

# Green Consumption: A Study of Buying Behaviour towards Herbal Products

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## ABSTRACT

Since the last decade, consumers pay more attention towards green products, and so, there is a sudden increase in the demand of herbal products for health care and beauty care, not only among the women, but also among the male youth. The present study is an attempt to understand the buying behaviour of male youth towards the herbal products. Both primary and secondary data were used for conducting the study. For primary data, 320 questionnaires were distributed among the boys in three hostels of Jammu University; however, only 310 responses were derived, resulting in a response rate of 96.8%. Secondary data were collected using the Internet and journals. Raw data from 310 respondents was purified using factor analysis, and analysed using regression and correlation test. It is found that the male youth give importance to the brand along with the performance of the herbal products. It is suggested that marketers should properly promote the herbal products among the male youth, through advertisements and periodical awareness campaigns; fix reasonable price for the herbal products, considering the disposable income of the various classes; conduct periodic upgradation of product attributes in accordance with the demands of the male youth; introduce more herbal products with positive health features, and so on.

**Keywords:** Buying Behaviour, Herbal Products, Need Recognition, Purchase Decision

## INTRODUCTION

Consumer behaviour analysis is based on the consumer's buying behaviour and aims at improving business performance through an understanding of customer's preferences and desires (Akir & Othman, 2010). In today's world of rising competition, where there are numerous brands selling the same products, consumers have an abundant number of choices and many diverse factors influence their buying behaviour. Consumer behaviour study is based on buying behaviour, with the customer playing the three distinct roles of user, player, and buyer. Research has shown that consumer behaviour is difficult to predict, even for experts in the field. Today consumer behaviour represents a fundamental part of the marketing literature and is the key to contemporary marketing success (Furaiji, 2012). For successful companies like Nike, their success comes from a strong customer focus and heavy commitment to marketing. Such companies share an absolute dedication to sensing, serving, and satisfying the needs of the customers in well-defined target

markets (Yakup & Sevil, 2011). The study of consumer behaviour is very important to the marketers as it enables them to understand and predict buying behaviour of customers in the marketplace. It is concerned not only with what consumers buy but also with why they buy it, when, where, and how they buy it, how often they buy it, and also how they consume it and dispose it. However, learning about the consumer buying behaviour is not easy – the answers are often locked deep within the consumer's mind as the consumers vary tremendously in age, income, education level, and tastes. They buy an incredible variety of goods and services. These diverse consumers relate to each other and to other elements of the world around them that impact their choices among various products, services, and companies (Saini et al., 2011). Globalisation and increasing consciousness towards hygiene and beauty have made the new generation more attentive towards their looks and health (Prabakaran, 2012). This has resulted in an increase in the use of herbal products. The women herbal care industry has been growing for a long time; however, the men grooming market is the new emerging

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market. Nowadays men are more conscious about their looks and health, and are constantly using herbal products as they do not have side effects. This has made marketers spend millions in marketing research every year trying to predict or anticipate the changing male youth behaviour.

## RESEARCH GAP

As consumers are becoming more discrete and demanding, there is an increasing realisation among the various herbal product companies to aim for the competitive advantage; this could only be achieved through detailed study of consumer buying behaviour. The aforesaid literature on consumer buying behaviour focused on online shopping (Delafrooz et al., 2009), food products (Warnaby Gary, 2006), insurance (Kate Valters, 2010), grocery shopping (Mital, 2011), healthy products (Petrovica Janka, 2009), pirated products (Haque et al., 2009), and so on. However, few studies have concentrated on herbal products. Moreover, the available literature has not examined the buying behaviour of male youth towards herbal products. The present study consists of five dimensions of the buying processes – need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and evaluation of outcomes, which remain untouched in earlier studies. They have been analysed in this study in the context of purchase of herbal products by the male population. The study of herbal products with regard to male youth would provide the marketers a strategic framework to understand and target the present and futuristic demands of male customers optimally.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Problem recognition or need recognition is the first step of the consumer decision-making process and occurs when an individual realises a difference between what he or she perceives to be the ideal or desired state (the situation the consumer wants to be in) of affairs compared to the actual state (the consumer's current position) of affairs at any point of time. The difference between the two states can either be minimal or immense (Chan, 2006). In other words, it is a state of desire that imitates a decision process that in turn occurs through the interaction of individual differences and environmental influences. Need recognition can therefore be a first step in decision-making process. The extent of the problem and number of

