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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## A STUDY ON CONSUMER ATTITUDE AND PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS HERBAL PRODUCTS IN INDIA

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### Abstract

The desire for knowledge and the preference for natural or plant-based medicines, cosmetics, and botanical products are increasing worldwide, irrespective of developed and developing nations. This growth is mainly attributed to several factors, as these products are considered to have minimal or no side effects and are available at affordable prices. The market remains highly consumer-driven, and organizations continuously attempt to understand patterns of consumer buying behaviour, which is often complex and dynamic. Various factors influence consumer perception, including personal beliefs, price considerations, brand image, perceived benefits, and product effectiveness. These aspects form an important part of consumer behavioural studies. Individuals increasingly rely on herbal and natural products in their daily lives and show strong confidence in herbal remedies and traditional treatments. Apart from perception, external influences such as media exposure, medical professionals' recommendations, and social opinions also affect consumers' purchasing decisions and usage patterns.

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### Introduction:-

According to studies conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO), a large proportion of the global population depends more on herbal medicines and natural products than on modern pharmaceutical treatments. Herbal remedies have been practiced for centuries, even before the emergence and advancement of contemporary medical science. Traditional healing systems have continued to play an important role in maintaining human health across different cultures and regions.

### Herbal Medicine:-

Herbal medicines are utilized by nearly 70–80 percent of the world's population because they are generally considered safe, cost-effective, and associated with fewer side effects. These products are commonly used for treating minor health problems, improving physical fitness, maintaining overall well-being, and managing certain

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chronic conditions. Many herbal preparations are available as over-the-counter (OTC) products and can be purchased without medical prescription. In India, traditional systems of medicine have a history extending over 5,000 years, popularly known as Ayurveda. Ayurveda emphasizes balanced nutrition, lifestyle practices, and herbal remedies for preventing as well as treating physical and mental illnesses.

**Overview of Herbal Products:-**

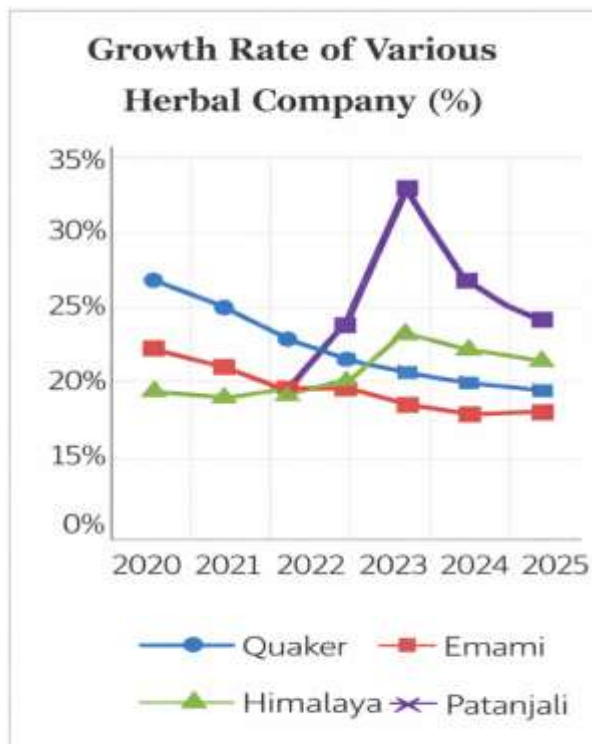
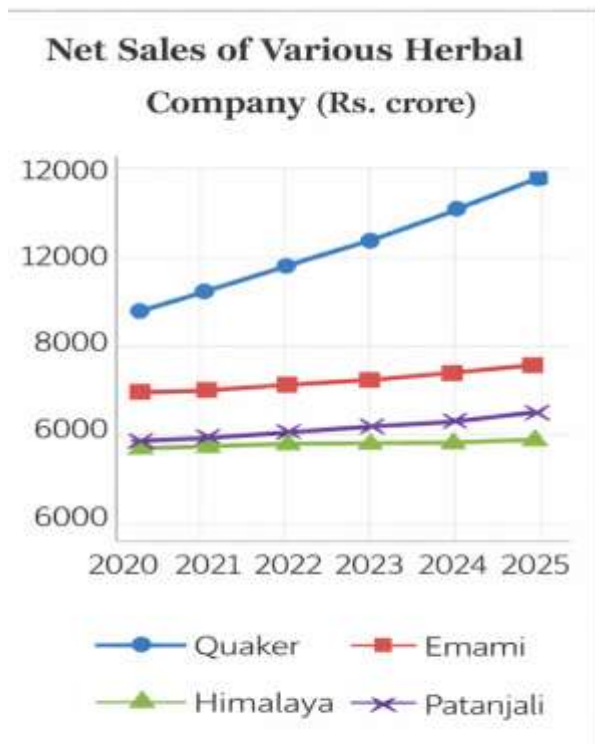
The term “herb” originates from the Latin word Herba, referring to plants or plant parts such as leaves, stems, roots, flowers, and seeds that possess medicinal, nutritional, or flavoring properties. Herbs have been used for thousands of years across European and Mediterranean civilizations and are also mentioned in various religious and historical texts worldwide. Across different cultures, herbal substances have been applied for therapeutic purposes through continuous experimentation and scientific development. Herbal products today range from raw plant materials to processed and packaged supplements designed to promote health and wellness.

