

A STUDY OF CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF HERBAL PRODUCTS IN BHOPAL

(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VINDHYA HERBAL PRODUCTS)

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ABSTRACT

The Indian herbal market is flooded with numerous well-known and recognised herbal brands. Vindhya Herbal is an initiative of Madhya Pradesh government to provide unadulterated ayurvedic products to the people and for generating gainful employment for the vulnerable and downtrodden section of the society. The study is to examine existing state of Vindhya Herbal in Bhopal, its birthplace. Besides, this study talks about other parameters like benefits/attributes consumer acquaintances with herbal products, awareness, preferential, source of knowledge, usage and attitude related to herbal products. The research design consisted of an exploratory phase followed by a descriptive cross-sectional, close-ended questionnaire-based survey in Bhopal. As the study has been conducted in a Hindi belt, the questionnaire was kept bilingual; Hindi and English. Sampling was done on the basis of two criteria; 1) such regions were selected where almost major herbal brands are available and 2) Respondents have used at-least one of the herbal brands.

Only 23 percent consumers responded to have used Vindhya herbal. Those who have used Vindhya herbal have preference it, if available in a nearby store. Most of the respondents mentioned that herbal products are prepared from the natural ingredient, as a result faced no side effect. Purchase of herbal products primarily takes place on a monthly basis and use on a daily basis. Doctors, family members and mass media were reliable sources and the respondents trust on their recommendations for buying fresh herbal products. Desirability for further information was high among consumers related to herbal products.

Keywords: Vindhya Herbal, consumer perception, familiarity, favourability.

Introduction:

A WHO (World Health Organization) study estimates that about 80 percent of world population depends on natural products for their health care instead of modern medicines primarily because of side effects and high cost of modern medicine (Sharma, Shanker, Tyagi, Singh, & Rao, 2008). The worldwide herbal market products are around \$6.2 billion and estimated to reach \$5 trillion by the year 2050 (WHO & Kumar & Janagam, 2011) (Figure 1).

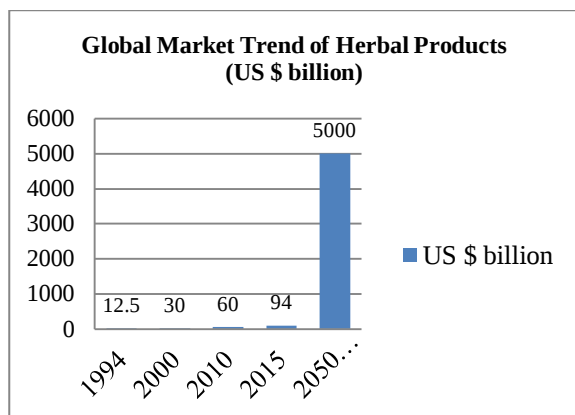


Figure 1 Source WHO estimate (Kumar & Janagam, 2011)

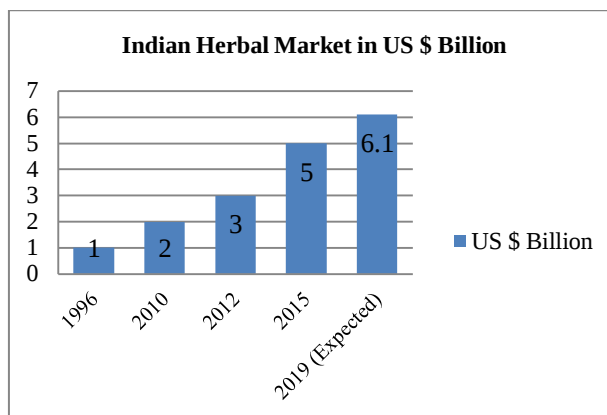


Figure 2 Sources (A Brief Report on Nutraceutical Products in India, 2015) (Sharma, Shanker, Tyagi, Singh, & Rao, 2008)

Indian herbal exports valued at about INR (Indian National Rupee) 874 crores (1crore=10 million) in 2001-02 constitute about 73 percent in the form of crude drugs and extracts and 27 percent as finished products (Government of India Planning Commission, 2006). The Indian herbal market is registering a tremendous growth and is likely to reach INR 14,500 crore by 2012 and exports to INR 9,000 crore with a CAGR of 20 and 25 percent respectively, according to Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham) (Sharma A. B., 2008). Government of India established AYUSH re-naming ISM&H (Department of Indian System of Medicine and Homeopathy) in November 2003 to popularised herbal cure. The Department has elevated to a self-regulating Ministry w.e.f. 09th November, 2014 observing people curiosity.