problems influence a consumer, and the decision-making process they embark on may vary. Sometimes consumers undertake a complex decision-making process, requiring a substantial amount of time and effort (Arya et al., 2012). More common, however, are rather simplistic processes in which relatively little time and effort are devoted to decision-making (Khan & Caroline, 2010). The presence of need recognition does not automatically activate some action. It depends on a few factors. Firstly, the recognised need must be of sufficient importance. Secondly, consumers must believe that a solution to the need is warranted. If need satisfaction is beyond a consumer's economic or temporal resources, action is unlikely. Problem recognition, if it is to lead anywhere, therefore requires both willingness and the ability to fulfill the emerging need (Kourfaris, 2002). The important factors that influence consumer need recognition are health consciousness, family views, and availability of herbal products (Elham & Nabsiah, 2010). Marketers create need for a product through marketing activities, particularly advertising. Marketers have numerous methods and mediums at their disposal to accomplish this. However, all methods have one thing in common – to make consumers aware of something (Roberts & Pirog, 2004). Low price of a product can also motivate the individual to purchase the product. The consumer identifies or recognises the need independently from the market conditions such as price and availability of product, and looks for a solution (Mittal & Mittal, 2011). Thus, it is hypothesised that

*Hyp1: Positive relationship exists between health consciousness, family referrals, advertisements, price, availability, and need to buy herbal products.*

Once an alternative is chosen and a final decision has been made, the consumer then moves to the purchase phase – the consumer then attempts to put his thoughts into action. There are certain concerns that the consumer must address in executing a purchasing action, such as whether to buy, where to buy, and how to buy (Birtwistle & Tsim, 2005). It is expected at this stage of the decision-making process that consumers have made up their mind and chosen a course of action. Lin and Shih (2011) argued that a purchase is done by a consumer after he/she first recognises some kind of problem, and thus the purchase is a solution to the experienced problem. Further, Elham and Nabsiah (2010) state that to be able to conduct a purchase the problem recognised needs to be defined.

Consumers tend to choose to buy the product by considering characteristics such as long-term health effects, price assortment personnel, peer group influence, and so on (Bush et al., 2004). In executing a purchase intention, there are five purchase sub-decisions that consumers may make, which include product choice, brand choice, dealer, purchase timing, and purchase amount (Lin & Shih, 2011). In other words, consumers may answer the question of which product to buy, or might as well form a purchase intention to buy the most preferred brand. Sometimes consumers may have to choose which dealer or store they will go to for purchasing the product. In some cases, consumers may be willing to pay a high price, if the product is perceived to be of high quality. Petrovica, J. (2009) found that major factors affecting purchase decisions related to herbal products are product attributes and services, brand, and perceived values. As indicated by Sen and Chakraborty (2015), ayurveda and other traditional herbal medicines are capable of addressing some modern unmet medical needs, and can provide the basis for developing potential. Huda and Sultan (2013) stated that physical procurement of herbal products by the younger generation (17-23 years of age) is influenced by marketing mix elements (accessibility, availability, awareness, and affordability) and quality of the products. Khan and Khan (2013) established that the company having high selling activity also rated well in the overall marketing mix.

Thus, it is hypothesised that

*Hyp2: Herbal product purchase decision stage is closely associated with long-term health effects, consumers' budget, and peer group influence.*

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Both primary and secondary sources relevant for gathering requisite information pertaining to the research problem in hand have been used. Primary data were collected through a self-developed questionnaire from the male students residing in three boys' hostels of Jammu University, namely Nehru Hall, Swami Vivekananda, and Baba Jitto. Secondary data have been extensively used for reviewing the pertinent literature generated from books, journals, viz., *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, *International*

*Journal of Research in Marketing*, and so on. The Internet has also been used to substantiate primary information.

