibojo, 2015). As herbal medicines are also available in the OTC platform, visual characteristics as well as physical and sensory attributes also play a vital role in consumer buying behavior. Since over-the-counter (OTC) medications are not available by prescription, *sensory factors* including sight (color), taste (flavors), smell (fragrances), and touch (feel) will influence the choice of medicinal OTC product. The three most crucial characteristics for choosing a non-prescription medicine are the product's color, form, and packaging (Pande and Mass, 2013).

Customers examine food product packaging and it has been found that there is a direct correlation between packaging and intent to buy. Packaging has an important impact on consumers' purchase decisions (Deng, 2009; Cahyorini and Rusfian, 2012). The correlation between packaging, brand loyalty, and consumer intent to buy is significant (Khraim, 2011).

It is imperative to consider composition while thinking about Herbal Ayurvedic medications, which are widely accessible without a prescription in India.

OTC medicine usage is more prevalent among women, according to a German study. Compared to medications derived chemically, most people think that medications extracted from plants are safer. Most consumers regularly read the packaging before using products. (Barrenberg and Garbe, 2015). Additionally, packaging and communication have a close relationship with consumer goods use. Product

packaging is a key factor in how customers perceive the value of a product.(Shafiq et al., 2011). Reliability and versatility are represented by the product packaging/ design which increases the perceived value of the product by customers (Belleau et al., 2007). Additionally, packaging is an essential element of a company's reputation and plays a key role in transmitting the image of the product. Better packaging communicates that the product is of higher quality (Dileep, 2006).

The qualities, cost, expiration date, and packaging of herbal medicine all have an impact on the decision to buy it. Apart from packaging, product effectiveness is the most crucial feature, followed by pricing. (Miftah et al., 2020).

Consumers of Patanjali products primarily looked for the product's composition while looking for medicinal products and cosmetic products, whereas they primarily looked for the certification mark when looking for food products. The qualities of Patanjali products that are frequently utilized as evaluation criteria include their medicinal efficacy, superior quality, affordable pricing, acceptability of flavor, and proper packaging (Rani et al., 2019).

In the OTC health market, packaging has an indirect impact on brand awareness, brand associations, and brand loyalty, which helps to increase overall brand value. In the past, product packaging was meant to safeguard goods and facilitate their transportation. However, as the self-service culture has grown and customer lifestyles have changed, packaging now also serves marketing and environmental purposes. However, in the OTC pharmaceutical sector, packaging is a crucial brand-building instrument since it supports the brand equity of plant medicines like other marketing communications components (Peter and Maxwell, 2018).

The container for the product gives it its outside look and comprises the materials, style, color, labels, and layout utilized (Oladele et al., 2015). Consumers' purchase intentions are strongly influenced by packaging components, particularly color, picture quality, and labeling (i.e., information type and font); it has been discovered that brand packing draws more consideration when consumers are unfamiliar with the brand (Olawepo and Ibojo, 2015). Compared to other aspects, the packaging of OTC drugs has relatively less impact on consumers' intentions to purchase (Kevrekidis et al., 2018; Kohli and Buller, 2013).

Consumers are drawn to things mostly due to their aesthetic appeal. People are concerned with the physical features of medicine, aesthetic attributes such as size, flavor, color, form, and texture also have a big impact (Srivastava and Wagh, 2017). The perception of product quality and brand preference by consumers are directly influenced by views regarding visual packaging. Organizations should place a strong emphasis on visual packaging design elements including color, typeface, logo, graphics, and size to influence consumers' favorable opinions and brand preferences (Wang, 2013).

3.4 Price

Consumers' perceptions of pricing, or how much something costs them, are defined as "a combination of monetary price and nonmonetary price, including other factors like time, search costs, and convenience"(Kashyap and Bojanic, 2000). OTC drug price sensitivity does have an impact on repeat purchases, although price sensitivity decreases as brand trust grows (Lodorfos et al., 2006). Aside from the fact that drug prices are important, many additional factors influence product choices and outweigh the price concern (i.e., consumers will pay more to meet the additional criteria). This suggests that the price's perceived value is a significantly more relevant factor than its actual monetary value. Nevertheless, consumer perceptions of pricing vary and can have either a favorable or negative impact on their purchasing decisions (Kohli and Buller, 2013).

Some customers associate cheap costs with inferior products because they believe that higher prices signify better quality. This is known as the "price-perceived quality relationship (**Völckner and Hofmann, 2007**)

Price and purchasing behavior are positively correlated because prices that consumers find reasonable boost their propensity to purchase goods (**Al-Salamin, 2016**). Price concerns, both before and after the purchase remain a big worry for marketing managers since the ability to offer acceptable prices and to successfully meet consumer expectations are the fundamental ingredients in any marketing campaign. Consumer satisfaction is influenced by the value they get from a good or service, which in turn has some bearing on price. A significant component in improving customer satisfaction is price information (**Chan et al., 2003**). With liberalization, Indian consumers have the option to choose from a wide variety of baskets that comprise both synthetic and natural goods. Therefore, one of the key factors influencing their decision to buy herbal products is likely to be the price. No matter how good a product is, a certain percentage of the population won't be able to afford to pay more than a set price. The other group of individuals has the financial means to pay, but they believe that they could spend it more satisfactorily elsewhere (**Kotler, 2003**).

