

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Mindful Consumption of Herbal Products Reflecting Traditional Lifestyle Practices

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ABSTRACT: According to this review-based paper, COVID-19 has compelled forces for consumers to make conscious choices. The ongoing pandemic and recent shopping data are reinvigorating mindful consumption practices. In the context of COVID-19, mindful consumption is not merely a response to crisis but a reflection of evolving consumer psychology, one that prioritizes preservation of life, cultural values, and natural remedies. During this health crisis, fear of getting the COVID-19 infection, a highly demanded as well as supplied category of consumer goods, is the self-care products, driven by plants and plant alternatives supported by traditional knowledge of herbs. The increasing reliance on sciences, word-of-mouth recommendations, and social media drivers is shifting the promotion and distribution of herbal products as complementary tools for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Despite this trend, understanding of the herbal products with consumer knowledge structure is an unexplored phenomenon. The product exchange behavior of pandemic-conscious consumers calls for further study, particularly in light of essential commodity patterns, community virus spread, and shifting health priorities. Future consumption behaviors will likely be shaped by conscious decision-making and resource optimization. Key factors such as income levels, expenditure patterns, buying decision-making, product categories, household size, generational differences, ethnicity, and essential commodity pricing are expected to redefine the relationship between consumer perception and product consumption to shape the herbal consumer market.

Keywords: Consumer, Experiences, Herbal, Mindful consumption, Pattern, Resources.

I. INTRODUCTION

Health and happiness are the foundation of life [7]. The relationship between health and consumption practices can be traced back to humoral theory and Ayurveda, which suggests that the majority of health issues arise from improper dietary habits and a poor sanitation system [1] [6] [14]. According to these theories, the balance of bodily humor directs not only physical well-being but also influences conscious decision-making, guiding individuals toward mindful choices and optimal use of available resources. This holistic approach is shaped by a variety of natural and cultural elements, including diet, indigenous

herbal knowledge, cosmo-physical factors, religious beliefs (the nature of mind), cultural traditions, and modern healing systems.

Therefore, to understand the concept of health through the prism of consumer consumption practices, it is essential to explore the dynamic interplay between traditional knowledge, local spiritual beliefs, lifestyle patterns, and contemporary healthcare systems, especially as they relate to the use of herbs and herbal products. These interconnected factors not only influence how individuals define and pursue health but also shape their choices in food, medicine, and self-care at the primary care level.

Ultimately, they guide culturally rooted and personally meaningful consumption patterns that reflect both tradition and modern wellness priorities.

With health literacy and transmission of biological viruses, conscious consumption has become an essential phenomenon, considering the essential products category. This is a new approach to spending where consumers consider the biological, social, and environmental impact of the product they buy, or before they make a purchase decision. Hence, the domain of sustainable, ethical, and natural consumerism is becoming crucial for all generations.

The proposition of health has changed after the outbreak due to the coronavirus. It has evolved a new consumer socialization based on mindful consumerism. The evolving trend of health consciousness in the absence of non-curable diseases is creating a relevant factor to explore how consumers and suppliers are channelizing their resources for the regular functioning of the human body.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also changed the generational spending behaviour among consumer units [20]. This transformed conscious generational spending has been initiated by millennials, followed by Generation Z, largely by the Greta effect¹ of conscious consumption [4]. In the present scenario, millennials are reinvigorating product development, which complements their personal growth as well as valued in their cultural segment. That is paying for functional and symbolic benefits. Hence, during this pandemic, how consumption practices are embedded within the dominant social paradigm, assessing preservation of life entails a new examination of needs, products, information exchange, and the consequences of their satisfaction.

The shopping behaviour curve of buyers shows a great momentum of variations within different product categories during this lockdown period. The consumption pattern has changed, cutting down the cost of the premium product lines. As per the Consumer Expenditure 2020 report released by the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics and the Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs, and Public Distribution (2020-2021), the product categories like apparel and services, going out for food, visiting hospitals, and transportation showed a decrease in average expenditure by consumers. The reasons for the lower share of garments and other industries during the coronavirus would be considerably low demand as people were staying at home, no social interactions, low demand, low supply as labor hours were reduced, lack of manpower, and compulsory temporary [3] [11]. Whereas the essential

product categories like cash contribution, cash liquidation, personal care products with food items, local traditional knowledge of wellness, and personal insurances showed a positive slope while accounting for high pocket consumer expenditure.