**Global Herbal Market:-**

The global herbal market comprises a diverse range of products including over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, dietary supplements, personal care items, and cosmetic products. In recent years, the herbal industry has witnessed substantial expansion due to increasing consumer preference for natural and wellness-oriented products. The global herbal sector is currently growing at an estimated annual rate of 15–18 percent. Herbal products also possess significant potential in international trade, particularly when manufacturers comply with global quality and safety standards. Market analysts project that the worldwide herbal industry may reach an estimated value of nearly five trillion US dollars by the year 2050

**Indian Pharmaceutical Market:-**

The pharmaceutical industry in India has emerged as one of the fastest-growing sectors, making a substantial contribution to export earnings and economic development. During the period 2020–2025, the industry witnessed significant expansion, with the Indian pharmaceutical market reaching approximately US\$ 55–65 billion by 2025, supported by strong domestic demand and global exports. Pharmaceutical exports alone crossed US\$ 30 billion in FY 2024–25, reflecting the country’s growing dominance in the global generic medicines market. The sector has maintained a steady compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 9–10 percent, with projections indicating continued double-digit growth in the coming years. The overall Indian healthcare market, comprising pharmaceuticals, healthcare services, diagnostics, and medical equipment, expanded rapidly and is estimated to reach nearly US\$ 638 billion by 2025. The healthcare industry plays a vital role in national economic development, contributing significantly toward employment generation and supporting millions of direct and indirect jobs across hospitals, manufacturing, research, and allied services. The pharmaceutical market includes both prescription medicines and over-the-counter healthcare products designed to meet the diverse healthcare needs of the population.