The questionnaire was distributed among 320 students using the census method and respondents were contacted on a convenient basis. Out of 320 respondents, 310 respondents provided complete information, representing a response rate of 97%. The total population of students residing in the three boys' hostels is 320 during the session 2019-2020. After passing through the various stages of refinement, the questionnaire was designed and distributed for pretesting among 50 students selected on a convenient basis, with the criteria of frequent use of herbal products. Subsequently, on the basis of the pilot survey, the few statements that received a no or zero responses were deleted. The final questionnaire consisted of 30 items, six pertaining to personal information, 15 related to need recognition, and nine on purchase decision. Items are kept in a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5) for each item.

Normality of data is assessed in two ways: graphically and numerically. Under the graphic method, the output of Q-Q plot (quantile-quantile plot) is used to determine normality. In Q-Q plot, if the data are normally distributed, then the data points fall approximately on a diagonal straight line, which indicates high correlation. If the data points strayed away from the diagonal line then data were not normally distributed (Malhotra, 2009). All the data points were closer to the straight diagonal line and no point strayed outside, which indicates that data is normally distributed. Under the numeric method in SPSS, skewness and kurtosis are some of the easiest tests. As per the rule of thumb, the data is normal when its skewness and kurtosis have a value between -1 and +1, or closer to zero (Paco & Rapso, 2010). With the help of SPSS (17.0 version), skewness and kurtosis tests were performed. The value of Skewness was .272 and kurtosis was -.387, which is between -1 and +1. This shows that data is normally distributed.

For checking outliers, box plot is considered the most objective and quantitative approach. Outliers are identified and deleted through box plot by calculating Z-scores of all the constructs, individually, with the help of SPSS (17.0 version). In box plot, those points which are outside the end of the whiskers are outliers. There are nine outlier

observations, which were deleted from the data sheet.

For scale purification, the multivariate statistical technique of factor analysis has been used with the help of SPSS 17.0. This technique is used to find out a way of condensing the information from a large number of original variables into a smaller set of new variables and composite dimensions with a minimum loss of information (Beri, 2008). Broadly speaking, it provides the tools for analysing inter-relationship among variables that are highly correlated and for the retention of a maximum number of factors (Beri, 2008). Thus, after proper classification, editing, and adjustment, the study used principal component analysis with varimax rotation, as our basic purpose was data reduction, i.e., obtaining scores on a large set of measured variables and reducing them to scores on a smaller set of composite variables that retain maximum information from the original variables (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Varimax rotation method has been used as it attempts to maximise the dispersion of loading within the factor, where it centers on simplifying the columns of the factor matrix. It is the best and most commonly used orthogonal rotation procedure. Further, there exists an interaction effect between sample size, level of communalities, and degree of over determinedness of factors such that when factors are highly over determined and communalities are above .60, sample size has less impact on the quality of results. Thus, the role of sample size and over determination of factors become more important when communalities are low (Manafi et al., 2011). Therefore, the present study aimed at reducing the number of variables through deletions made on the basis of low communalities and missing values. The Eigen value, equal to or more than one criterion, has been used to determine the number of components to be extracted for further analysis (Morton, 2002). The test of appropriateness of factor analysis was verified through Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy, where a value greater than .50 is acceptable, between .50 to .70 is considered mediocre, .70 to .80 is good, .80 to .90 is great, and above .90 is superb (Malhotra, 2007), which indicates its relevance for further analysis. Further, Bartlett test of sphericity, which is also known as zero identity matrix, has been used to determine correlation among variables (Steiger, 2007). It is a statistical test for overall significance of all variables within a correlation matrix.