Presently the demand for traditional Indian herbal products has increased tremendously in India and abroad (Government of India Planning Commission, 2011). Fast Moving Healthcare Goods (FMHG) in India worldwide known as Nutraceutical, defined as, ingredients with human health benefits beyond basic nutrition) industry is expected to grow by 20 percent to USD 6.1 billion by 2019-2020 due to rising awareness about health and fitness and changing lifestyle. However, dietary supplements, herbal and nutritional supplements will form the greatest opportunity areas for Nutraceutical processing, motivated by growing demand from an evolving consumer base (Corporate Catalyst (India) Pvt Ltd, 2015) (Figure 2).

Some of the major players in the Indian herbal market are Dabur, Himalaya, Patanjali, Vicco, Emami and others. Figure 3 and 4 shows the net sales growth rate and of herbal companies stated. [Sources of the data are (Dabur n.d.); (Vyas, 2012); (Joshi R. , 2013); (Emami Limited, 2013); (The Times of India Group, 2011); (Ghosh, 2015); (Acharya, 2011) and www.moneycontrol.com]. The researcher cannot find accurate net sales data on Vicco Herbal manufacturing company.

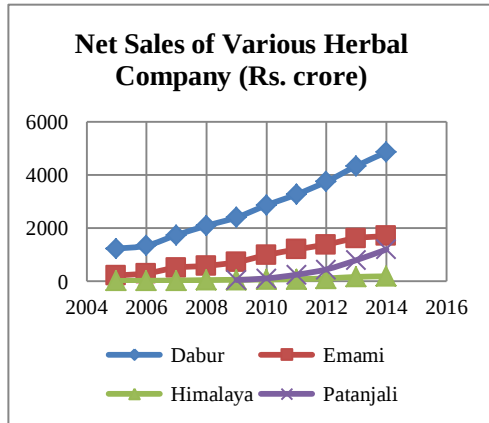


Figure 3 Source www.moneycontrol.com accessed on 08/06/2015

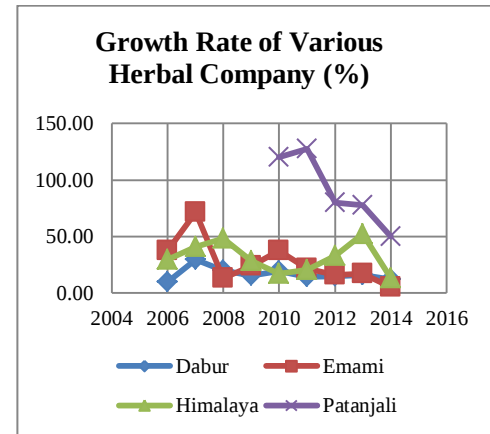


Figure 4 Source www.moneycontrol.com accessed on 08/06/2015

Madhya Pradesh Minor Forest Produce Federation (MP MFP) firm has established Minor Forest Produce Processing and Research Centre (MFP- PARC) in Bhopal in 2002-03 with an objective to do value addition, development of processing technology, quality improvement and marketing assistance for Vindhya brand. MFP-PARC is engaged in processing and marketing of Ayurvedic and herbal products under the brand name “Vindhya Herbal”, which are marketed through a retail network of 25 “Sanjeevani stores” spread over various district of Madhya Pradesh. In addition to MFP-PARC, processing units are also working at Rehti (District Sehore), Barman (District Narsinghpur), Katni, Panna and Dewas. These units are also producing herbal products for “Vindhya Herbal” brand (Vindhya Herbals, n.d.) (Profile: Vindhya Herbal, 2013).