Source: www.moneycontrol.com accessed on

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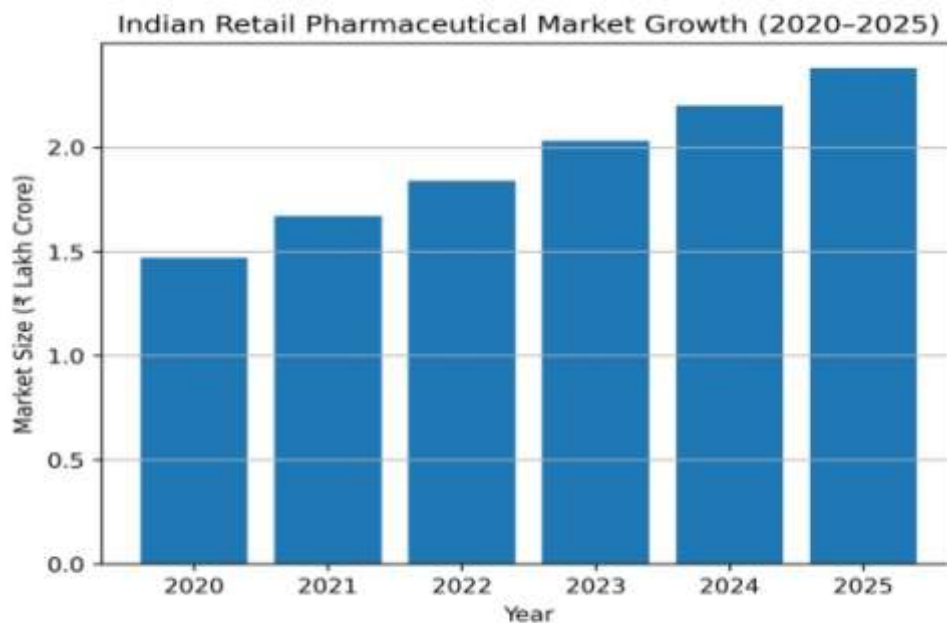
Table 1: Growth Performance of Indian Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Industry (2020–2025)

S.No	Indicators	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Observation
1	Pharmaceutical Market Size (US\$ Billion)	42	45	50	50	60	65	Continuous Growth
2	Pharmaceutical Exports (US\$ Billion)	20	24	25	25	30	30+	Export Expansion
3	CAGR Growth Rate (%)	-	9.0	9.5	9.5	10	10	Stable Growth
4	Healthcare Market Size (US\$ Billion)	280	310	372	372	520	638	Rapid Development

5	Employment Generation (Million Persons)	3.5	3.7	3.9	3.9	4.3	4.5	Increasing Employment
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#### Trends in Indian pharmaceutical industry:-

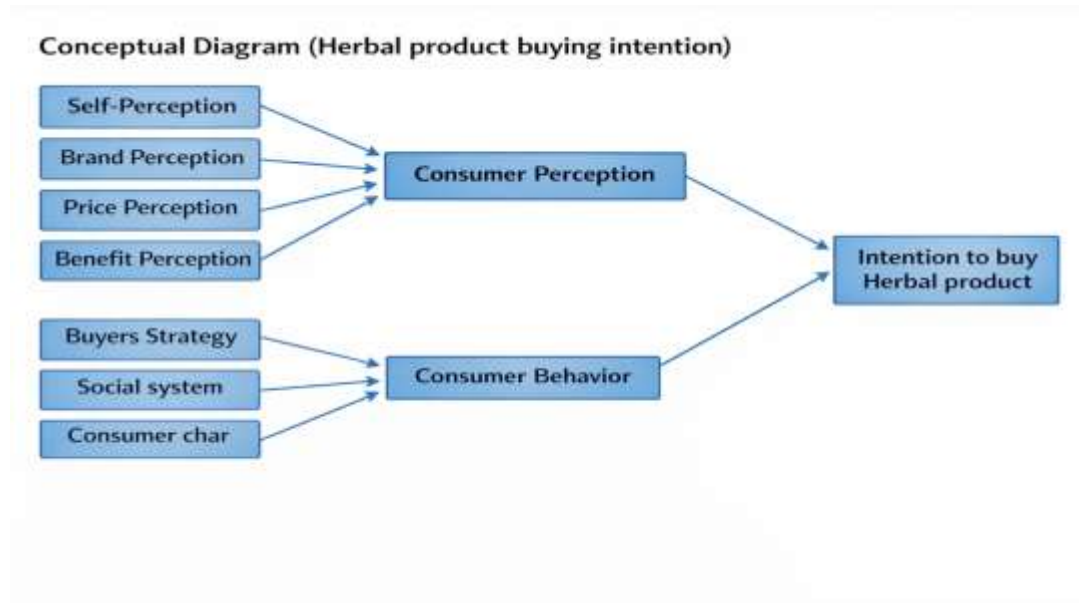
The bar chart illustrates the steady growth of the Indian retail pharmaceutical market from 2020 to 2025. It shows a continuous increase in market size from ₹1.47 lakh crore in 2020 to an estimated ₹2.38 lakh crore by 2025. This upward trend indicates consistent expansion of the pharmaceutical sector due to rising healthcare awareness, increasing demand for medicines, growth in chronic disease treatment, and improved access to healthcare services. The chart clearly reflects the strong and stable development of the Indian pharmaceutical industry during the given period.