Reliability test was carried out to check the internal consistency in the data collected. Cronbach Alpha has been worked out, wherein a value of about 0.70 (Miles & Shevlin, 1998) is generally considered acceptable. Five factors of need recognition are identified, namely 'products benefits', 'product price', 'product promotion', 'product usage', and 'product in fashion'. Alpha value ( $\alpha$ ) of four items of factor 1, 'product benefits', is 0.72; three items of factor 2, 'product price', is 0.75; two items of factor 3, 'climate conditions', is 0.73; three items of factor 4, 'product usage', is 0.76; and two items of factor 5, 'product in fashion', is 0.72. Three factors of purchase decision are generated, namely, 'long-term health effects', 'consumers' budget', and 'product promotion'. Alpha value ( $\alpha$ ) of three items of factor 1, 'long-term health effects', is 0.78; three items of factor 2, 'consumers' budget', is 0.83; and two items of factor 3, 'product promotion', is 0.64. The items that are the indicators of a specific construct should converge or share a high proportion of variance in common, which is known as convergent validity. The convergent validity of the scale is assessed by examining the nature of association between interrelated items falling under the respective five dimensions of herbal products. The correlation coefficient values are found to be significant and varying between 0.244 to 0.379 for (F1) need recognition and 0.276 to 0.338 for (F1) purchase decision.

## DISCUSSION

District-wise need recognition for herbal products was maximum among the male youth belonging to the Jammu district (4.23), and minimum among the respondents belonging to the Leh district (3.24). Statement-wise district mean response was found to be maximum at 4.17 for 'Products are environment friendly', and minimum at 3.56 for 'Your family members have already used the products'. Qualification-wise mean response for need recognition in case of herbal products was highest among scholars (3.82) and lowest among post-graduate respondents (3.61). Statement-wise qualification mean response was maximum at 4.17 for 'Products are environment friendly', and minimum at 3.49 for 'Tried product is usually bought'. Department-wise mean response was maximum at (3.89) for social sciences and minimum for IT department (3.74). Statement-wise department mean was maximum at 4.17 for 'Products

are environment friendly' and minimum at 3.56 for 'Your family members have already used the products'. Family-income-wise need recognition regarding herbal products was found to be highest among the family whose annual income was Rs. 700000-800000 (4.11) and lowest among the family whose annual income was Rs. 100000-200000 (3.67). Statement-wise family income mean was found to be highest at 4.17 for 'Products are environment friendly', and lowest at 3.56 for 'Your family members have already used the products'. Hostel-wise need recognition for herbal products was highest for Nehru Hall hostel (3.88) and lowest for Vivekananda hostel (3.81). Statement-wise hostel mean was maximum at 4.17 for 'Products are environment friendly', and minimum at 3.49 for 'Tried product is usually bought'.

Correlation was applied to test the association between health consciousness, family referral, advertisements, price, availability, and need to buy herbal products. The result of correlation coefficient indicates that all factors (health consciousness, family referral, advertisements, price, and product availability) are positively and significantly correlated with need recognition. Thus the hypothesis, '*Positive relationship exists between health consciousness, family referrals, advertisements, price, availability, and need to buy herbal products*' was accepted.

Once the customer has decided the product he intends to purchase, then some lower-level decisions like brand, salesperson, amount, service, buying time, and form of payment are made. Therefore, completed purchasing decision is not yet the end of the purchasing process. It is rather the beginning of an additional decision-making, which can take a very long time and might not be easier than previous decisions. The company's marketing should assist the consumer to act on their purchase intention. District-wise purchase decision regarding herbal products was maximum at 3.93 for the Jammu district and minimum at 3.50 for the Leh district. Statement-wise mean response for the district of the respondents was maximum at 4.24 for 'Long-term health effects of product are taken into consideration', and minimum at 3.33 for 'Low price is more important than brand name'. Qualification-wise mean response was found to be highest at 3.95 for post-graduates and lowest at 3.91 for scholars. Statement-wise mean response for the qualification of the respondents regarding the decision about the purchase of herbal