Hence, with the pandemic, the new opportunistic niche of long life through essential product categories has levelled up in the consumer market. Eventually, these mindful rationales behind life preservation give meaning in the minds of consumers and provide awareness to achieve it [23]. Henceforth, how a consumer transacts a social exchange in their lifelong interest is a matter of mindful consumption as well as mindful production.

II. NEED OF THE STUDY

Discovering the right demand has created an impression of mindful production, too. It has been found that the notion of staying at home during this lockdown period, with all consumers being risk-averse in their behaviour, has led to them stocking up the essential products to maintain their health [27]. The evolving trend of health consciousness in the absence of non-curable diseases is creating a relevant factor to explore how consumers and suppliers are channelizing their resources for the regular functioning of the human body.

The objective is to understand how the global health crisis influenced consumer behavior, particularly the renewed interest in traditional health practices and herbal products. The COVID-19 pandemic created widespread uncertainty, leading to increased health consciousness and a demand for preventive and immune-boosting remedies. In this context, consumers began revisiting traditional knowledge systems, including the use of herbal medicine, dietary practices, and natural wellness routines, as accessible and culturally familiar alternatives to modern pharmaceutical interventions.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, review-based research methodology, relying exclusively on secondary data sources. The research is grounded in an extensive analysis of existing literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, public health reports, consumer behavior studies, and market trend analyses published during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study applies an epistemological and interpretive lens, reviewing how traditional knowledge resurfaced as a coping mechanism, supported by both social transmission (e.g., word-of-mouth and community practices) and digital platforms (e.g., social media, blogs, and online health forums). This approach allows for the identification of

¹ It's a movement and policy initiative started by a school girl name Greta Thunberg in 2018. This is based upon environmental issues, health issues with bad consumption practices. While dealing with such issues she

and her team showed a high risk with India in consideration to lack of conscious choices for the well-being of the society.

patterns in consumer preferences, cultural influences, and the perceived reliability of traditional remedies during the pandemic. By synthesizing historical, cultural, and behavioral insights, this review aims to highlight the strategic importance of integrating traditional knowledge into contemporary health and wellness models, particularly in response to global health disruptions like COVID-19.

IV. DISCUSSION

In mindful consumption, certain factors should always be considered, like basic needs, health, education, freedom from harm, and preservation of life through different resources with less cost [19]. Nevertheless, mindful consumption is a practice of incorporating minimalism, which eventually results in sustainable behavioural changes. Recently, the narratives due to the coronavirus content implications on conscious consumerism are creating and communicating novel offerings in the marketplace place focusing on only the physiological needs of people by tapping into their cognitive psychological process. Thus, these behavioural changes are complemented by the Greta effect of integrated marketing communication channels. It performs a strategic intent to provide information in the form of products to the different age cohorts, complementing health aspects via the utility aspect of locally grown resources.

If we go through the problematic situation of the pandemic due to COVID-19, it is a chain of communicable spread of a life-threatening virus. It is a dilemma where a way out is not yet offered by medical science. As of now, only preventive measures are given to protect the life of an individual, like immunity boosters in the form of food, food supplements, and traditional knowledge in the context of how to live a life in the local environment, herbs, and vaccinations. While collecting the evidence related to this chain of transmission of the coronavirus, we identified that it is a phenomenon that is just transformed in the form of conscious exchange of products in the marketplace, but no one can eliminate it.

The notion of consumer socialization is not merely consumer learning. It is the relationship between cognitive psychological process and social learning where the role of social media, parents, peers, and society form an image about the products in the mind of the consumers [34] [22]. During the lockdown period, when people lack social interactions, the exploration of consumer socialization at the macro level has become more imperative for all the nodes of supply chain management [27] [33]. Because the idea or market of many products failed and leading to the forceful shutdown. Therefore, prioritizing human life necessitates a focus on essential product categories that support traditional knowledge of health, well-being, and resilience during times of crisis.

