

## A STUDY ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS SELECTED ALTERNATIVE CARE PRODUCTS WITH REFERENCE TO SALEM DISTRICT



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### Introduction

In accordance to the last trends of life style, people are returning to the nature looking for natural food sources, aiming to increase their immunity by healthy diet and to prevent diseases avoiding sedentary lifestyle. Herbal remedies and traditional medicines (Chinese, Ayurvedic, homeopathic, etc) win increasingly more followers. From food science perspective, it is difficult to define a food product that is “natural”. The notion of “natural”, which could be read on food labels have different meanings, such as: products which do not contain additives, artificial colours and flavours or synthetic substances; products which are derived from plants or animals GMO-free; products which have used just organic or traditional crops as ingredients, etc. The FDA has considered the term “natural” to mean that nothing artificial or synthetic (including all colour additives regardless of source) has been included in, or has been added to a food. However, this concept do not address to raw material (cultivation technologies, use of pesticides) nor to odd processing or manufacturing methods, such as thermal technologies, pasteurization, or irradiation. FDA also did not consider whether the term „natural” should describe any nutritional or other health benefit.

The past decade showed the public interest in alternative medicines and natural therapy including diet, food supplements and herbals both in developing and developed countries. It was noticed a change towards nutrition and health: individuals are taking charge and control of their health and they may perceive plant products to be more natural and superior as compared to the manufactured medicines. Many manufacturers have noticed this trend in recent years and have responded by investing in research and production of various foods with higher nutritional quality. Today someone can choose from thousands of products based on botanicals and plant extracts that have both preventive and curative effects. The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) defines CAM as “a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not generally considered part of conventional medicine.” Complementary medicine is used in addition to conventional medicine, while alternative medicine replaces conventional medicine. The combination of CAM and conventional medical practices is known as integrated medicine. According to NCCAM, as there are no rigorous, well-designed clinical trials for CAM therapies. One factor precluding carefully controlled clinical trials is the expense of these studies. Research trials for conventional drugs are funded by

companies that develop and sell drugs, but fewer resources are available to support trials of CAM. There are many different components within CAM, including natural practices, mind and body medicine, and manipulative and body-based practices. Mind and body medicine improves health by focusing on the interaction between mind, body, and behavior. Examples include meditation, acupuncture, yoga etc, The belief that herbal therapy promote healthier living and the new look of herbal medicines as a balanced and moderate approach to healing people are some of the reasons for the diversity and many more new natural products introduced into the markets all over the world.

The fast development of the food supplement markets was also positively correlated with the higher education level of consumers. People show interest in selecting and choosing the category of products which are the most suitable for their health problems, looking for the efficacy and effectiveness of alternative medicines, especially in the treatment of certain diseases where conventional therapy has proven to be ineffective or inadequate. Herbal products have the image of being able to create appropriate conditions to the body's natural capacity for self-repair. Most of the consumers believe in the improvement of quality, efficacy and safety of traditional herbal medicines as result of the development of science and technology. People are familiar to the main plant species and their bioactive chemical compounds, physiological effects and health benefits. Patients' freedom of choice in utilization of alternative treatments as well as the easy access to the herbal remedies is also responsible for the fast growing markets: natural products are available not only in drug stores or herbalist shops, but also in food stores and supermarkets; they could be bought on internet or via direct sales. According to Cohen and Adams (2011), 74% of adults utilize the Internet; 61% have searched for health or medical information on line; 49% have reviewed a website for information about a particular medical issue. A simple search for the term “weight loss supplements”, for example, produced 21,800,000 hits (Google, August 2016).

In addition, marketing strategies of herbals manufacturers and their sale representatives projected these products into greater limelight, while television and radio programmes increased consumers' awareness and given to herbal products respectability and credibility. Advertising was successful in attracting different age group of people . Thus children were encouraged to use herbals for their healthy growth and development, young persons to supply their diet for helping to cope with daily stress and slow the onset aging, elder to get rejuvenating effects, women for slimming and beauty effects and men for sexual life improvement and enhancing virility.

### **Alternative Care Product in India**

The alternative medicines market includes ayurveda, unani, homeopathy and siddha systems of medicines. The market has increased abundantly. With strong government support and rising prevalence of lifestyle diseases among the population in India, the demand for alternative medicines has consistently enhanced. The alternative medicines do not have any side effects and can be consumed daily for preventions from various diseases. Moreover, the strong government support and number of players entering in this segment has also contributed to the growth of the sector. Government along with AYUSH ministry has opened number of AYUSH institutes and AYUSH yoga institutes in various parts of the country. This has positively influenced the market. Some of the major players which have concentrated the market include Dabur, Himalaya drug company, Patanjali and others.