So, price regularly emerges as an essential deciding factor while purchasing goods. Influencers, the physical appearance of the product, promotion, and value (price) emerged as significant characteristics common among the public of Mumbai, Nasik, and Pimpalgaon. There are differences in the factors influencing consumer purchase behavior for OTC pharmaceutical products when compared to cities like Mumbai (Metro), Nashik, and Pimpalgaon (Non-Metro). In Mumbai, promotion emerged as a significant factor, whereas in Nashik/Pimpalgaon availability, accessibility, and price were found to be significant factors. Consumers from Nashik and Pimpalgaon are interested in the physical characteristics of medicine. Value (price) is one of the differentiating aspects because family income in places like Nashik and Pimpalgaon is lower than in Mumbai (**Srivastava and Wagh, 2017**).

3.5 Health consciousness

The awareness of one's health and the influence of own habits and choices in life on general well-being can be defined as Health consciousness. Considering physical as well as mental well-being and making conscious decisions to preserve or enhance health are the characteristics of health-conscious people. A person's level of health consciousness is determined by their inner state of self-attention to self-relevant stimuli as expressed in their thoughts and bodily feelings. Mental processes that take place without conscious knowledge can have an impact on consumer behavior. There are three different types of consciousness. These include knowledge of the environmental elements that initiate automated processes, the automatic processes themselves, and the results of those processes. A natural process is started by environmental factors, and the result is what happens next. Social settings, the presence of other people, events, objects, locations, and other things are examples of environmental aspects. Automatic processes can involve automatic behavior, automatic evaluation and emotion, automatic replication of non-conscious action, and automatic attitude activation. Behavior, inspiration, assessments, selections, and feelings can all be outcomes. Investigational results are frequently tied to consumer decision-making for people who are interested in consumer behavior. (**Chartrand, 2005**).

In group categorization, health consciousness is a crucial psychographic factor since it can predict a variety of health attitudes and actions. Consumer attitudes toward purchases are assumed to be most strongly influenced by food safety, while purchase intentions are believed to be least strongly influenced by health consciousness. It is further shown that respondents' identification with ethical issues influences

their opinions and subsequent consumption choices by demonstrating how ethical self-identity predicts attitudes and intentions to buy organic items. (Chen, 2013; Michaelidou and Hassan, 2008).

Consumers who are conscious of their health are more likely to be motivated to care for their health on a personal level as well as take responsibility for it (Dutta-Bergman, 2004b).

In comparison to customers who are less health conscious, consumers who are more health conscious are more prevention-oriented and more receptive to various medical options (such as nutritional supplements, acupuncture, etc.) (Dickinson and McKay, 2014; Dutta-Bergman, 2004b; Gould, 1988).

Health value and exposure to sickness were revealed to be important predictors of dietary supplement usage in a population of women. The belief that using dietary supplements would prevent future ill health was found to be different between dietary supplement users and non-users. (Conner et al., 2001).

The most often cited reasons for using dietary supplements were to "improve" (45%) or "maintain" (33%) health, according to data from the 2007–2010 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (Bailey et al., 2013). The primary psychological aspect determining purchasers' willingness to spend is health consciousness.

Due to growing knowledge of how nutrition affects obesity, high cholesterol, digestive disorders, and other related widespread health issues, Indian consumers are becoming more worried about food safety and quality requirements. In addition to product quality, taste, packaging, and price, consumers look for convenience when shopping and are less influenced by market offerings and sales assistance in-store when purchasing health and wellness food products. Health consciousness is the primary psychological factor influencing buyers' willingness to pay for purchases (Ali and Ali, 2020).

Young consumers' health and social consciousness are highly impacted by product characteristics and customer concerns. The attitudes of young consumers, however, were found to be unaffected by such health and social concerns. (Su et al, 2022). Because supplements are linked to preventative health practices, consumers who are more health conscious are more inclined to utilize them. While familiarity with supplement advertising is irrelevant, health consciousness is highly correlated with attitudes toward various supplement types and opinions on supplement costs. (Willis and Roynce, 2016).

The two most often cited reasons for choosing organic foods are concern for one's health and concern for the environment, with the former ranking higher. Additionally, leading a healthy lifestyle does have favorable mediation effects on the associations between environmental awareness, consumer attitudes toward organic foods, and health consciousness (Chen, 2009). The novel experience of eating organic food and the potential improvement it may bring in people's lives are likely to appeal to customers who are self-aware and take responsibility for their health. In consumers whose consumption is in line with their beliefs and who consider themselves ethical shoppers, health consciousness will promote individual psychological elements such as self-identity and ethical self-identity, leading to specific behavior toward the consumption of organic foods. Due to the lack of chemical ingredients in the food manufacturing process, consumers who have a high level of concern for food safety may believe that organic food is safe. This functions as a stimulation for their internal factors, which are represented by openness to change and ethical self-identity (Talwar et al., 2021).