4.1 Essential Commodities and Conscious Consumption

Essential commodities are necessary for the interest of all people, where they pay a specific amount of money for a particular situation [8²].

During the COVID-19 period, when income sources are limited, the most essential product categories are food and food supplements. The rise in the prices of essential commodities is leading to an increase in monthly household expenditures, especially on food items, assuring immunity and a healthy life. But the factual information it's not a COVID-19 period, which made people pay extra from their pocket for their well-being [24]. The high out-of-pocket costs have remained a typical episode for the people of developing and underdeveloped countries.

However, this expenditure has become more pronounced among the masses with the matter of the COVID-19 pandemic situation. The main reason is poor allocation of public health expenditure budget out of the GDP (gross domestic product) by the federal bodies, and less awareness of people related to the essential commodities and mindful consumption practices. Essential commodities are vital for human survival; they provide control of the production, supply, and consumer satisfaction (The Essential Commodities Act, 1955) [9]. These essential commodities include:

Drugs (1)	Fertilizers (2)	Foodstuffs, including edible oil seeds and oil (3)	Hank Yarn made wholly from Cotton (4)	Petroleum & Petroleum Products (5)	Raw Jute & Jute Textiles (6)	i. Seeds of Food Crops and seeds of fruits and vegetables (7)
Rice, Wheat, Atta, Gram, Arhar Dal, Urad dal, Masoor Dal, Tea, Sugar, Salt, Milk Vanaspati, Groundnut oil, Mustard Oil, Soya Oil, Palm Oil, Sunflower Oil, Gur, Potato, Onion, Tomato						ii. Seeds of Cattle Fodder
						iii. Jute Seeds
						iv. Cotton Seeds

[17]

All the above-mentioned essential commodities are meant to describe the necessities to live a healthy life, reinforced by an accommodative purchase decision³. The point of observation in this table is that the majority of essential commodities are coming out of plants and plant alternatives. And they are also known as food supplements and part of the complementary alternative medicine system. Hence, consumerism focuses on a healthy lifestyle through traditional and indigenous ethno-botanical resources [21].

Consumerism is a matter of legislation. The social reality of biological influences is shifting towards the health consciousness of consumers. In other words, health

² <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/essential-commodity>

consciousness is described as an attitude in which one has an awareness of the healthiness of one's diet and lifestyle [10].

Food security and sanitation have become the centre of concern [31]. The consumers have shown a perceived and real risk against the use of allopathic medicines [30] [32]. High cost, side effects, poor resources, and less accessibility of the Western health care system are the reasons for such perceptions. Increasing concern towards health and healthy diets has changed the perspectives of consumers and producers. However, these changes are seeking only those offerings that have a longer and favourable impact on consumers' lifestyles.

Due to a lack of a medicinal cure for COVID-19, only immunization of the human body via diet and food supplements is a defense. Food, which is termed an immunity booster in modern and traditional knowledge, is in great demand. Globally, a debate arises that is harmony of life significantly depends on nature, clean air, locally grown food, wild forest food, sunlight, and vitamins in terms of natural resources.

The situation assessment due to the pandemic changed the culture of health and healthy consumption practices in day-to-day life. While in the absence of any curable clinical treatments against coronavirus, the evidence noticed at the early stage to break this spread of cluster transmissions was social disconnection, social isolation, personal hygiene, and food consumption habits have been considered as the most essential measures for health maintenance.

Earlier, herbs and plant alternatives were perceived in the category of medicines by consumers. But through the stimulus of COVID-19, consumers have started interpreting them as a part of regular life. Therefore, now consumer consciousness is supporting herbal-health product consciousness. With this, the WHO health guidelines for the promotion of herbal products and herbal supplements have highlighted the need for new product offerings in the FMCG sector.