### Herbal Products

Herbal products market includes herbal skin care products, herbal hair care products, herbal balms, herbal oral care and digestives. The huge marketing and promotional activities by the herbal companies and rising awareness about benefits of using herbal products has accelerated the size of the industry. Indian herbal hair care market has evolved as a potential market with the presence of companies such as Dabur, Himalaya and Patanjali which primarily focuses on natural products that have been increasingly penetrated in the market. The herbal skin care business has been the new growth frontier in the cosmetics segment in India. Rising awareness about the benefits of using herbal skin care products has pushed the demand for skin care products.

The demand for herbal toothpastes has augmented in the country in the recent years. The herbal toothpaste contains extract from mint, neem, basil, cinnamon, clove and several other herbs. Moreover, the growing issues in oral health care in India such as cavities especially among children, gum swelling, gum bleeding and others has aided the growth for the demand of herbal oral care market in India. The rich and traditional cuisines of India are famous across the globe. The recipes which are rich in spices and oil are the major reason for indigestion, acidity and gastric problems. This has triggered the size of the digestive medicines market.

### Unani Products

**Unani'** means medicines which are a symbol of life. The name is derived from the word 'Ionian' which originated in Greece. 'Tibb' means the knowledge of the states of the human body in health and decline of health, or in other words, medicine. 'Tibb-E-Unani', is hence an age old, time tested system of medicine dating back 5000 years to Greece. Unani medicine, like any other form of medical science strives to find the best possible ways by which a person can lead a healthy life with the least or zero sickness. It prescribes drugs, diet, drinks and other regiments including codes of conduct which are conducive to the maintenance and promotion of positive health, as well as the prevention and cure of disease. The ultimate aim of these scientific prescriptions and prohibitions is the creation of a healthy society. Traditional systems of medicine are no doubt prevalent in various countries of the world. But most of these are empirical. On the other hand, Unani and its allied branches have rational and scientific basic principles. It is distinct from other branches of medicine, as the drugs it uses are natural in their sources and forms. It emphasizes on retaining natural compounds which belong to the human body, and hence prescribes only natural remedies. Unani medicine believes that diseases can be kept at bay by the use of clean and fresh water, breathing clean air and consuming fresh food. Likewise, a balance should be maintained between the mind and the body so that the metabolic process can take place easily and the body waste evacuated. Unani medicine also believes that all life forms have originated from the sea

### Siddha System of Medicine

Siddha system of medicine is one of the oldest systems of medicine practiced in South India especially in Tamil Nadu. It is a traditional system of medicine which is gradually evolved along with the Dravidians' culture and hence this system is known as Dravidian system of medicine. The exponents of Siddha system of medicine are called Siddhars. They are the super human beings with high culture and intellectual abilities. They had tremendous powers by the way of Meditation, Yoga practice and rejuvenation. They were the spiritual scientists who explored and explained the reality of nature and its relationship with man by their Siddhic powers (supernatural

powers) and experimental findings. Eighteen Siddhars seem to have contributed much to the development of this medical system. They have left their imprints not only in medicine but also in Yoga, Alchemy and Philosophy. There are 6 dispensaries and 1 hospital for siddha in ISM.

The aim of siddha medicine is to make the body perfect, imperishable and to promote longevity. For the healthy life, Siddhars have mentioned daily and seasonal regimen including dietary habits and also insisted some code of ethics. This is the first system to emphasis health as the perfect state of physical, mental, social, moral and spiritual component of human beings. Also Siddhars lead a simple way of life according to the laws of nature and beyond the narrow divisions of caste, creed, religion, colour and nation.

This system is mainly based on ‘Andapinda Thathuvam’ that means the relationship between the universe and human body. These two are interlinked through the five basic principles which are known as ‘Panchaboothas’. The structural aspect of the human body is said to be ‘Udal Thathus’ (i.e. the physical component of the human body) and the functional units of the human body is said to be ‘Uyir Thathus’ (the physiological units i.e., Vatham, Pitham, and Kapham). Functional co-operation of these two are essential for the maintenance of health.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study falls under the broad area of Marketing. Many studies have been made to investigate the relationship between Consumer behaviour towards various products. The concept of Consumer behaviour is always differs from each perspective. Its influence on the on the alternative care products has not received much attention in research perspective. The main aim of the present study is to understand the Consumer behavior of alternative health and beauty care products in Salem District.