#### Scope of Herbal Products in the Indian Market:

Herbal products are generally perceived as safe, economical, and more effective than modern medicines in curing certain diseases. However, in recent times, they have encountered adverse effects, leading to a reduction in sales. This decline is mainly due to consumers requiring more reliable and authentic information regarding the proper usage of herbal products (Arun, 2014). India is one of the richest countries in terms of herbal resources. It has more than 45,000 plant species, spread across 16 agro-climatic zones, 10 vegetative zones, and 15 biotic provinces. The country possesses around 18,000 flowering plants, 16,000 lichens, 2,500 algae, 1,800 bryophytes, 23,000 fungi, and nearly 30 million microorganisms (Industry Highlights, 1998).

India is a major player in the global herbal market and is one of the 12 mega biodiversity centers in the world. Investment in herbal products increased significantly from ₹450 crore in 2000 to ₹3,000 crore in 2005, and further rose to ₹10,000 crore by 2010 with the support of a “Grand Strategic Plan” (Pujari et al., 2015). The value of the Indian herbal market is estimated to be about \$1 million, and nearly \$80 million worth of products are exported. Herbal product sales account for approximately 50% of the total herbal market (Braver, 1998). In recent years, the herbal market has grown rapidly, covering a wide range of products from over-the-counter (OTC) medicines to beauty and personal care products. The annual growth rate of the herbal industry is estimated to be around 15–18% (Vani and Nikhil, 2015). The demand for herbal products has increased worldwide, including in developed countries, due to their higher safety margin and fewer side effects. Herbal products play a significant role in food supplements as well as personal care products. Thus, the herbal industry has emerged as a promising sector with immense growth potential (Alok, 2008).



#### **Self-Perception:-**

Self-perception is a crucial factor in analyzing consumers' priorities, purchasing decisions, and consumption patterns. It explains how individuals interpret and understand the motivations behind their own behavior. Self-perception significantly influences consumer buying behavior patterns. Consumers who are socially and environmentally conscious tend to consider the environmental impact of products before making purchasing decisions.

#### **Brand Perception:-**

Brand perception refers to the emotional and psychological response of consumers toward a brand. It is associated with trust, loyalty, preference, repeated usage, and effective product differentiation (Guthrie & Kim, 2009). Market characteristics and a company's expertise play a vital role in designing strategies to create and strengthen positive customer perception toward a particular brand.

#### **Price Perception:-**

Organizations often adopt penetration pricing strategies to attract customers, while others focus on quality and value for money to satisfy them. Price perception is one of the most influential factors affecting customer satisfaction and repeat purchase behavior. Pricing decisions are usually determined by the quality of products and services offered compared to competitors providing similar products or services.

#### **Benefit Perception:-**

The perceived nutritional value of food products strongly influences consumer perception. Consumers often reject foods enriched artificially with nutrients, as they may consider them unhealthy based on traditional beliefs. Modern consumers demand accurate and transparent information about the products they purchase. Buying decisions are influenced not only by discounts and promotional offers but also by economic conditions (Rojanadilok, 2012). Socio-economic changes, rising income levels, increasing awareness, and exposure to Western lifestyles and beauty trends have significantly expanded the herbal and cosmetic market. Particularly, the growing middle-class population with higher disposable income has altered purchasing behavior and increased the consumption of cosmetic and herbal products (Bhattacharya, 2006).