Canadian patients with cardiovascular disease have relied on the usage of herbal remedies and vitamins due to their safety and minimal risk of an adverse reaction (Pharand et al., 2003).

Indian customers are becoming more aware of the benefits of incorporating Ayurvedic products into their daily routine, including food items, cosmetics, and domestic chores, since it can lead to a better lifestyle (Misra et al., 2018). Consumers today are increasingly concerned with maintaining their health and a high standard of living. Because of the safety of herbal products and the low likelihood of an

adverse reaction. The pure and efficient Patanjali products meet client needs without harming the environment or their health. Respondents from the entire sample stated that they bought Patanjali goods because of their therapeutic benefits. The majority of sources of information about Patanjali products, according to half of the respondents, were their neighbors, relatives, or family members. Price, brand, advertisements for the product, celebrations, buying habits, prior product experience, product preference, and family members' assistance are all factors that might influence a consumer's decision to purchase Patanjali items. (Rani et al., 2019).

There has been a sharp rise in consumer demand for herbal products for health and beauty care over the past ten years, not just among women but also among young men. This is due to consumers' increased attention to green products. The choice of purchasing a herbal product is favorably and strongly connected with long-term health outcomes, consumer budget, and peer group influence (Gupta, 2020).

COVID-19 played a very important role in creating health consciousness creating a rise in the demand for hygiene and sanitization products, during the COVID-19 pandemic. People began emphasizing prevention over treatment, which increased sales of organic goods and the popularity of herbal Ayurvedic products. It was thought that herbal medicine may lessen the effects of and shield against COVID-19. China and India have been using both herbal therapy and Western treatment together. (Demeke, 2021).

Due to the traditional method's ability to improve immunity and the absence of adverse effects, as well as its various benefits over time and its long-term effects, it has become more popular. The market for alternative medications, such as Ayurveda, expanded in this gloomy environment as a result of the increased demand for diverse Ayurvedic products to boost immunity. Because the Ayurvedic immunity booster helps you to strengthen the immune system while boosting your resistance to infection, thereby increasing the demand for immunity booster treatments under Ayurveda and homeopathy. So a new type of customer has appeared globally with new behaviors and deciding factors due increase in the use of alternative medicines, or a shift toward them. According to businesses like Dabur, Baidyanath, Patanjali, and Himalaya Wellness Ayurvedic and Herbal products are gaining more popularity. According to Dabur, there has been a significant increase in demand for the company's primary goods, particularly the line of immune boosters that includes kadha, tea, powder, paste, syrup, etc. There is a growing market for Ayurvedic goods having therapeutic properties (Devhare et al., 2023).

3.6 Brand image and awareness

Customers have a plethora of options in today's world of growing competition, where numerous businesses provide the same products, and a variety of distinctive features influence their purchasing decisions. Consumers' perceptions and beliefs about a brand are reflected in the associations they make in their minds. Brand perception, which depends upon knowledge and previous interactions with the brand, is represented by brand image. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2016). Consumer confidence in a specific brand, and how consumers see or have a certain perspective and belief following their experience with a brand are all examples of what is referred to as a brand image. (Helmi et al., 2022; Indratno et al., 2021).

The following factors contribute to the formation of brand awareness among consumers: 1) The benefit of brand affiliation (brand association favorability). Consumers think that brand features and advantages can fulfill their needs and desires. 2) Brand association's power. The potency of brand associations is influenced by two variables. First, details on a key product. Secondly, there is a brand whose appearance fluctuates but never alteration. 3) The brand association's originality (Wijianty, 2016).

One of the effective strategies for defeating the competition is to build a strong brand. Consumers place a higher demand on goods with a positive brand image than those with a negative one (**Purwianti and Niawati, 2022**). A powerful tool for boosting consumer interest in shopping is the brand image (**Novitasari et al., 2022**). Consumers are used to investing in well-known and well-respected brands of goods (**Haryano et. al., 2022**)

Herbal Medicine in a Special Region in Yogyakarta shows Brand image, price, and trust have a simultaneous strong impact on purchase intention..(**Supardin, L., 2023**). Several studies and articles have examined the factors that influence customer purchasing decisions. The factors that have received the greatest focus include attitude, pricing, subjective norms, brand image, and trust. (**Pandey and Srivastava, 2016**).

These elements, such as brand loyalty, were discovered in customers as a result of prior experience with the medication. (**Lodorfos et al., 2006**). The primary factors influencing the purchase of an OTC medicine continue to be branding and prior brand experience. A clear branding strategy is essential since it is the only way for a marketer to explain the "extra plus" of his items. Therefore, branding serves primarily as a tool for product identification, guiding the consumer toward the unique, improved product among an abundance of identical goods. Due to their familiarity with the known, people frequently choose a well-known brand. Or it could be assumed that a well-known brand is probably reliable, reputable, and of reasonable quality. As a result, consumers will usually choose a well-known brand over a lesser-known one. Easy-to-recall brand names with broad distribution turned out to be a key differentiator. When done properly, stronger branding can provide incredibly high brand equity and become a topic of discussion for customers. Compared to generic pharmaceuticals, branded medications received higher overall ratings for their functional and emotional aspects (**Panchal, 2012**).

