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A study on consumers' awareness and perception towards herbal personal care products as compared to non-herbal personal care products in the City of Mumbai

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Abstract

Rising awareness of various benefits of herbal personal care products over synthetic chemicals-based non-herbal personal care products is translating into a greater interest in it. Herbal products are derived from natural resources such as plants and their different parts like stems, roots, leaves, pulp, flowers, and seeds and are free from harmful chemicals. Strong growth in current demand is prompting many manufacturers to introduce herbal products and focus on research and development. The herbal personal care industry has witnessed remarkable growth because of the growing hygiene awareness, increasing income level, mass media penetration, internet, social media use, etc. As a result, the organic and natural herbal personal care market has grown significantly during the past few years. It is now a key and significant segment of FMCG (Fast moving consumer goods). This development will continue for a substantial period.

The research paper studies about herbal personal care product industry, its evolution in India. It has also explored consumers' awareness and perception towards herbal personal products as compared to non-herbal personal care products.

Keywords: Herbal personal care products, fast moving consumer goods, non-herbal personal care products

1. Introduction

Human health and total well-being are fundamental needs. In recent years, the popularity of herbal personal care items, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals has expanded dramatically. Because of rising literacy rates and increased exposure to social media platforms, customers are becoming more aware of the impacts of various product chemicals on their health. As a result, herbal products are becoming more popular in the healthcare field. People in India and around the world are becoming more aware of the multiple benefits of using herbal products as a primary form of healthcare. With its size and population, India has the largest domestic and worldwide market for herbal products.

Evolution of herbal products in India and Globally

Self-care, hygiene, grooming, beauty, and cosmetics are the concepts that ancient humans and civilizations have employed to enhance their appearance in various ways. Natural products were another name for herbal products during this time. The literature and studies have shaped the development of herbal products in a way comparable to and similar to human civilization and lifestyle. As time passes, herbal products have increasingly shifted away from being used as medicines and pharmacies to cosmetics and personal care products. Plants and plant extracts, which humans utilize as herbal cosmetics and medicines, have existed on earth for a long time. Men were more inclined to influence people through their outward appearance during the dawn of civilization. In the past, people employed various natural essences such as oils, waxes, colours, scents, and plant parts like leaves and flowers directly for cosmetic and therapeutic purposes.

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These are used as necessary herbs and other substances in modern industrialized and technologically advanced times to create personal care products, cosmetics, and medications. (Shivanand *et al.*, 2010) ^[3].

Ayurveda, combining sophisticated personal care and cosmetics products, was developed in India because people then deeply understood nature. Ayurveda is a system of medicine developed by ancient civilizations using their extensive knowledge of herbs, plants, spices, and their therapeutic properties for grooming and treating various diseases. The information and knowledge of medicinal plants that they utilize to create medications to treat dermatological disorders, hair care, hair problems, and cosmetics are firmly rooted in the culture and tradition of the civilization. By beautifying their skin and safeguarding them from adverse impacts from the outside, ayurvedic cosmetics worked like magic for them. These ayurvedic cosmetics are now referred to as herbal cosmetics (Singh *et al.*, 2014) ^[4].

In the modern era, these herbal personal care products and cosmetics are created and manufactured with the aid of technological advancement and using a variety of ingredients with one or more herbs, a plant-based ingredient, as the main ingredient. The core herbal ingredient used in products aids in treating various body ailments and helps to maintain and groom the human body's hair, skin, and oral tissues. Because they are easier to procure and have no or very few adverse effects, herbal compounds are chosen over chemical ones.

Globalization and liberalization have created and expanded the opportunities for the production and marketing sectors of several products in developing and under-developing countries. Traditional medicines and products made from plants and their extracts are becoming more and more popular domestically and internationally due to countries controlling and developing herbal industries boosting their exports and imports of plants, their extracts, and herbal products. Clinical investigations to ascertain biochemical outcomes, market analyses to follow consumer purchasing trends, and a considerable rise in the number of herbal product patents are the identified trends. (Kumar & Janagam, 2011) ^[5].

The Baba Ramdev-owned Patanjali brand introduced a swarm of herbal personal care products to India. The expansion of herbal personal care products began in 2016 with the introduction of products like Dantkanti, herbal soaps with wide varieties like Tulsi, Neem, Rose, Aloe Vera, etc., herbal shampoos, and face wash under the Patanjali brand.

