

# Delving into the realm of Ayurveda: Exploring antecedents, consumer factors and perceptions in Ayurvedic product purchase

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study dives into Ayurveda marketing, examining what influences consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. We explore how product features, communication strategies, and demographics impact Ayurvedic product choices. Attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control all play a role in shaping consumer behavior.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is been used to draw the theatrical background for the study. An online survey was administered to collect data from Indian consumers who have used Ayurvedic products. Analysis was done with the help of descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and regression analysis.

**Findings:** Our study found that product attributes and communication significantly impact consumers' decisions when it comes to ayurvedic products. Positive perceptions of product features and effective communication strategies enhance purchase intentions. While gender differences didn't affect purchase decisions or communication perceptions, a slight variation was observed in how product attributes were perceived

**Practical Implications:** This study delves into consumer behavior in the Ayurvedic product market. Manufacturers and marketers can customize strategies to effectively communicate the benefits and safety of these products. Understanding consumer preferences, including gender differences, helps create targeted marketing approaches and product offerings

**Originality/Value:** While previous research has explored various aspects of consumer behavior in different markets, this study specifically delves into the Ayurveda marketing landscape, focusing on factors influencing consumers' perceptions, selection, and purchase decisions of Ayurvedic products. This research offers unique insights into an emerging and specialized sector, providing essential knowledge for manufacturers and marketers in the ayurvedic product market.

**Keywords:** Ayurvedic products, purchase decisions, product attributes, communication effects, Theory of Planned Behavior, brand loyalty, consumer behavior.

## Introduction

Sustainability, a cornerstone of our collective future, is a principle that emphasizes meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. This holistic approach to living in harmony with our environment and future generations is not only a necessity but also a moral imperative. Ayurveda, an ancient system of holistic medicine from India, embodies this philosophy. It seeks to restore and maintain the balance of mind, body, spirit, and senses through natural and eco-friendly therapies.

Unlike conventional medical systems, Ayurveda prioritizes the use of natural ingredients, minimizing the risk of side effects. Its rich history of treating ailments with nature-based traditional medicine underscores its effectiveness and safety. Ayurveda is renowned for its use of natural herbal ingredients, promoting a healthy lifestyle and individual well-being.

In recognition of the limitations and side effects of conventional medicine, many developed countries are increasingly exploring and adopting Ayurveda for the well-being of their citizens. This shift is not only driven by a desire to minimize side effects but also by the growing recognition of the holistic benefits of Ayurveda. As a result, the Ayurveda market is experiencing significant growth, with projections estimating it to reach \$5 trillion by 2050, up from \$20 billion in 2015 (Deshpande, 2015).

Researchers have argued that the connection between sustainability and Ayurveda is not simple, but rather complex and dynamic, depending on the context and the actors involved. There is a need for more critical and comparative studies on food cultures and practices in the Asia Pacific region, as well as the importance of engaging with diverse and plural perspectives on food, health, and sustainability (Montefrio & Wilk, 2020).

In recent years, India has experienced a notable shift in consumer preferences towards Ayurvedic products, which now encompass not only food items but also cosmetics and a broader embrace of healthy lifestyles (Verotta, Macchi, & Venkatasubramanian, 2015). This growing demand has prompted Ayurvedic product manufacturers to make

substantial investments in research and development, as well as marketing efforts. Consequently, the Ayurvedic product industry has thrived, now subject to regulation under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940 and oversight by the Ministry of Ayush in India. These regulatory measures ensure that Ayurvedic products meet stringent standards of quality and safety, further enhancing their appeal and acceptance among consumers.

The shift towards Ayurvedic products reflects a broader societal trend towards holistic and natural approaches to health and well-being. Consumers are increasingly seeking products that align with their values of sustainability, environmental consciousness, and personal wellness. Ayurveda's emphasis on natural ingredients and holistic healing resonates with these values, driving its popularity among consumers.

Moreover, the increased availability and accessibility of Ayurvedic products have contributed to their widespread adoption. With a growing number of consumers recognizing the benefits of Ayurveda, the industry is poised for continued growth and innovation.

Ayurvedic products are gaining popularity among consumers due to their perceived safety and natural ingredients. In today's world, consumers are increasingly concerned about food safety and the potential side effects of traditional products. This has led to a growing interest in Ayurvedic products, which are seen as safe and free from harmful effects on human health. In recent years, there has been a noticeable trend towards Ayurveda, Unani, and Yoga, all of which have their origins in India. These traditional practices have gained considerable popularity in both developed and developing countries, reflecting a global shift towards natural and holistic approaches to health and wellness. This trend is likely to continue as consumers seek out products that are not only effective but also safe and sustainable.