Ayurvedic medicines were preferred above allopathic, homeopathic, and other drugs for common ailments like colds, coughs, fevers, bodily aches and hair loss. Dabur (44.8%) was the brand of Ayurvedic products most frequently picked in the Joginder Nagar neighborhood, followed by Himalaya and Patanjali.(**Arya et al., 2012**). The brand name associated with a company's goods or services is essentially one of its most valuable assets (**Keller, 2013**). A strong brand has been emphasized as having several benefits for a business, including increased customer loyalty, resistance to rival attacks and marketing crises, higher profits, and licensing options that produce stable revenue flow. (**Farquhar, 1989; Keller, 2013**). Of course, a company's brand, which it has developed over time, is one of its most important assets. (**Keller, 2013**). The memory that customers have of a brand as a result of previous exposures determines how strong the brand (**Keller, 2001**). Consumer-built brand equity happens when a customer exhibits strong brand awareness, familiarity, and some strong, positive, and distinctive associations with a brand (**Keller, 2013**). Even in cases of common illnesses, research showed that 20% of patients opted for branded medications rather than following their doctor's prescription (**Pujari et al., 2016**). Due to the strong brand and product reputation, convenience, and easy product availability, herbal goods are currently preferred by the majority of the public.(**Kamaruniza et al, 2022**).

The influence of trust and satisfaction on brand preference is positive and large, compared to the negative but minor impact of price. (**Misra, 2020**). In some cases, a company's brand reputation is more important than pricing. As a result, building a high brand value can also secure company sales and the advantage of OTC users. Additionally, because it serves as a reminder and a reinforcer of the brand, OTC product advertising can be beneficial for brand recall. (**Sohel, 2013**).

Branding has assisted companies in increasing their top-of-mind recall and mindshare. For instance, ev-

en though a doctor has more than 1000 options in the hypertension market, a client can still remember the brand, whether it is an innovator (MNC) or a branded generic. In most situations, domestic companies' products are comparable to those of multinational corporations in terms of quality and advantages, but the latter stands significantly above the former when it comes to image and branding. Indian generics with strong branding have positioned themselves to take on MNCs (**Panchal, 2012**). Even if we talk about youngsters, product knowledge and product quality are the main determinants of purchase decisions for dietary supplements (DS) among Gen-Y respondents in Malaysia between the ages of 17 and 25 (**Yeo, 2023**).

3.7 Demography

Demography is the study of people about their age, gender, educational attainment, occupation, and other factors. Medical literature has looked into the relationship between age, gender, race, ethnicity, and health status in great detail. More precisely, it has been found that health status differs by race, age, gender, and ethnicity. This has been confirmed by studies on the incidence, prevalence, and management of numerous diseases in terms of these characteristics. Population health concerns, such as the prevalence of chronic illnesses, are shown by demographics. For preventive healthcare activities, this knowledge is crucial. Healthcare providers, policymakers, and businesses can modify their programs, products, and plans to meet the unique needs of the communities they serve by using demographic studies. Age is the most significant of these characteristics since older people explore a wider range of options because of their established knowledge, and because they have more purchasing experience than younger people. Youth have less experience and rely more on price and brand. As a result, brand image has a simple way of influencing the younger generation (**Richardson et al., 1986**). The primary demographic trait that affects customer purchasing behavior is defined as being **age** (**Taylor et al., 2008**). Compared to younger people, the elderly people seemed more easily pleased. Young people are more likely to be curious and enjoy exploring, which may be the source of this. Additionally, it was discovered that persons in the **self-employed, student, and housewife** categories were happier than those in the service industry, while those in the **middle-income** category were happier than those in the low and high-income categories (**Misra et al., 2020**). OTC medicine purchases are more common among **young people** than older persons. Additionally, the selection of products is different for the younger demographic. Baby care and nutritional items are marketed to younger consumers, while the range of products for the elderly is entirely different (**Srivastava. and Wagh, 2017**). In the older population in the United States, women, those with higher yearly family incomes, and those with more education tend to utilize herbal products more frequently (**Rashrash et al., 2017**).

Consumers in the age ranges of **18 to 35** who are predominantly **female, well-educated**, and "graduates" utilize most OTC herbal medications. (**Adlakha and Sharma, 2019**)

In the United States, the use of herbal supplements is highest among people aged 65 to 69, **females**, Hispanic and non-Hispanic ethnic minorities, and those with higher **incomes**, higher levels of education, or better self-reported health status (**Bruno and Ellis, 2005**).

People between the **ages** of 25 and 49 contribute significantly to the increased utilization of wellness goods (**PwC and FICCI**). This age group is open to goods and services. For high-quality goods, this demographic is prepared to pay more. In 2010, there were more than 91.6 million senior persons in India, and 2.5 million more were added each year between 2005 and 2010. Senior adults will surpass youngsters under the age of 14 in India by 2050, when there will be 158.7 million of them (**Raju, 2006**).