Consumers' behaviour towards herbal personal care products in India

The process consumers use to choose, get, utilize, and discard goods and services that meet their needs is known as consumer buying or purchasing behaviour. The term consumer behaviour is associated with the consumer's Behavioral pattern while purchasing any product or service. It is the mental and emotional change of behaviour during the searching, choosing, purchasing, and post-consumption of a particular product or service (Suresh, 2021) ^[6]. Consumer behaviour is considered to be one of the most significant criteria in the process of purchasing goods and services from any organization. It is true that each person has a variety of dimensions and that a consumer's mental,

psychological, cultural, emotional, and behavioural responses can affect their behaviour. The process that consumers use to choose, get, utilize, and discard goods and services that meet their needs is known as consumer buying or purchase behaviour (Suganya, & Dr. Hamsalakshmi 2017) ^[7].

The personal care business has undergone remarkable changes due to significant liberalization and globalization that has affected practically every nation. Over time, the size, growth rate, product line, and variety of the personal care products sector have changed. In the marketplace, many brands are following the D2C (Direct to Consumer) trend (Marchessou & Spagnuolo, 2021) ^[8]. Additional social media use, internet usage, and digital payments have adorned its growth story's crown.

Consumers have been deeply connected with herbal, natural products in India for ages. The history of herbal products dates back to India. We have been directly utilizing species and plant components. Our grandparents and parents have used these products for various things, including self-care, hygiene, and grooming. In our Indian families, cardamoms, Tulsi, Ginger, and Haldi have been used to treat cuts, fever, coughs, and other ailments (Longe, 2016) ^[9]. Our journey toward grooming has included homemade facials using Lemon, Curd, Besan, Multani Mitti, and other ingredients. A paradigm shifts for herbal products occurred in 2016, and Patanjali was influential. It revived our reliance on conventional plant-based self-care, hygiene, and grooming practices. In a relatively short time, the Guru Ramdev brand of ayurvedic products gained a much recognition and achieved success over other well-known brands available in the Indian market, such as Dabur, Himalaya, and other brands. The Patanjali brand's marketing methods, along with the yoga teachings and philosophy of the company's founder, Baba Ramdev, were responsible for the success story's rapid rise to fame. These factors quickly won over consumers to the Patanjali brand and its products (Dutta 2015) ^[10]. Along with this, the Patanjali brand has introduced herbal personal care products with ayurvedic medicines, including herbal toothpaste, shampoo, soap, oil, face wash, face cream, body lotions, face packs, and more.

In the past, consumers preferred herbal medications more. Shahnaz and Himalaya herbals were two of India's few herbal cosmetics brands. After the Patanjali brand introduced herbal personal care products to the Indian market, people began favouring herbal cosmetics and personal care products. Globally, the same preference change can be observed.

Statement of the problem

This research study examines consumers' perception for herbal personal care products compared to non-herbal personal care products in light of the above changes in consumer behaviour and the market for herbal products. The researcher has explored the awareness for herbal products and their brands too.

Researcher collected primary data by interviewing the consumers across all age groups and gender. The interviewed consumers were from Mumbai City District. The research explicitly cites and studies the well-known and reputable herbal brands like Patanjali, Dabur, Himalaya Herbals, Ayur Herbals, Biotique, VLCC, Mamaearth, Lotus herbals, Wow Skin Science, Khadi Naturals, and Forest Essentials.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the growth of herbal personal care products in India.
2. To analyse the consumers' awareness about different herbal personal care brands in India.
3. To analyse consumers' perception towards herbal personal care products compared to non-herbal personal care products in Mumbai City.

1. Findings on interviewed consumers' demographic characteristics and number of hours spent on social media a day

Fifty consumers were contacted for interviews via recorded phone calls and Zoom meetings. The consumers were chosen using a random convenience sampling method and were from the Mumbai City District.

These demographic conclusions were found

1. The 50 consumers who were selected, 22 were men, and 28 were women, representing 44.0% and 56.0% of the total interviewed respondents.
2. In total, 52.0% of the consumers polled were married, and 48.0% were single.
3. The researcher interviewed consumers across all age groups. The age group of consumers between 16 years and 25 years old provided the most responses. A prominent number of 76.0% of total interviewed participants were till the age of 40 years, representing the young and working class.
4. It was observed that 68.0% of consumers were in the category of a minimum of one hour to more than 4 hours a day on social media. Further, it revealed that 88.0% of interviewed respondents were using social media.