#### **Consumer Behavior:-**

Consumer behavior refers to the study of how individuals, groups, or organizations select, purchase, use, and evaluate products and services. It integrates concepts from psychology, sociology, and economics to understand buying patterns and decision-making processes. Research indicates that women tend to use herbal products more frequently than men. This difference may be due to variations in attitudes, health awareness, and perceptions regarding diet and well-being. Findings related to age are mixed. Some studies suggest that older individuals

consume more herbal products, while others indicate higher usage among younger consumers. Education level also influences herbal product usage. Higher educational attainment is associated with increased use, as educated consumers tend to be more informed and confident about product quality, safety, and media influence.

#### **Consumer Behavior Theories:-**

Consumer behavior is influenced by factors such as personality, past experiences, age, gender, and behavioral intentions (Engel, Kollat & Blackwell, 1973). Various theories have been developed based on psychology, sociology, economics, marketing variables, packaging, promotion, and external stimuli (Ehrenberg & Goodhart, 1979). Models proposed by Engel (1995), Howard and Sheth (1969), and Nicosia (1966) consider both environmental and personal variables. However, these models primarily explain brand understanding and fail to clearly link brand preference to purchase intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The Expectancy-Value Model developed by Rosenberg (1956) and Fishbein (1963) explains that consumer satisfaction depends on the belief that a product fulfills their needs. This model later evolved into the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) and subsequently into the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985; 1991). The TPB model helps explain how attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control influence purchase intention and consumption behavior.

#### **Market Value and Consumer Attitude:-**

Market value refers to a product's ability to satisfy customer needs and wants (Sheth, 1999). Value is created only when a product meets customer expectations. Values serve as guiding principles that shape attitudes toward products or situations (Rotech, 1973). Consumer attitude can be defined as a learned predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably toward a product (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard, 1995). Kotler et al. (1999) further extended this definition to include behavioral tendencies toward products or ideas.

#### **Buying Strategy:-**

Consumer buying strategies are influenced by factors such as needs, social status, media exposure, and promotional activities. However, not all consumers respond to promotions equally. Selective exposure refers to consumers paying attention only to information relevant to their interests. Selective retention means consumers remember information that matches their needs and ignore irrelevant details.

#### **Social System:-**

A social system consists of interconnected individuals and institutions working toward common goals within society. Herbal product usage is influenced by household size and marital status, with higher consumption observed among families compared to individuals. The social system includes family, peer groups, organizations, and retail outlets. Health food stores, in particular, play a significant role, as trained staff members provide guidance and promote appropriate herbal products to customers.

#### **Consumer Characteristics:-**

Consumer characteristics include health-related factors and demographic factors such as age, gender, use of medicines, and level of education. These factors influence how people choose and use herbal products. Studies show that women use herbal products more than men. This may be because women are generally more concerned about health, diet, and overall well-being. They also use more herbal and nutritional supplements compared to men. When we consider age, the results are not clear. Some studies say older people use more herbal products because they have more health problems. Other studies say younger people use more herbal products due to awareness and lifestyle trends. Education level also affects the use of herbal products. People with higher education are more likely to use herbal products. This is because they have better knowledge about quality and safety and are more influenced by media and health information.

#### **Discussion:-**

Herbal products are used by more than 80% of the world's population, especially in developing and low-income countries, to meet their healthcare needs. People trust herbal products because they believe they are safe, of good quality, affordable, and have fewer side effects. Cultural acceptance also increases their usage. Marketing factors such as product quality, price, place of availability, and promotion play an important role in shaping customer perception. Advertisements, attractive packaging, easy availability, and awareness programs also positively

influence consumers. Customer satisfaction is another important factor that supports the continued use of herbal treatments.

### **Conclusion:-**

This study mainly focuses on the factors that influence customer perception toward herbal products. Various reliable sources were used to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the study. Although people use modern medicine for quick relief, many still prefer herbal pharmaceutical products as an alternative option. Even though herbal products may be expensive, they are widely accepted because they are believed to have fewer side effects. Personal interest, doctor recommendations, and media influence also encourage consumers to purchase and use herbal products

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