MP MFP Federation is an apex organisation with three tier co-operative structure consisting of a state level Apex body, 62 District Unions and 1066 Primary Forest Produce Co-operatives. It started its operation by trading in Tendu Leaves, followed by Harra and Sal seed in 1990, and later in Kullu, Salai gums in 1996. MFP-PARC is one of the eight firms in India recognized by AYUSH Department (Department of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) for the supply of Ayurvedic Medicines and Herbal products. MFP-PARC provides medicines to Department of AYUSH in the state of M.P., Karnataka, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, A.P., Orissa, Pondicherry, Manipur and J&K (Profile: Vindhya Herbal). This ISO 9001:2008 and GMP (Good Management Practice) certified unit is in the manufacturing of classical & patented Ayurvedic drugs with emphasis on the purity of raw material and quality of products (Vindhya Herbals, n.d.). It started its retail sale from 2004-05. The retail sales were INR 2.33 lakh (1 Lakh=0.1 million). MP-MFP Federation started providing medicines to M.P. state government from 2006-07. From 2008-09, MP MFP Federation started supplying medicines to AYUSH department of other state governments of India. Its retail sale was INR 98.94 lakh in the year 2013-2014 and 52.44 lakh in the year 2012-13 (Profile: Vindhya Herbal, 2013). From 2008-09 sales to AYUSH department of various state government dominates. Figure 5 and 6 shows the sales figure of Vindhya Herbal since 2004-05. Frequent fluctuation can be noticed from the graph.

At present, almost all sectors are facing stiff competition. However, marketers must ensure that their products and services have a preference over their competitors, by updating the consumers (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2008). There are more than 7800 herbal manufacturers and processors in India (T.P., Hisham, M., Madhu, & V., 2009). The increasing volume and spread of marketing and advertising is creating a challenge for the companies to either create awareness about the new products or to retain the consumer’s interest in their products. It has become very difficult to grow, excel and stabilize in business performance.

Product and advertising are two means directly influencing consumer awareness. They have the potential to impact consumer purchase behaviour in different ways since consumers react differently to different stimuli (McCarthy & Perreault, 2008). All herbal companies (or brands) have made a huge expenditure in promotional activities. All firms are increasing their advertisement expenditure to catch up with slowdown and improve sales (Joshi R., 2013).

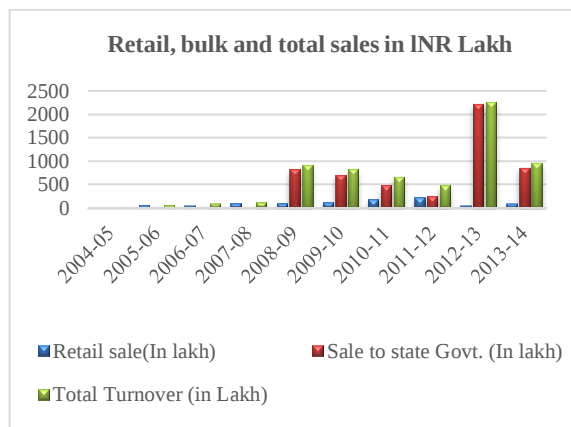


Figure 2 Sales Growth rate of Vindhya Herbal

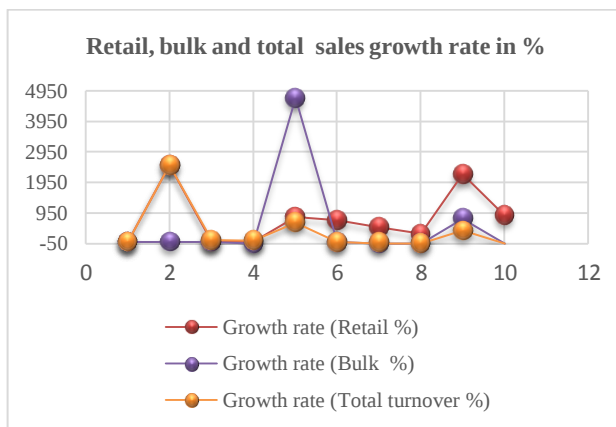


Figure 1 Sales figure of Vindhya Herbal

Review of Literature:

Perception is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions to give meaning to their environment (Robbins & Judge, 2013). In marketing, perceptions are more important than reality because perceptions affect consumers' actual behaviour (Kotler, Keller, Koshy, & Jha, 2014). Information processing model have four major steps or stages. It starts with exposure followed by attention, interpretation and lastly retention. The first three of these establish perception (Hawkins, Best, Coney, & Mookerjee, 2007). All this takes place inside the mind or black box of the consumers simultaneously, and it changes from person to person. Perception is highly subjective and therefore easily distorted. Moreover, perception is the meaning that an individual attributes to the incoming stimuli that gathered through the five senses that are taste, smell, touch, hearing and sight. According to Kurtz and Boone, (2006) different people have different perceptions of objects or events based on the interactions of two types of factors that are stimulus factors and individual factors.