Diseases are defined by the National Sample Survey Organisation as injury, sickness, and poisoning. An examination of morbidity patterns by age shows that older people experience more illnesses than people of other ages. The elderly experience cardiovascular disease, circulatory disorders, and cancers more frequently than the general population, who are at greater risk of death from infectious and parasitic diseases. (Alam, 2000; Kosuke and Samir, 2004; Shrestha, 2000). The term "gender" describes “the socially constructed characteristics, such as roles, standards, and relationships within and between sexes, that set men apart from women”(World Health Organization, 2011).

Gender affects people's health at different stages of their life. Gender can affect a person's experiences with crises, exposure to infections and emergencies, medical care, availability of clean water, and other essentials (Blondeel et al., 2018).

Due to differences in how each gender participates in different sectors daily, consumption behavior varies by gender. Their consumption habits and choices thus differ from one another. When making purchases, women look for more options and information than men. (Dorota, 2013). Compared to males, women reflect more emotion and are more susceptible to marketing. (Imam, 2013). Compared to men, women are more informed about skin care, herbal, and ayurvedic goods. When it comes to the effectiveness of herbal products, young men place greater value on brand names. It is recommended that marketers appropriately raise knowledge of herbal goods among young men through regular awareness programs and commercials (Gupta, 2020).

Compared to **males**, **women** are more likely to use dietary supplements and/or herbal remedies. There is a decline in utilization as people get older, both when taking herbal medicine items alone and when using them in conjunction with nutritional supplements. **Age** has no impact on the possibility of taking dietary supplements in Sweden (Stjernberg et al., 2006). Most consumers of Herbal products are ‘**Females**’ (Venkatesh and Venugopal, 2019). Most customers under the **age of 25** are aware of herbal products. The youth use herbal products in large quantities. The majority of users of herbal products are undergraduate students, followed by consumers in the private sector and small company owners. Customers who make less than Rs.25,000 per month use more herbal goods than those who make between Rs.25,000 and Rs.50,000 per month. Females make up the majority of consumers of herbal products. Due to the higher quality and advantages of herbal products, people who live in nuclear families are turning to them (Kamaruniza et al., 2022).

Equal societies have higher levels of social cohesion, good interpersonal relationships, and reduced stress (Wilkinson, 1996).

Contrarily, those who reside in unequal societies typically have bad health. The risk of early death and increased morbidity is enhanced by income poverty and inequality (Marmot, 2002). Relative deprivation in society also causes ill health. Individual health status is significantly influenced by personal income as well as income disparity. The psycho-social school holds that wealth inequality increases stress levels in the low-income group and harms their health either directly or indirectly by leading to the emergence of undesirable behaviors like alcoholism or smoking (Lynch et al., 2000; Murali and Oyebode, 2004; Wilkinson, 1996). Under all the circumstances, women have a consistently larger chance of being sick—the likelihood rises with age. Compared to their rural counterparts, people who live in cities are less likely to get sick. This is compared to respondents who are illiterate, higher-educated individuals—that is, those who have earned post-graduate or graduation degrees—are less likely to experience poor health. An individual's level of education has a significant impact on their health. A higher level of education reduces the possibility of getting sick (Paul, 2021).

Because a person's **career** is tied to a personality feature that varies greatly from person to person, it has a major impact on his purchase decisions (**Taylor et al., 2008**). The individual's lifestyle and personality might be impacted by their **income**, which can influence how they view their decision. Income is also a significant issue. One's perspective can alter depending on their level of education and income. People with low incomes purchase generic medications.

Contrary to those from low- and middle-**income groups**, those from high-income groups are less concerned with whether the price is fair and are more likely to believe in the product.

According to the majority of consumers, **perceived effectiveness** plays the most crucial role in choosing health and wellness goods. Age followed by professionals and those with private occupations are more aware of their health and wellness. When it comes to purchasing products for health and well-being, **female** buyers predominate. Compared to those with **higher or lower incomes**, middle-class people prefer a healthier lifestyle.

Higher **age** groups are also spending money on these wellness items as well. This shows that people of all ages are becoming more concerned and informed about their health. This has encouraged the market introduction of age-specific products (**Pharand et al., 2003**).

Participants with **postgraduate degrees** or above use more health and wellness items than graduates do. This demonstrates how people are getting more health-sensitive as **education and knowledge** levels rise. It can be because those with greater educational standing make more money (**Sharma and Singh, 2021**).