## Objectives of the study:

1. To study the factors considered by consumers while selecting Ayurvedic products for purchase.
2. To study the effect of factors considered, on the perception of consumers towards Ayurvedic products

3. To assess the relationship between product attributes, communication, and demographic factors on the purchase decision of Ayurvedic products.

## **Theoretical Background and Review of Literature:**

The market for Ayurvedic products has experienced significant growth in recent years, with consumers increasingly seeking natural and holistic approaches to healthcare and wellness. Businesses have identified the significance of understanding factors that influence the purchase decision of ayurvedic products to effectively cater to the needs and preferences of consumers. The literature review explores the relationship between product attributes, communication strategies, and demographic factors, and its impact on the consumer purchase decision for ayurvedic products. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) framework is used as a foundation to understand consumers' purchase intentions and behaviors concerning ayurvedic products.

### **The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) & Consumer Purchase Intentions**

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991) posits that individuals' intentions and behaviours are determined by their attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. An individual's positive or negative willingness to demonstrate a certain behavior is reflected in his attitude, social pressures to enact specific behaviors are influenced by subjective norms, and the perceived ease of difficulty of performing certain behaviors is related to perceived behavioral control. TPB has been widely used in studies about the understanding of consumer behaviours, as well as reflecting product purchase decisions (Lee et al., 2021; Chakraborty et al., 2022).

### **Brand Preference and its Influence on Purchase Behavior**

Consumers' loyalty to a specific brand is reflected by consumers' brand preferences. Various product attributes are considered by consumers and these attributes are compared with competing alternatives. This consideration and comparison of attributes leads to the development of attitudes towards a brand, resulting in brand preference

(Overby & Lee, 2006). Consumer purchase behaviors are found to be strongly influenced by attitude toward the brand; the stronger the positive attitudes, the higher is the probability of product purchase (Chawla & Sondhi, 2011).

### **Factors Influencing Purchase Behavior of Ayurvedic Products:**

**Price:** The price of the product influences the purchase decisions (Kotler et al., 2018) as it represents the value the customer can derive from its consumption. Consumer satisfaction with the purchased products is dependent on the price perception and fairness (Herrmann et al., 2007)

**Product Quality and Contamination Concerns:** Product quality and contamination concerns affect the purchase intentions of consumers. Past studies have also raised concerns about the Ayurvedic product's quality and contamination especially when sold on e-commerce platforms (Tripathi, 2008). Literature also reported the instances of microbial contamination and the presence of heavy metal poisoning in ayurvedic medicines (Aneesh et al., 2009). This highlights the need to employ and adhere to stringent quality standards and labeling (Bhalerao et al., 2010), along with the implementation and adoption of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) (Aneesh et al., 2009).

**Ayurvedic Education and Perception:** Patwardhan et al. (2010) reported the quality of ayurvedic education as one of the major subjects of concern and urged the need for enhanced education, training, and research skills among academicians. Islam (2012) has also studied the perception and branding of Ayurvedic products among different consumer segments.

**Market Growth and Consumer Demographics:** Raju and Rahul (2016) reported the growth of the Indian consumer market which is driven by favorable demographics and an increase in the disposable income of Indian consumers, contributing to the popularity of ayurvedic products. This suggests the strong requirement of studying the factors resulting into the growth of ayurvedic product market in India.

### **The Role of Communication and Marketing Strategies:**

Researchers have identified the crucial role of effective communication and marketing strategies in shaping the

perception and brand preferences of consumers. Companies like Patanjali have successfully utilized communication and marketing strategies to create brand awareness and consumer loyalty (Jeyabrabha et al., 2018). The use of social responsibility and ethical considerations in marketing has been found to positively influence brand preference (Misra et al., 2018).

Chatterjee, Saraswat, & Neogi (2023) concluded that perceived risk, perceived ease of use, performance expectancy, and perceived trust are important factors in consumers' adoption intention of online medical purchases.