Rekha and Gokila, (2015) found that consumers are well aware with various herbal cosmetics and now no longer considered as luxury items. The perception of side effect and the chemical is the reason to switch over to herbal based cosmetics among all age group, gender and educational qualification (Rekha and Gokila, 2015). The research conducted by Sawant, (2013) mentioned that consumers of the rural area preferred ayurvedic products. They relate it to native treatment and both male and female have similar consumer perception of ayurvedic products. The absence of side effect is the most important factor that influence women in the purchase of skin care products (Khan & Khan, 2013). As per Arya et.al, (2012) consumer shows a positive attitude towards ayurvedic drugs and products and use without doctor's prescription. People treat Ayurveda not as a treatment but as a lifestyle (Arya, Kumar, & Kumar, 2012). Joshi (2008) observed that the perception of people in traditional medicine is optimistic and emphasised the need to revive the system along the line of prevalent traditions and promote the usage of herbal medicines (Joshi K., 2008).

As per 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. Processing of herbal products is a complex process. Quality control, prevention of adulteration and other harmful chemicals is a challenge. It should be in minds that all that glitters are not gold similarly all herbal products are not safe. Proper information required before using any herbal medicines and product (T.P., Hisham, M, Madhu, & V., 2009). In his study Suleiman (2014) found that herbal medicine is used commonly by people, but they lack information on its proper usage. All herbal remedies and health supplement are not free from adverse effect and must use with caution especially by children, women during pregnancy, the elderly, patient suffering from critical diseases and in chronic conditions.

The study of Awad & Al-Shaye (2014) covers an area like level of awareness, pattern of use and attitudes towards natural health products. The attribute respondent associates with herbal products were to promote and maintain health and to prevent illness and build the immune system. They further stated that respondent stressed the need for consulting a doctor before using herbal medicines (Awad & Al-Shaye,

2014). Minor side effects were also experienced by people using herbal products. Respondents stressed on more information and regulation related to herbal products. According to Zimmerman and Kandish (2012) the younger generation seems quite familiar with the benefits of herbal medicine and food supplements but retain little experience and knowledge. The parameter selected by the study includes perceptions, familiarity, and knowledge of six commonly used herbs. The participants were interested and liked to see the usage of Complementary and alternative medicine and conventional medicine in a health-care setting (Zimmerman & Kandiah, 2012). The research of Arya et.al (2012), explained that promotion plays significant role and impact purchase decision on a consumer. Subrahmanian and Venkatesan (2011) suggested that awareness level towards ayurvedic products was more among elderly men. Lack of facility and availability was a major hindrance in the popularity of herbal products.

According to Huda and Sultan, (2013) physical procurement of herbal products by younger generation (17-23 years of age) are influenced and impacted by marketing mix elements (Accessibility, Availability, Awareness, and Affordability) and quality of the products. Khan and Khan, (2013) found that the company is having high selling activity also rated well in the overall marketing mix. This proves that marketing has an influence on the sale of herbal products. The quality of the product and promotional strategies plays significant role in the sale of the herbal drugs. This study also reported that awareness level among the Women Skincare Consumers is contributed by education, exposure to media and advertisements displaying the use of unique ingredients used in their products to create a unique selling point (Khan & Khan, 2013). Thaisorn et.al, (2012) in their study explained that marketing mix (4Ps: product, price, place and promotion) and inflation were factors discovered using in-depth interview and content analysis that impelled Thai consumers' perception about facial herbal cosmetic products. The study of Kewlani and Singh, (2012) found the brand, advertisement, awareness; small size package and availability were important factors in changing people perception towards ayurvedic products and therapy.

Sinha and Singh reported (2015) cut-throat competition in the cosmetic market in India between national and international brand, and between herbal and chemical product. The increase tendency and attraction of younger generation especially female are towards the natural product. It is forcing established cosmetic companies to follow and adjust accordingly. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2009) at the evaluation stage, the consumer ranks brands and forms purchase intentions. Two factors can influence purchase intention and decision, the consumer attitude and the consumer's expected income, price and expected products benefits. According to Uncles et.al (2003), consumer loyalty is the repeat of a product, for those consumers must find a level of satisfaction to purchase the products in future. According to Philip Kotler, (2004) current brand image of the company and its products is done by familiarity and favourability study. The familiarity is to measure the target audience's knowledge about the brand and its products. The favourability checks the feeling towards the brand and its products of the familiar respondents. This defines brand and its products from the view point of the customers (Figure 3 present Familiarity-Favourability grid). The four cases and the respective view of the expert are as following (Kotler P. , 2004)

A-Most positive image: Must work at maintaining its good reputation and high awareness.