In the light of the above, the present study has the following objectives.

1. To study the pre-purchase and post purchase behaviour of consumers towards Selected Alternative care products
2. To study the consumer perception towards Alternative Care products.
3. To determine the reason why people are using Alternative care product.
4. To analyse the aspects of consumer’s familiarity, information desired and attitude with alternative care products.
5. To study the relationship between the demographic factors and consumer behaviour of alternative care products.

### **Importance of the Study**

The study mainly focuses on the consumer behavior towards selected alternative care products. In this modern world studying consumer behavior is typical one. Alternative care products receiving more attention on the consumer now days. For many reasons consumers are returning to the ancient methodology of treatment for avoiding side effects. Most of the consumers selecting alternative care after consulting their doctors, relatives, friends, etc.. Marketing of Alternative products needs different strategy and techniques. Studying consumer behaviour most important factor in marketing products especially in alternative care products. This study will highlight consumer behavior on alternative care products before purchase, at the time of purchase and post-purchase.

### Statement of the Problem

In a competitive world, there are many problems in marketing of goods. Some problems can be solved. Some problems cannot be solved. India is a developing country. So, most of the people are living in rural and semi-rural areas. Manufacturers facing many problems while marketing products in rural and semi rural areas. Most of the consumers earn low and average level of income. Among them selling one products is not an easy task. Manufacturers face many problems towards creating awareness about brand, products, etc. Creating product awareness and retaining consumers for the organization are the long term plan. To retain the consumers, the organization has to study the mind of consumers.

Healthcare is one of the major components that decides urban infrastructure. Health of the city is decided by quality of healthcare services available. Hence, development of high quality healthcare facilities is one of the most essential aspects that decide the quality of city or town. Salem happens to be a rapidly growing mega city which soon shall acquire the status of a metro with high cultural, social status of a metro with high cultural, social and economic background. The city cannot maintain its status of metro unless and until it improves itself in terms of healthcare facilities and infrastructure. Hence the researcher intends to study what are the issues and challenges involved in offering quality Alternative Care products in Salem district?

The consumer is finding various problems in selecting their Alternative care products. It is identified that there is a need for research work in the field of consumer behavior of alternative care product in the areas of Salem District. The research deals with questions like.

1. What are the factors that influence the consumer in the purchase of Alternative Care Products?
2. What is the level of consumer recording alternative care products?
3. What is the level of satisfaction and problems faced by consumers towards alternative care products?

### Research Methodology

To achieve the objectives and to test the hypotheses of the study, a three part questionnaire consisting of personal information, Consumer pre purchase behavior and post purchase behavior has been framed.

### Sample and Population

The researcher has the plan to collect the data from the consumers in Salem district. The proposed sample size is 700. The study covered consumers in different part of Salem District. The researcher plans to collect the data through Random sampling method.

### Scope of the study

The study has within its scope the task of providing a conceptual framework of the term 'Consumer behaviour'. The purpose of this study is to examine the consumer behavior towards selected alternative products especially health and beauty care products in Salem District.

Alternative care product market offer huge untapped potential to the marketers and academicians alike, and the consumer behavior differs significantly from one product from others. But surprisingly, not much research has been done in the area of Salem. An in-depth knowledge of consumer psychology and consumer behavior patterns is one of the perquisites for making a dent in the market. In a highly populated country like India there is a potential market for the Alternative care products. Hence the researcher has chosen for the research Health and Beauty

care products. The research has been done on the basis of products available for hair care, skin care, oral care, food and beverages.

### **Limitations of the Study**

1. The study is limited to Salem District only. Due to time constraint and cost, the study is restricted to only one district.
2. The study has been conducted based on the response of the selected respondents of Salem District.
3. The study covers only 700 consumers in Salem. More response would have thrown adequate light on the entire study.

### **Conclusion**

The important aspect for the sales or marketing of Alternative care products in Salem District is Unique due to awareness and buying behavior. Even though the Alternative care products have good market for further Development. The buyers not only for progressive capable suppliers but often finding them to take all reasonable steps to support them for knowing new products available in the market and benefits of using the product compared to other products. However buyers behavior is a significant role of the marketing.