The literature review highlights the importance of understanding consumer attitudes, preferences, and perceived value concerning Ayurvedic products. Price, quality, education, branding, and effective communication strategies are significant factors influencing purchase decisions. Businesses in the Ayurvedic industry should consider these factors to cater effectively to consumer needs and preferences. Further research is needed to explore the evolving dynamics of the Ayurvedic market and to design targeted marketing campaigns to address specific consumer segments effectively. By employing such insights, businesses can build strong relationships with consumers and foster a loyal customer base in the growing market for Ayurvedic products.

#### **Based on the above literature reviews following hypotheses are framed:**

- H1: Product Attribute affects the purchase decision.
- H2: Communication affects the purchase decision.
- H3: There is a significant difference between the perceptions of males and females about the Purchase decision of Ayurvedic products
- H4: There is a significant difference between the perceptions of males and females about Product attributes of Ayurvedic products
- H5: There is a significant difference between the perceptions of males and females about the communication effects of Ayurvedic products

## **Research Design**

### **Sample and procedure**

The data was collected through an online survey administered by researchers. The convenience sample method was used. Data was collected from Indian nationals, both male and female who have used Ayurvedic products. The purpose of the study was explained to everyone. It was also informed that there are no right or wrong answers for the items in the questionnaire. It was also informed that confidentiality of response will be maintained and will be used only for academic research purposes. 300 consumers were approached by the researchers, and 204 completed the survey out of them. Hence the response rate achieved was 68%.

### **Measurement instrument**

The survey comprised of 5-point Likert scale as 1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree, measuring variables i.e., Product Attribute, purchase decision, and communication. Demographic items, such as age, gender, and, occupation, were also included.

### **Data Analysis**

Statistical techniques were used for data analysis in this study. Descriptive statistics was used to establish an understanding about the demographic features of the data collected from the sample. Most of the items are adapted from the existing scales so internal consistency was checked with the help of Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Further factor analysis was done to check construct validity and research hypotheses were tested using stepwise regression. SPSS 22.0 was used to run all the statistical analyses.

### **Results**

Preliminary analysis: The demographic data results are shown in the table 1 and Cronbach's alpha for all items was .829 representing good reliability of the statements used for data collection.

**Table 1: Demographic details of sample**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	98	48.04
Female	106	51.96
<b>Age Group of respondents</b>		
Less than 20 years	09	4.41
21 years to 40 years	110	53.92
41 years to 60 years	81	39.71
61 years and above	04	1.96
<b>Occupation</b>		
Homemaker	63	30.88
Service	50	24.51
Professional/Self Employed	50	24.51
Business	41	20.10

Source: Collated by the authors

**Factor Analysis Results:** To check the construct validity, factor analysis was run. The KMO value was found to be .817, establishing sample adequacy for research. Three factors were generated out of the items are shown in Table 2. The remaining items were dropped due to their poor loadings.

**Table 2: Factor analysis**

Factor Items	Loadings		
<b>Purchase Decision</b>			
Purchase based on advertisement	.609		
Purchased considering side effects	.819		
Purchased considering less costly	.687		
<b>Product Attributes</b>			
Price affects the purchase decision		.830	
Brand Name affects the purchase decision		.740	
<b>Communication Effects</b>			
Information Provided affects the purchase decision			.843
Sales Promotion affects purchase decision			.852
The warranty provided affects the purchase decision			.631

Source: Collated by authors

**Hypothesis Tests:** To test the hypothesis of the study stepwise regression was performed. The results for the same are presented in Table 3. Hypothesis 1 was Product Attribute affects the purchase decision, and this was accepted as product attribute significantly related to purchase decision ( $\beta=.18$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Hypotheses 2 was Communication affects the Purchase decision, this was also accepted as communication affects significantly related with purchase decision ( $\beta=.35$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

**Table 3: Regression results**

Variables	$\beta$
Communication	.35***
Product attributes	.18*
R Square	.220
Adjusted R Square	.212

\* $p<.05$ ; \*\* $p<.01$ ; \*\*\* $p<.001$



T-test results: Independent sample tests were conducted to understand the difference between male and female sample groups for the following hypotheses.

- H3: there is a significant difference between the perceptions of males and females about the Purchase decision of Ayurvedic products
- H4: there is a significant difference between the perceptions of males and females about Product

attributes of Ayurvedic products

- H5: There is a significant difference between the perceptions of males and females about the communication effects of Ayurvedic products

The group statistics are shown in Table 4 below, including details as about the number and mean obtained.