B-Less familiar to most people, but those who know it like it: Must gain the attention of more people. More investment is required in awareness building.

C-Viewed negatively by those who knew it: Must find way out why people dislike it and must take steps to improve its quality while keeping low profile.

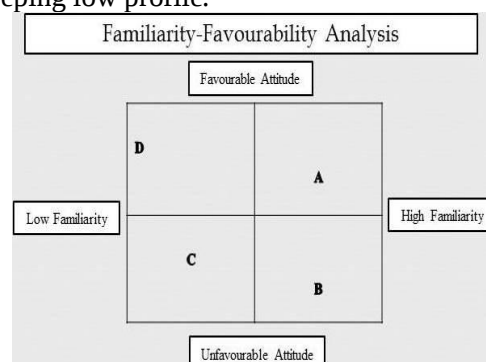


Figure 3 Source: (Kotler P. , 2004)

D-It is seen to be a poor company or brand, and everyone knows it: Should lower its profile, improve its quality and then seek public attention.

To summarize, various studies have highlighted the aspects like consumer's awareness, attitude, familiarity, side effect, marketing mix, quality, experience, belief and knowledge, pattern of usage and packaging related issues of herbal products. Therefore these factors are equally applicable and effect on Vindhya herbal. However, no study has been reported about the impact of these factors on Vindhya Herbal brand. Therefore this research paper attempts to understand consumer perception on the following aspects:

- To determine familiarity, favourability and buying intention,
- The awareness level of Vindhya herbal and
- Attitude, information requirements, side-effect, and purchase behavior of herbal products.

Objectives of the Study:

The purpose of this research oriented term paper is to understand the perception consumer hold towards Vindhya herbal and its products. The overall objectives are as follows:

1. To determine the reason why people are using herbal products.
2. To compare the level of familiarity and favourability of consumers with Vindhya Herbal Products and others brands available in the market.
3. To analyse the aspects of consumer's familiarity, information desired and attitude with Herbal products.

Research Methodology:

To define the problem and construct a research design, the researcher went through a series of process. The researcher first collected secondary data available from various sources on ayurvedic and herbal products. Journals, articles, research reports and government documents were reviewed to get the insight of the previous interventions that the stakeholders and policy makers have already in place. Also websites of natural products manufacturing company and online document were investigated to conduct this research. To have the glimpse of preliminary feeling about Vindhya Herbal, the researcher personally visited Sanjeevani store in Bhopal and Pandit Kushilal Ayurvedic Hospital (Bhopal), interviewed people and store personnel. The researcher personally visited MFP PARC and interacted with employees. Interview of an industry expert and a past CEO of the company were conducted. The study consists of both qualitative and quantitative research. To further drill down, the researcher conducted qualitative research via unstructured and open-ended questionnaires on ten respondents. One-on-one interview was conducted. The attributes, benefits and brands suggest were incorporated into quantitative studies (Malhotra & Dash, 2012).

Hence, the research design consisted of an exploratory phase followed by a descriptive cross-sectional, closed-ended questionnaire-based survey in Bhopal. Two criteria were used to determine target population. First, such area selected were different herbal brands are available, including Vindhya Herbal. Second, only those respondents were interviewed who were using at least one of the herbal products. The sampling unit was an individual consumer. The data collected from three areas of Bhopal namely, New Market, M.P. Nagar (Bhopal Haat and DB city mall area) and Nehru Nagar (including Pandit Kushilal Ayurvedic Hospital). Non-probabilistic convenience sampling was used to collect responses. Responses were collected from 13th May, 2015 to 26th May, 2015. The researcher personally collected the data. Proper care was taken to make sure that the questionnaire is correctly filled. In total 68 responses were collected but eight responds were rejected due to incomplete replies. Finally, 60 complete questionnaires were used for data analysis purposes.

The response was collected using structured closed-ended questionnaire approved from previously used and validated study questionnaire to survey Natural Health products among consumers in Kuwait (Awad & Al-Shaye, 2014). Question on 'never used natural health product' and further related queries on it, were removed. The questionnaire was modified as per local requirement including Indian brands. The question on familiarity with herbal products was used from different literature (Zimmerman & Kandiah, 2012), incorporating Indian brands along with Vindhya Herbal. The questionnaire was reworded in both Hindi and English. The translated questionnaire was pre-tested for content, design and

readability through five respondents and necessary adjustments were made so that it was simple to understand and answer, yet provided precise data.