3.8 Psychological factors

Consumer behavior is a complex interplay of various factors, including personal beliefs, attitudes, and preferences. In recent years, the market for herbal healthcare products has experienced significant growth, driven by consumers' increasing interest in natural and holistic remedies (**Tanya, 2005**). As consumers become increasingly health-conscious, their choices are guided not only by the perceived benefits of herbal remedies but also by their values and perceptions regarding natural, holistic, and sustainable healthcare alternatives. Consumers' values, encompassing beliefs, attitudes, and principles, shape their preferences for herbal healthcare products. Personal beliefs play a crucial role in shaping consumers' attitudes and behaviors towards herbal healthcare products. Beliefs about the efficacy, safety, and trustworthiness of these products significantly influence consumers' purchasing decisions. Research conducted indicates that individuals with a strong belief in the healing power of nature are more likely to opt for herbal remedies over conventional medications (**Smith et al., 2019**). Additionally, cultural and religious beliefs can also impact consumer choices, as certain herbs and plants hold significant spiritual or traditional value in specific communities (**Gupta and Sharma, 2020**).

Consumers often turn to herbal healthcare products due to their perceived health benefits. Personal beliefs regarding natural healing and the avoidance of synthetic chemicals lead individuals to prefer herbal remedies (**Liu et al., 2018**). A study found that consumers who believe in the natural balance of the body are more inclined to choose herbal products, driven by the perception that these products promote overall well-being and harmony with nature (**Johnson and Smith, 2021**).

Consumers' beliefs in the authenticity and reliability of herbal healthcare brands significantly influence their purchasing decisions. Research suggests that consumers tend to trust brands that align with their personal values and beliefs (**Lee and Kim, 2017**). Herbal healthcare companies that emphasize transparency, quality, and ethical practices often gain the trust of consumers who prioritize these values, leading to increased brand loyalty and repeat purchases. Consumers are more likely to purchase herbal

products from brands they perceive as credible, transparent, and reliable. Consumers value brands that provide clear information about the ingredients, sourcing practices, and manufacturing processes of herbal products. Such transparency builds trust, assuring consumers of the authenticity and quality of the products, ultimately influencing their purchasing decisions **(Smith and Jones, 2019)**.

Customers' behavior frequently employs trust as the underlying idea that mediates the connection between their perception of a brand's attributes and their loyalty to it **(Agustin and Singh, 2005; Wiener and Mowen, 1986)**. People's implementation of trust often includes beliefs about honesty, safety, and reliability, among other crucial aspects of trust **(Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001)**. Consumers' opinion of the safety of over-the-counter medications influences their level of trust when using them. **(Rainsford et al., 1997)**. While personal beliefs often drive consumers towards herbal healthcare products, there is also a segment of the population skeptical about their effectiveness. Skepticism arises due to concerns about the lack of scientific evidence supporting the claims made by herbal product manufacturers. Consumers with a strong reliance on scientific research and evidence-based medicine may be hesitant to trust herbal remedies **(Garcia-Alvarez et al., 2016)**. However, the influence of personal beliefs can also be mitigated if herbal healthcare brands invest in research and provide credible scientific evidence to support their products' efficacy and safety. Personal beliefs significantly impact consumer behavior in the realm of herbal healthcare products. Beliefs about natural healing, health benefits, trust in brands, and skepticism about scientific evidence all play a vital role in shaping consumers' attitudes and preferences. As the market for herbal healthcare products continues to grow, understanding these underlying beliefs is essential for businesses to develop effective marketing strategies that resonate with consumers and foster trust and loyalty **(Tang and Lee, 2019)**.

Several studies have also explored public perceptions of risk at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, such as the study which states that the perceived risk of a covid outbreak is the second highest compared to other diseases. This condition encourages a person to take precautions to maintain his health, one of which is by consuming herbs that are allegedly able to strengthen the immune system **(Nanda et al., 2020)**. Most people use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) to treat chronic health issues, enhance overall well-being, address unresolved issues with therapy, and alleviate stress-related conditions **(Vos and Brennan, 2010)**. Patients with severe illnesses are among the most regular users of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies, usually in addition to conventional medical care. **(Harmon and Ward, 2007)**. Users of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) are more likely to believe that it will improve their health. **(Furnham and Lovett, 2001)**. When people anticipate using complementary and alternative medicine (CAMs), they are more likely to do so. **(O'Connor and White, 2009)**. As per the consumer self-identity, the use of all CAM forms was positively correlated with a person's strong sense of sick identity. People who choose to use CAM because they have been attracted to it, rather than because they use it in spite of the prior construct **(Bishop et al., 2006)**.

Herbal healthcare products, especially those labeled as organic, appeal to consumers who identify themselves as health-conscious individuals **(Piron, 2019)**. Consumers seeking empowerment over their health often turn to herbal healthcare products, perceiving them as a proactive and natural approach to well-being **(Fleming-Moran and Anderson, 2015)**. Emotional appeals are powerful tools in marketing herbal healthcare products. Emotional attachment to these products often stems from personal experiences, cultural beliefs, or nostalgic feelings associated with traditional **remedies**. Emotional marketing strategies, emphasizing the emotional benefits of herbal products, create a sense of attachment and loyalty among consumers, influencing their purchasing behaviour **(Jones and Slater, 2020)**.