products was found to be highest at 4.34 for 'Product is purchased at convenient location', and lowest at 3.31 for 'Products regularly advertised & promoted are generally purchased'. Department-wise mean response was maximum at 3.83 for social sciences and minimum at 3.70 for IT. Statement-wise mean response for the departments of the male youth of Jammu University was the most at 4.24 for 'Product is purchased at convenient location', and least at 3.31 for 'Peer group influences my purchase decision'. Family-income-wise purchase decision was maximum at 3.90 for family income group Rs. 700000-800000, and minimum at 3.66 for family income group Rs. 100000-200000. Statement-wise mean response for the family annual income of the respondents regarding the purchase decision of herbal products was found to be highest at 4.28 for 'Peer group influences my purchase decision', and lowest at 3.24 for 'Product reputation & image direct purchasing'. Hostel-wise mean response for purchase decision was maximum at 3.80 for Nehru Hall hostel and minimum at 3.75 for Vivekananda hostel. Statement-wise mean for the hostel of the respondents was maximum at 4.19 for 'Budget remains a vital part in actual purchase', and minimum at 3.21 for 'Low price is more important than brand name'.

Correlation was applied to test the association between herbal product purchase decision and long-term health effects, consumers' budget, and peer group influence. The result of correlation coefficient indicates that all factors, i.e. long-term health effects, consumers' budget, and peer group influence are positively and significantly correlated with the dependent variable, i.e. herbal product purchase decision. Thus the hypothesis, '*Herbal product purchase decision stage is closely associated with long-term health effects, consumers' budget, and peer group influence*' is accepted.

## MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

To foster need recognition among respondents in the districts of Leh and Kargil, firms must design a specific promotion-mix, such as advertising through the radio, health awareness campaigns through local health centers, and so on. so that the advantages of herbal products are communicated to respondents. Companies must design periodical awareness campaigns, preferably for the less educated customers residing in the remote

and backward districts of J&K. To cater to the specific needs of male youth, efficiency, performance, and eco-friendliness of herbal products must be continuously monitored and improved. Companies should improve contents of herbal products and price them in such a way that the poor section of the society can easily purchase them. Product diversification should be carried out by the herbal manufacturing companies to meet the changing requirements of the male youth. Herbal product companies should build good public relations, so that a positive image of the product is created among the public. Marketers should adopt suitable warehousing strategies, so that products are readily available when demanded by the customers. To meet the product performance expectations of the customers, herbal products must be upgraded by the companies, by enhancing R&D budgets or through collaboration with reputed national and international research centers. To cater to the impulsive purchase instincts among the male youth, store location, ambience, design, and personnel should be paid more attention. To enhance purchase of herbal products among the male youth, product demonstration in areas where male youth reside and frequently visit should be carried out by the manufacturers of herbal products.

The consumer buying behaviour regarding herbal products calls for immense attention from academicians, researchers, professional managers, statisticians, and so on. The analysis showed that marketers should properly promote the herbal products among the male youth through advertisements and periodical awareness campaigns; fix a reasonable price for the herbal products, considering the disposable income of the various classes; conduct periodic upgradation of product attributes in accordance with the demands of the male youth; introduce more herbal products with positive health features; ensure easy availability of herbal products; emphasise product quality and standardisation; maintain the reputation of product brand through the satisfaction of expectations of customers; and retain existing customers and attract new ones.

### LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

All possible efforts have been made to maintain objectivity, validity, and reliability of the study, yet certain limitations have emerged which restrict its applicability. Due to

restricted resources and time constraints, the scope of the study is limited to male students living in the hostels of the University of Jammu. Thus, the conclusion on the overall male youth segment is a generalisation. The scope of the study is confined only to male youth; female youth are excluded from becoming the respondents in the study. The element of subjectivity might not have been completely checked; the students might have responded on the basis of their own experience and perception regarding the items in the questionnaire. Due to paucity of time, students were sometimes found to skip or be casual about answering some statements. In such cases, the researcher relied on judgements to elicit the requisite information. Future studies can gain an edge by conducting research on the buying behaviour of women, with respect to herbal products. Future researches may take into consideration the actual buying behaviour of the general public, and not focus only on the educated youth. This may lead to more conclusive results.

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