2. Findings on awareness of herbal personal care products and their various brands

1. All of the consumers surveyed were familiar with varied herbal personal care products and their various brands.
2. All age groups of consumers immediately recalled brands like Patanjali, Himalaya, Dabur, and Vicco.
3. Additionally, brands including Mamaearth, Khadi Naturals, Biotique, Jiva, Vaadi, Lotus Herbals, and Shahnaz Husain were the brands those consumers in the 16 to 30 years age range could recall.
4. Only 6.0% of the consumers who were interviewed mentioned their familiarity with and use of high-end herbal brands like Forest Essentials, Kama Ayurveda, and Vedex.

3. Findings on consumers' perceptions towards herbal personal care products

1. It was discovered that every consumer interviewed was aware of the side effects of some synthetic chemicals used in non-herbal personal care products and the benefits of some natural plant-based ingredients.
2. When asked if consumers believed that herbal goods were completely free of chemicals and very effective, the majority of respondents indicated that herbal products are not completely chemical-free but that herbal products are still superior to non-herbal products. Herbal products of high grade are soft, less harmful, and with no side effects.

3. The majority of consumers revealed that society is becoming more health concerned. Organic, environmentally friendly, and self-care products are valued by consumers. Consequently, consumers are becoming more interested in herbal products.
4. A larger proportion of consumers indicated that various herbal brands had been introduced in response to their shifting preferences and inclination for natural and healthy products. Consumers, however, are not as easily convinced by firms' claims that their products are natural and herbal. They wouldn't choose a brand at random.
5. A small number of consumers claimed that herbal products help reduce the carbon footprint as they use fewer chemicals and more natural plant-based ingredients. They also mentioned that most herbal product brands available in the Indian market are Swadeshi, therefore, purchasing from them will benefit the Indian economy.
6. Most respondents were fully aware that using herbal personal products consistently is essential to getting the best outcomes. Good quality herbal products take a period to produce results. Herbal products have only positive effects on skin and hair when used regularly.
7. A higher number of respondents discovered that various herbal products are more expensive than non-herbal products. They were aware that the price of herbal products is more elevated than non-herbal products because producers use more natural ingredients. However, they also clarified that paying a little bit more is worth it in the long run if it means getting healthy and valuable benefits. It is an investment in their well-being, health, and the long-term advantages of using herbal personal care products.
8. A greater number of respondents believed that the Patanjali brand products were the most cost-effective. It was discovered to be the brand that consumers in the low-income segment most favoured.
9. Most consumers acknowledged that all brands of herbal products lacked the same marketing influence as non-herbal product companies.

Conclusion

The research study observed that consumers are well aware of the variety of herbal products available on the market thanks to the growing use of social media and the internet. Now, consumers are informed about new developments and advancements in technology. They research a product or service, read blogs, go through online reviews, compare the price of different brands of the same product, consider suggestions, and then make a decision. Because of rising income levels and literacy rates, consumers can better select products that meet their needs and preferences. The same behaviour about herbal personal care products is seen in this research study.

Customers find that when compared to non-herbal personal care products, herbal products are more be gentle, unimpressive, and free of adverse effects. They know that items made with non-herbal substances can include dangerous chemicals. Furthermore, using plants and their constituent parts for medicinal and self-care purposes has a long history. As a result, adopting natural and organic products for personal care and cosmetics is nothing new. It is currently gaining popularity. Numerous herbal product

brands and items are available in the Indian and global markets nowadays.

Products used for personal hygiene are a great illustration of hybrid consumption. Despite the fact that although customers seem to prefer herbal goods, using non-herbal personal care items is persistently widespread. Customers continue to have some doubts about the efficacy of herbal products, and they think they are more reasonably priced. There are numerous brands of herbal products on the market, and each one has a distinct price range, which occasionally makes it difficult for customers to choose which products to purchase. The market for herbal products is growing right now. Concentrating on a few key areas by Producers, retailers, and the government can further its development narrative, benefiting the Indian economy and provide a large number of job opportunities.

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