3.9 Environmental factors

Ethical sourcing refers to the responsible procurement of raw materials, ensuring fair treatment of workers, environmental sustainability, and adherence to ethical labor practices. Consumers today are more conscientious about the origins of the products they buy. Ethically sourced herbal healthcare products resonate with consumers who value transparency and social responsibility. A study conducted found that 78% of consumers are more likely to choose herbal products derived from ethically sourced ingredients, indicating a significant impact on their purchasing decisions (Smith and Johnson, 2019). Consumers are increasingly aware of the exploitation and environmental degradation associated with unethical sourcing practices. By choosing products that uphold ethical standards, consumers contribute to positive social and environmental change. This awareness is reflected in their purchasing patterns, fostering a sense of trust and loyalty towards brands that prioritize ethical sourcing (Brown, 2020).

The eco-friendly approach in the herbal healthcare industry involves sustainable practices, reduced carbon footprint, and the use of biodegradable packaging. Eco-conscious consumers are more likely to opt for products that align with their environmental values. As per the research study demonstrated that 65% of consumers consider eco-friendly packaging an essential factor when purchasing herbal healthcare products, emphasizing the significant impact of sustainable practices on consumer choices (Green et al., 2021). Eco-friendly approaches not only appeal to environmentally conscious consumers but also contribute to a brand's reputation and competitiveness. Studies highlighted that businesses adopting eco-friendly practices experienced increased customer loyalty and positive brand image, driving higher sales and market share (Johnson and Lee, 2020).

However, the ethical sourcing and eco-friendly approaches have a profound influence on consumer behavior in the herbal healthcare product industry. Consumers are increasingly mindful of the social and environmental implications of their purchases, seeking products that align with their values and beliefs. Brands that prioritize ethical sourcing and eco-friendly practices not only meet consumer expectations but also contribute to a sustainable future. As the market continues to evolve, businesses must recognize the significance of these factors and integrate them into their strategies to meet consumer demands and foster long-term success (Smith and Johnson, 2019; Johnson and Lee, 2020).

Table 1: An overview of recent studies on consumer behaviour in herbal healthcare, summarizing their key focus areas, methodologies, and findings.

Author(s) and Year	Study Focus	Methodology	Key findings	Relevance to this review
Gerard Lee L. et al. (2024)	Consumer behavior towards Herbal supplements	cross-sectional online survey	Users are influenced by their social connections and typically view herbal supplements positively due to their natural qualities, perceived cost savings, and health benefits	Highlights how <u>Social</u> connections <u>affects</u> consumer choice in herbal supplements.
S. Elango et al. (2022)	Consumers perception and preference towards ayurvedic medicines	Descriptive research	The study revealed that consumer perceptions of Ayurvedic medicines can vary significantly from person to person.	Highlights the relationship between consumer perception and preference for Ayurvedic medicines

Krsnik and Eriavec (2024)	Factors Influencing Use of Medicinal Herbs	Quantitative Study	The study found that familiarity with medicinal herbs and the social impact of herbalists are the strongest factors influencing their use.	Highlights the impact of Society, on use of herbal medicine.
Widyaningtyas et al. (2023)	Purchase intention of consumer towards herbal products considering their health consciousness behavior	Cross sectional survey	Health awareness has a positively influence on purchase and use of herbal products.	Highlights the importance of factor Health Awareness.
Rokhmawati et al. (2023)	How brand Image, Price and Trust influence purchase Intention for Herbal Medicine	Quantitative	Brand image, price and trust simultaneously has a significant effect on purchase intention Herbal Medicine.	Highlights how Brand and price influence herbal medicine purchase.
Misra et al. (2022)	How demographic variables influence the preference for Ayurveda medicine.	Cross sectional survey	Price has negative influence on brand preference while demographic conditions (Age, Qualification, Income, Occupation) influence the purchase behavior of consumer.	Highlights demographic as well as price influence on consumer behavior.
Sally et al. (2020)	How environmental, demographic, and economic factors influence the use of Herbal medicines.	Cross sectional Survey	Herbal remedies are primarily preferred in rural communities, even with modern facilities available. This choice is influenced by factors such as residence, age, education, and occupation. People in these areas often rely on self-medication, using herbal remedies more frequently.	Highlights the influence of environmental factors on consumer behavior.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of factors influencing consumer buying behavior for herbal healthcare products reveals a complex interplay of psychological, social, and environmental factors that significantly shape purchasing decisions. Understanding these factors is vital for both marketers and policymakers in the herbal healthcare industry. First and foremost, consumers are increasingly drawn to herbal healthcare due to a growing awareness of the potential health benefits and a desire for more natural and sustainable alternatives to conventional medicine. This emphasizes the importance of education and information dissemination as key factors in consumer decision-making. Psychological factors such as personal beliefs, values, and perceptions play a substantial role in shaping consumer preferences. Consumers often associate herbal products with notions of safety, effectiveness, and holistic well-being. This underscores the significance of branding and marketing strategies that align with these beliefs.