Data entered into IBM SPSS 20 and descriptive analysis conducted. Two types of frequency distribution analysis used for data on a nominal scale. The simple frequency distribution used for single option question. Multiple response frequency distributions used for multiple or more than one option question. Mean and standard deviation for interval scale data. Separate analysis of Vindhya herbal data via a select case of all those who responded Heard about it and used it” for Vindhya Herbal.

Data Analysis:

Table 1: Demographic Detail of the respondents

Demographic	Frequency (%)
Gender	
Male	36 (60)
Female	24 (40)
Age in years	
16-25	10 (16.67)
26-35	16 (26.7)
36-45	18 (30)
46-55	16 (26.67)
Educational Qualification	
10th and below	10 (16.67)
12th Pass	10 (16.67)
UG	25 (41.67)
PG and above	15 (25)
Monthly Income	
Less than INR 20,000	12 (20)
INR 20,001-50,000	28 (46.67)
INR 50,001-80,000	20 (33.33)

Table 1 present the demographic detail of the respondents. The researcher tried to maintain a proper balance in the collection of responses.

Demographic profile of Herbal consumers:

The Vindhya Herbal consumers profile related to familiarity are middle-income household (INR 20,001-50,000 and INR 50,001-80,000), higher educated group over age 36. Dabur is equally famous among all segments of consumers. In contrast Himalaya consumers are lower income (INR 20,000 and below), college-going undergraduate male below age 25. Emami consumers are male with household income above INR 20,000, educational qualification PG and above between age 26-45. Vicco consumers are the female middle-income group in all age and education segment. Patanjali respondent's demographic profile is lower income group, with education qualification 10th and below, PG and above, male and female of age group 16-25 and 46-55.

The beliefs/attributes associated and considered important by the respondents:

It is prepared from natural ingredients (N=59 for belief, N=56 for attribute) considered to be both important belief and attributes by the respondent. Other belief attached to herbal products are ayurvedic medicine (N=31), herbal remedies (N=25) traditional medicine (N=19) and vitamins and minerals (N=17). Other attributes and reason to use herbal products considered are free from side effect (N=48), good for health (N=41), non-chemical (N=34), suggested by friends and family (N=32) and environment friendly (N=20).

The Use and purchase pattern of herbal products:

45 out 60 responses (75%) said they use herbal products daily. 29 respondents out of 60 (48%) said they purchase herbal products on the monthly basis. 15 respondents said they purchased it twice a month (25%), and 7 (12%) said purchasing it weekly.

The familiarity and intention to buy of Vindhya Herbal products along with other herbal brands in the market:

Dabur is the most familiar herbal brand in the market among the respondent. 54 out of 60 respondents (90%) said they have used it. Himalaya is second 41 out of 60 (68%) respondent, Patanjali stood third, Vicco fourth, Emami fifth and Vindhya herbal sixth in familiarity list.

In similar order (as of familiarity) on mean was scored by various brands on intention to buy if it were available at a nearest store, on a five-point scale. Dabur first (mean=4.42), Himalaya second (mean=4.15), Patanjali third (mean=3.92), Vicco fourth (mean=3.70), Emami fifth (mean=3.40) and Vindhya Herbal sixth (mean=3.37). Standard deviation is slight more than one in case of Emami (S.D=1.343), Patanjali (S.D. =1.183) and Vindhya Herbal (S.D. =1.041). Others standard deviation is less than one.

The favourability of Vindhya Herbal products with other herbal brands in the market:

Those who respondent 'heard of it and used it' (14 respondents) in familiarity question to Vindhya herbal has high likeability and buying intention for Vindhya Herbal products than other brands, if available at nearby store (Mean=4.71 with S.D. =0.469 on a five-point scale). Others standard deviation is less than one.

The familiarity ranking of all the six herbal brands:

The familiarity ranking and scores of the six brands on total score of 180 (3 point for "Heard of it and used it" 2 for "Know a fair amount of it", 1 for "Heard of it" and -1 for "Never heard of it" the total respondents=60). As per Table 2; Dabur hold the first rank (with 173 points), Himalaya second (152 points), Patanjali third (142 points), Vicco fourth (136 points), Emami (124 points), and Vindhya Herbal sixth (with 92 points). Except Vindhya Herbal, (Which comes under "D" part) all other herbal brands comes in "A" part of Philips Kotler familiarity-favourability grid (as per figure 7 above).