And the positive effect of the coronavirus has raised the global industrial value of plant alternatives and herbal products more than USD 130 billion, which was only a target in 2019, as per the report of PIB, 2019, and Market Research Future, 2019. Therefore, this area is at the stage of introduction only, and very few specific studies related to health consciousness, trading, and the commercial value of this industry have been conducted.

With the vaccine booster shots of COVID-19, consumer consciousness is learning new consumption behaviour. These involvements of consumer socialization with products were shifted downwards in Maslow's hierarchy,

³ A household group members decision or agreement on what to buy and who get to use it with maximum utility

as well as thematically centralized towards a healthy lifestyle. Those who have stayed at home to preserve their life and enhance immunity started eating healthy and doing physical workouts with available resources using traditional value propositions and activities like Yoga, exercises, meditation, eating fresh food and citrus products, and living in harmony with nature.

The point to ponder here is, how do consumer patterns paradigm shifts depict in the marketplace? Will this new lifestyle approach be centric towards health conscious? Will this give rise to new consumption patterns? Is it permanency, or is it a COVID-19 pandemic-generated fad or trend? How markets take a competitive advantage and establish a strategic shift when 'preservation of life' is a cardinal principle of the new consumption shift. What are the key performance and key experience indicators that can engage consumers for the long term? In mindful consumption, why are consumers ready to pay higher prices? Who benefits from the conscious consumer? Is it an evolution of new market sub-segmentation in various segments? To a great extent, the answer is yes, this is a new sub-segmentation that needs to be characterized to form a new market or a product, or a brand image [13].

Health has become a survival need, and hierarchical motivation has shifted towards the physiological needs of all age cohorts, leaving other needs in a latent state. However, the pandemic positioning of this word in the consumer consciousness plays a significant role in raising the demand for self-care products and services.

Hence, the conscious product involvement and utility aspects with complementary synergies essentially should be studied from the meta point of view. This meta point of view is a composition of interrelated markets. These interrelated market forces are that part of cross-disciplinary study of behavioural aspects (includes perception, personality & attitude), situational aspects (includes income, age, information, environment & climate) and satisfactory aspects (includes motivation, innovation, utility & reinforcements) which could create and add values in the lives of people who are buying and consuming products and services.

The concept of utility and mindful consumerism is a powerful trend in healthy consumption practices. To quote management guru CK Prahlad, *no one is resource-poor*. When it comes to investing in life for living healthy life, consumer always wants a value-oriented and qualitative product. The value of any item is the function of its output [15] [16]. We need to understand the behavioural and consumer psychology of shoppers in the pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and after the pandemic era.

Henceforth, we can develop the concept of mindful consumption with the utility aspects of plant/herb-based traditional knowledge of essential commodities for different

age cohorts. And the point of discussion will relate to different aspects like income and expenditure utility, risk-benefit payoff, health benefits, future survival, resource utility, with traditional knowledge. With wide variations of responses in the pattern of consumption, this study evolves the concept of utility by incorporating conscious choices in self-care products and food items with available resource knowledge.

4.2 Indian Consumer and Herbal Consciousness in Essential Commodities

The healthcare ecosystem seems to be a critical function in its development for any country. All South Asian countries have a rich heritage of plant-based traditional health care systems in the form of preventive, therapeutic, and curative treatment to heal the infirm bodies. By seeing the potentialities of this system, all South Asian countries made it official to commercialize the traditional knowledge of natural resources. In addition to this, intellectual property rights are given in the form of patent laws to preserve this traditional knowledge in the field of natural products, traditional herbal medicines, and herbal medicinal products [18]. The reasons for these patent claims provide a high market share in the food and beverage industry, a large part of the international drugs market, and the cosmetic industry.

In India, the role of Ayurveda with plant alternatives (known as herbs) seems to have been studied and practiced since Vedic times. This thematic practice is based upon the association of herbal product attributes with the traditional health care system. In order to promote the eco-innovative, unique offerings of Ayurveda, the government of India introduced an AYUSH ministry in 2014. After seeing the positive responses and involvement of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy), health transformation has focused on the promotion of herbal and ayurvedic products in the Indian FMCG sector. Hence, it is an emerging as well as unexplored area under the consumer market of daily needs.