**Table 4: Group statistics**

Gender of respondent	N	Mean
Purchase Decision		
Male	98	3.7211
Female	106	3.7421
Product Attributes		
Male	98	3.8673
Female	106	3.6651
Communication		
Male	98	3.8878
Female	106	3.7044

Source: collated by authors

The result of hypothesis 3 (H3) revealed there was not a significant difference between the scores of males and females, conditions (Equal variance assumed),  $t(202) = -.189$ ,  $p=.632$ , hence, males and females perceive the purchase decisions for Ayurvedic products equally.

The result of hypothesis 4 (H4) revealed there was a significant difference between the mean scores of males and females, conditions (Equal variance not assumed),  $t(197.9) = 1.667$ ,  $p=.097$  (at 90% confidence interval). Hence, Males and females perceive the product attributes differently.

The result of hypothesis 5 (H5) revealed that there was not a significant difference between the scores of males and females, conditions (Equal variance assumed)  $t(202) = 1.590$ ,  $p=.113$ . Hence, males and females perceive the communications about Ayurvedic products equally.

## Discussion

The current research supports that product attributes play an important role in affecting purchase decisions. The finding is in line with prior research (, L. M., Wardhani, I.

D., Maulana, W. A., Armadiana, A., Aurelya, A. T., &Pratminingsih, S. A. (2022) and , I., & Rauf, A. (2022)) which establishes that the consumers value the attributes offered by the Ayurvedic products as they offer safety and various health benefits. It is also further established that communication of the product to the consumer also affects the purchase decision. According to ., & Kuik, S. (2022) the information received by the consumers about the products plays a vital role in affecting consumers' attitudes. Therefore, the knowledge about the product received through different channels affects the purchasing decisions of consumers.

The demographics play an important role in influencing the consumers' purchasing intentions. We found in the current study that there was no difference in purchase decisions made by male and female consumers. The finding is in line with et al. (2019) which shows gender factor doesn't impact. The gender socialization theory emphasizes that the different socialization processes from childhood develop different values among males and females (, 1978; et al. 1982). But the results here specify that somewhere the

thought process about the benefits of Ayurvedic products has been equally accepted by both genders.

There is a significant difference between the perceptions of males and females about Product attributes of Ayurvedic products. This is consistent with past research that males and females process available information differently (, D. S., Laczniak, R. N., & Smith, R. E. 2006). The female looks at comprehensive information, on the other hand, the male focuses on just a few attributes ( et al. 1991).

Further, the study found that there is no significant difference between the perceptions of males and females about the communication effects of Ayurvedic products. Sales promotions do play an active role in decision-making for consumers (et al., 2018). Sales promotion plays a significant role in affecting decisions. The activities done under sale promotion are interpreted by both genders in the same way.

## Implications

The Ayurvedic products manufacturers can spread the information amongst the targeted consumers by promoting the advantages of these products. Certified Ayurvedic doctors can be contacted to partner for the promotion of the product attributes to the consumers.

As there is no difference between the perceptions of males and females about Purchase decisions of Ayurvedic products, policymakers can target both genders equally and establish opinion leaders on the market. This will help to increase the awareness and sale of these products. When targeting the women segment the practitioner can also look for providing the trail products to the women so that they can have time to process the information in detail. However, when targeting men, the marketers can highlight a few selected points of benefit for them.

Further, the Indian government can also take initiatives to promote attributes of Ayurvedic products through the department of Ayurveda Unani Siddhi Homeopathy (AYUSH), R., Singh, S., & Singh, D. (2018).

## Limitations and Future Research

This research has focused to provide the insights for individual perceptions towards the Ayurvedic products.

The model created for the research links product attributes, and communications to the product purchase decisions. The research also looks at the difference of perceptions amongst the male and female gender groups. The practitioners can get insights into consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards Ayurvedic products. The present study can also act as a base for studying the impact of other constructs like values on Ayurvedic product purchase decisions.

The future research directions can be discussed as follows. Firstly, this research has focused on the broad category of Ayurvedic products. Future research can consider studying a specific Ayurvedic product category. The various categories of Ayurvedic are for example Ayurvedic medicines, Ayurvedic cosmetics, Ayurvedic food, Ayurvedic beverages, etc.

Secondly, the data collection during the pandemic might raise some generalization concerns, future research can take up longitudinal studies for these products for meaningful insights. Thirdly, heterogeneous populations can be covered for data collection and differences between the different parts of the nation can be recorded to study deviation if any. Lastly, the mediation and moderation construct can be introduced in the relationship of the studied variables to get rich insights.

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