Table 2: Ranking of various Herbal brands

Brand	Score out of 180	Rank
Dabur	173	1
Himalaya	152	2
Patanjali	142	3
Vicco	136	4
Emami	124	5
Vindhya Herbal	92	6

The sources of information and herbal products purchase point:

All are multiple response questions, so some of the respondents selected more than one option. The sources of information for Vindhya Herbal products are friends and family, trade fair (56%), posters and banners (40%) and retail stores (23%). The sources of information for Dabur, Himalaya, Vicco and Emami are mass media (almost 100%), posters and banners (48%, 42%, 37% and 28%). The sources of information for Patanjali are retail stores (83%), posters & banners (42%), friends and family (23%) and mass media (22%). Vindhya Herbal products are purchased from trade fair (86%) and retail stores (86%). No response found for online and supermarket to acquire Vindhya Herbal products. The purchase point of Dabur, Patanjali, Himalaya, Vicco and Emami are retail stores (100% for all), supermarket (17%, 0%, 3%, 18% and 26%) and medicine shop (19%, 0%, 59%, 5.5% and 0%). No response for the online purchase of any herbal brand products. Honey, herbal tea and medicine were top three items of Vindhya Herbal obtained by the respondents.

The recommended and trusted source of information for herbal products:

Both of the questions on recommended and trusted source of information are multiple responses so some indicated more than one option. Mass media 95% (N=57) and family and friends 87% (N=52) top the list of the respondents to provide recommendation and information related to herbal products. Doctor 92% (N=55), family and friends 82% (N=49), mass media 57% (N=34) and store staffs 40% (N=24) are the trusted source of information for the respondents.

Attitude towards herbal products and its side effect:

The respondent disagrees (Mean=1.45, and S.D. =0.594, on a five-point scale), to have experienced any side effect while using herbal products. The attitudes towards herbal products (measured on a five-point Likert scale) respondent agreed with most of statement. This means that respondent hold a positive attitude towards herbal products. Except statement “I think that a lot of the health claims made by the manufacturers of Herbal are unproven.” The statement “I think that Herbal products are safe because they are made from natural ingredients” again preferred by the respondents (Table 3).

Table 3: Attitude towards herbal products

Statement	Mean	S D
Herbal products can be used to help maintain and promote health	4.083	.381
Herbal products can be used to treat illness	4.000	.552
I think that Herbal products are safe because they are made from natural ingredients	4.300	.497
If a Herbal products is for sale to the public, I am confident that it is safe	3.883	.666
I think that Herbal products are better for me	4.150	.577
I think that a lot of the health claims made by the manufacturers of Herbal are unproven	3.400	.995
Government should regulate the claims made by the manufacturers of Herbal products	4.150	.547
I think that it is important to talk to a medical doctor before using Herbal products	3.717	.715

Interest in information relating to herbal products:

All except “I need more information on herbal products” and “Government does a good job in informing (AYUSH) the public about Herbal product” scored average. The second was measure on a three-point scale. The respondents are very interested in various types of information on herbal products. All statements scored above 2.8 (Mean=2.8 and S.D. below 0.5) (table 4 & 5).

Table 4: Information required related to herbal products

Statement	Mean	S D
There isn't enough information on Herbal labels to help me understand the Products	2.60	.924
I don't trust the information on the labels of Herbal products	2.38	.761
I need more information on Herbal products	3.78	.691
Consumers have enough information to make informed decisions about the Herbal products that they buy	2.75	.751
Government does a good job in informing (AYUSH) the public about Herbal product	3.53	.769

Table 5: Information interested in related to herbal products

Statement	Mean	S D
Uses and beneficial effects of Herbal products	2.867	.343
Potential side effects of Herbal products	2.817	.431
Possible prescription (Drugs) communications	2.683	.504
How to safely use Herbal products	2.883	.324
How to report unwanted side effect or reaction	2.867	.343

Findings and Discussion:

The study was to understand consumer perception of Herbal products in Bhopal with special reference to local brand; Vindhya Herbal. The research study was carried out using three overall objectives. The data analysis and inference building process used for achieving the objectives of the research was done using ten sub-objectives.