The majority of Ayurveda literature dedicates an elaborate section on food, nature of food, herbs, herb supplements, and their significance in the health and wellness sector [25]. Ayurveda has been classified based on morphological features which are having corresponding physiological as well as psychological actions, which initiated the idea of mindful choices and conscious consumerism.

The current study aims to explore how consumption behavior in India is evolving in response to different variants of the COVID-19 virus, with a focus on emerging narratives that incorporate food and lifestyle changes, particularly the use of herbal-based decoctions. In Asian countries, the interpersonal goals and social development goals are valued more than self-actualization needs (Keller

et al, 2020). Indeed, Asia's rapid growth with 2/3rd poor the world population shows high pocket expenditure on primary and biological needs, which are fulfilled through natural resources [24].

The dualisms of people with westernization and their demand segment of regular foods still retain the utility value of local-traditional knowledge and ethnicity. By regular demand, we mean essential commodities that fulfill the primary, biological, and survival needs of an individual. With high promotion and distribution of herbs in terms of complementary alternatives for a healthy lifestyle, the consumer goods sector has come up with a new mass production range of herbal products. Henceforth, managing the herbal brand with consumer knowledge structure is an unexplored phenomenon that needs a strategic evolution.

The social determinants for the culture of health primarily include food and dietary supplements [33]. *As per the WHO, "health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."* It is a holistic approach. Consumer is a part of biological influences as well as constitutes a significant part of natural phenomena. Being a heterotrophic component and macro consumer of the ecosystem, human beings are largely dependent on autotrophs for their survival needs⁴. Here in this paper, macro consumers are human being who largely depends on plants and plant alternatives for their healthy life. Hence, they have a positive response to natural offerings. The increasing role of buying and consuming products for personal health benefits is directing attention towards traditional knowledge of herbs and natural products.

As per the WHO, 80 percent world's population shows its dependency on natural resources for the fulfillment of their primary needs. That is highly influenced by herbs and herbal resources [26]. Consumers play a vital role in reshaping the local resources into products due to their cultural value system. Herbs have been considered in the category of food (Cliver, 2010). Therefore, the application of this principle assumption is critical in the consumer goods category. It is like taking back the existing nature of the product, i.e., unsought goods from the product life cycle and the transition of the new product range into regular demand.

The herbal proposition of being healthy is a new segment of the 21st century. It is foreshadowing the massive shift happening in our traditional food habits. Recent episodes of product-market fit in the coronavirus situation stimulate the mindset of the people. And this statement articulates the ideology of mindful consumption, where herbal is not a

⁴ Deb, S. C. (2003). *Environmental management* (2nd ed.). Jaico Publishing House.
<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=MA5OAOAACA>

brand or name only, but it's an acceptance. An acceptance of herbal culture is supported by geographical traditions, religion, and ethnicity.

Adding to this, the pandemic situation arises due to COVID-19, resulting in the greatest opportunity for the FMCG sector. Consumers are looking for those products that have nutritional and immune booster characteristics. Dietary supplements for immunity boosters are backed by ancient literature on food habits and knowledge about nature, especially influenced by Ayurveda, a scientific way of life. Now globally, the health and national reconstruction is highly focused on primary health care products, including all FMCG product lines.

This consumer learning process is a combination of conscious and unconscious processes supported by external and internal stimuli. In India, the Patanjali Ayurveda and Herbal products in the retail sector have positively changed the consumer perception towards the use of herbal products in daily life. This company had recognized the value of biological influences and natural environment in the lifestyle of its consumers to shape their buying behaviour.

The current situation of COVID-19 made this statement true that 'the times of change present opportunities for change'. Purpose-driven marketing and consumer-conscious work as a mindful concept for positioning products in the targeted market. Hence, how the concept of health seems to be influenced by the herbal and plant-driven traditional health care system needs to be studied. During the pandemic, the threat of virus transmission compelled people to stay at home, reinforcing the perceived benefits of a healthy life through social distancing. In this context of social distancing, food supplements, fresh foods, plant-based alternatives, and herbal fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) are recognized as essential components of a healthy lifestyle by Indian federal authorities.