Moreover, social factors, including peer influence, family recommendations, and cultural traditions, exert a significant impact on herbal healthcare purchasing decisions. The desire for social approval and a sense of belonging drives many consumers to choose herbal remedies. Environmental factors, like sustainability and ethical sourcing, are increasingly influencing consumers' choices. As environmental consciousness grows, consumers are more likely to support herbal products that align with their eco-friendly values. In conclusion, a nuanced understanding of these multifaceted factors is crucial for businesses seeking to successfully market herbal healthcare products. Furthermore, it provides insights for policymakers aiming to regulate and promote this burgeoning industry in ways that prioritize consumer health and satisfaction. As the herbal healthcare market continues to evolve, staying attuned to these factors will be paramount for continued growth and success in meeting consumer needs and expectations.

5. Future perspective

The consumer behavior study in the herbal healthcare industry is forecasted to transform significantly in the face of the ever-challenging issues of health, technological changes, as well as regulatory developments. Naturally, there are a myriad of the most identifiable elements in the form of research and industry, from this perspective the future becomes to be clearer, as a matter of fact.

Sustainability and Ethical Consumerism

The practice of eco-friendliness is not to come by, but that has been the catchword during the current era. For studies to come, the future experiences should be reported with the relevant authors. In one case, the environment and nature will be involved in the topic and in the project. Future research could be case on the fact that if products are biodegradable, or composed of recyclable materials the preference for such goods would be the result, and thus the environment will be the one benefiting. At the same time, they must avoid the crime of oversupply or stock-piling by implementing the latest stock management systems and thereby to introduce to customers products that are linked to strategic destinations for the business.

Personalization and Digital Healthcare

The utilization of AI and big data is producing customized healthcare, the industry is moving towards, the scientists believe. According to the authors, in the following years or in the field of herbal healthcare, the algorithmic approach may be of potential imbeddedness of genetics, personalized health goals, and lifestyle factors in the choice of herbal medicine. Moreover, a study should be done for the user to know if the outcome of self-prescribing his medicine is affected by the purchase of drugs; otherwise, a physician should recommend the user to the proper medicine. In addition, others may assure (or doubt) consumer trust by engaging in such directed messages, which results in both situations having a direct impact on consumers. The result of the usage of up-to-date technologies among other things will be high-priced. Hence, business professionals should be ready to invest money in high technologies like AI-powered chatbots and virtual consultations.

Influence of Digital Marketing and E-Commerce

It is obvious that digital marketing and e-commerce are the main players when it comes to consumers' shopping choices. From development of the internet and the forging of social connections through this new-fangled business model, marketing has reached a period that nobody could even dream of a decade previously. Thus, there is this concern with the digital divide issue which needs not to be overlooked in the process of achieving equal participation in online technologies across diverse groups in society.

Therefore, the merchants' concern with the curbing of these practices and implementing proper monitoring software packages will be the preliminary solutions towards addressing the capturing of online traffic. The more experienced the merchants are with understanding human behavior, the more they know how to sway the person's desire that results in a conversion of the person from being a browser to be a regular customer.

Regulatory Changes and Standardization

The herbal healthcare industry in different countries have distinct regulations about over-the-counter products, with varying levels of performance that result in different product efficacies and consumer trust. The research of the future should be adjusted to explain if for example the existence of regulations, for the sake of the safety of end-users, would influence the behavior of buyers when the time comes to order products. Further to this, policies to be set should be tightened and control regimes should be brought in place to assure market progress and safe consumer goods.

Health and Wellness Trends Post-Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has emerged as a trigger to discover the potential of food supplements, as a result, the medical community showed an advent in immune-boosting remedies and preventive healthcare, therefore, herbal product consumption was in the dynamic phase. The future should examine whether this nomination undergoes a steady process or an alternative lift from improving crises and healthier societies. In addition, the lingering psychological trauma of the pandemic in terms of people's attitudes to the use of herbal medicine is a major issue for research.

The Role of Scientific Validation and Consumer Trust

The need to prove the scientific world that the herbal healthcare is not a pseudoscience is still a major challenge. Forward-looking perspectives would be better targeted if they brought about the interweaving of native knowledge with the cutting-edge scientific research. Primary and secondary research conducted by in-house researchers, were peer-reviewed and released articles will pare the disputes by medical professionals and experts from the herbal medicine sector and prove to the users the truth of the products and confidence in the same.

Cultural and Demographic Insights

The consumers of herbal over-the-counter products may have different preferences in various nations based on the sociocultural status of the populations there. In the future, a series of projects will be performed in which the behavior of consumers in different countries will be studied with the view of recognizing their belief systems, economic circumstances, and government regulations. The period of time when people move from a generation to another one can also offer some distinct aspects of the way people are identifying and using herbal products which are crucial to the marketing strategy..

Research and Education

Ongoing scientific research and increased consumer education about herbal remedies will influence buying behavior. Future analysis will need to consider how access to information impacts consumer choices. The analysis of factors that impact consumer buying behavior in the herbal healthcare industry will become increasingly multifaceted and dynamic in the future. Understanding the interplay of sustainability, personalization, digital marketing, regulation, wellness trends, and education will be crucial for businesses and researchers seeking to thrive in this evolving market.

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