The attributes suggested by the respondent to use herbal products are prepared from natural ingredient, free from the side effect, fit for health and non-chemical. Most of the respondents mentioned herbal products are made from natural ingredient so they faced no side effect (Kumar & Janagam, 2011). Purchase of herbal products primarily takes place on a monthly basis and use on a daily basis.

The second objective was related to familiarity and favourability of herbal brands particularly Vindhya Herbal. The consumers segments of Vindhya herbal products are a middle-middle class, higher educated

over age 36. This segments search value for money, examine products quality and performance. The overall familiarity with Vindhya herbal products is low i.e. 23.33 percent. Dabur (90 percent) and Himalaya (70 percent) are the market leader in familiarity as per respondents. However, there is high favourability of Vindhya Herbal products among respondent who have used it. They definitely prefer Vindhya herbal if available at the proximate shop.

Mass media, posters and banners and retail stores are the prime sources of information about herbal products and brands. A direct relationship was noticed among products information and the use of mass media, posters and banners (Except for Patanjali whose awareness are through retail stores more than via mass media). In contrast, the sources of information for Vindhya Herbal products area a trade fair, friends/family, posters, banners and retail store for the respondents. The purchase of herbal products takes place at a retail stores and medicines shop for the majority of the brand. The purchase of herbal products is proportionate to the availability of products at a retail store. A trade fair is a significance place for purchasing Vindhya Herbal products. None of the respondents mentioned purchasing of herbal products via online. Some herbal brands are also purchased at various medicine shops like Himalaya and Dabur. Consumers generally consider all herbal products comparable in attributes. They purchase other company product in case of non-availability of preferred brand. They do not take much pain to look for their favourite brands. Since most are low priced items and purchase on a regular base.

The third objective explains common herbal products related aspects, attitudes, information of interest and brand loyalty. Mass media and family/friends are two leading recommended sources of information about herbal products. The doctor, family/friends and mass media are the top three trusted source of information for herbal products as per the respondents. Consumers trust doctor (more than 90 percent), to provide precise information on herbal products. The respondents have a positive attitude towards herbal products. All disagree to have faced any side-effect. They all rather agreed to use herbal because it is free from side effect and prepared from natural ingredients. However, consumers are interested in additional information's like the use and beneficial effect, potential side effect, prescription of drugs, how to safely use and report an unwanted side effect or reaction related to herbal products. Most of them were found to have low loyalty. Most of the respondents were using two or more herbal brands. It provides confidence about good prospects for Vindhya Herbal and other herbal brands.

Conclusion:

There is not at all shortage in the demand for herbal products in the market. The consumers concern towards health risk and harmful effect of chemical products forcing them to switch over to natural products (Sharma, Shanker, Tyagi, Singh, & Rao, 2008) How to capture this market and maintain is a challenge for Vindhya Herbal and other companies.

The first and foremost task before Vindhya Herbal is to increase the familiarity. There is high favorability of Vindhya Herbal products among its users. According to expert brand having low familiarity and high favourability need to invest in marketing effort and must gain the attention of more people (Kotler P. , 2004). The brand loyalty of consumer towards herbal products is low. People use more than one brand of herbal brand products at a time. They switched over to another brand in case of non-availability.

Marketing is considered to be the heartbeat of an organisation. Therefore, it is very essential for a firm that it must think that what it is doing and what its competitors are doing and must emphasize to create a market driven organisation. Even after a decade in the business awareness level about Vindhya Herbal is unsatisfactory in Bhopal, its place of origin. A cost-benefit analysis is required to check the efficiency and effectiveness of its marketing plan. The exposure is the first step in the formation of perception. The bulk sale with state government department cannot resolve the problem. The recognition of Vindhya Herbal products in the market among consumers is essential.

Limitation of the Study:

It may not be possible to generalize the results since we followed convenient sampling method and the response rate was only 15 percent. The researcher could not find any response in the age group 56 and above (both in male and female segment) and in the monthly income group of Rs.80, 001-110,000 and

Rs.110, 001 and above category. Also, the study was conducted only in Bhopal city so does not reflect attitudes of consumers living in the rural area and other parts of the state. The bias cannot be excluded since the selected participants were those who were in a particular area and using at-least one of the herbal brands. Time and resource constraint were another limitations. One mistake recognized by the researcher that one-page clipart representing different brands of companies must be used for easy recognition from consumer's side.

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