V. CONCLUSION

Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the trend of herbal consumption, with consumers increasingly seeking natural and local products to bolster their health and well-being. However, the underlying drivers and motivations behind this trend remain understudied. This research aims to address this gap by exploring how herbal products have become a growing trend post-COVID-19, and what factors are contributing to their increased adoption.

While concluding this paper, we can say that the pandemic consumer consciousness counterpoises the culture of consumption with strong preferences for herbal products. Before COVID-19, the dominant social paradigm perpetuated the ideology of conscious consumerism under the domains of technology, society, and the environment. But the situation assessment of the COVID-19 world

widely shifted the mindful consumption under the field of essential product categories, assuring health benefits. Henceforth, it's a wave of social conformity forming a local green consumer society.

This paper advocated the concept of mindful consumption with the theory of minimalism during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Furthermore, in marketing and behavioural studies, it is important to question the satisfaction of consumers' personal needs and wants. The reason is that the consumption of products and services in a specific situation comes under the consideration of society, managerial & firm perspectives [2] [12]. But while defining these marketing activities, very few researchers and authors talked about biological viruses and prevention from natural products as a way to deal with such non-curable problems like COVID-19.

Health has been defined as an asset [29]. As consumers, we play a vital role in the health of an economy [28]. Hence, any products or services for which a consumer is making an exchange to fulfil their physiological requirements eventually have long-term interests. So, the mindful production and consumption do matter in social exchange.

During this time of crisis and recession, when cash contribution was needed at its most, the price inflation of these commodities made the economic development low and made poor people vulnerable. We have listed the names of essential commodities. And attached consciousness of consumers for their own and others' well-being.

The sustainable conscious consumerism in the era of inflation is becoming questionable. The structure of conscious evolution and value proposition is getting decided by the prices in a country like India. Except salt, onion, potato, and tomato, every packaged branded essential commodity is charging plus 5% GST over their listed prices. And the exceptional essential food product category is getting dominated by the producers. Reasons would be no government regulation, hoarding, artificial price rise, shortage of supply, poor supply chain management, climate change, and international pricing [28].

The need for cash contribution for managing the monthly household expenditure has become imperative for conscious consumerism. But the inflation indexes in the coronavirus time make conscious social exchange complex will lead to unhealthy stimulus. Though marketing paradigm is talking about conscious consumerism, behavioral sciences, but how it can sustain in the inflationary environment of household expenditure has become a matter of discussion and question as well.

Indeed, this novel virus is creating a novel opportunity as well as a novel consumer consciousness in favour of local

natural resources. And this opportunity is more favourable to rural people, where accessibility to forest goods is more than visiting urban places for encountering health-related services.

In rural areas where diagnosing and curing are not accessible, but herbiculture provides solutions as a medicine, as a food, and a health-oriented product in the daily lives of people. The biggest drawback of Western health care is that it ignores the socio-cultural and political environment of rural communities. As herbiculture is the concept of the rural/indigenous/forest domain now trending globally to heal unwell people.

Health care sector follows a centralized approach. Hence, whatever statement or idea is drawn by it, consumers and consumer goods industries will follow it. After the arrival of AYUSH, AYUSH practitioners, Patanjali Herbal Ayurvedic clinic, Patanjali Herbal Ayurvedic medicines, Patanjali Herbal Ayurvedic food chain, Patanjali herbal gardens, a revolution has been entered into healthy consumer socialization as a primary care source, including rural areas too.

Consumer socialization is an integral part of mindful consumption. Because it defines the development of a thought process and touch points with specific product involvement in society. Consumer socialization provides social agents who create, communicate, and deliver the value propositions in the minds of consumers for quality of life through integrated communication channels. The information that passes through these media makes products. Hence, the conscious product involvement and utility aspects with complementary synergies essentially should be studied from the meta point of view with the present market scenario.

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