



A Study On Consumer Habits And Interest Regarding Non-Prescription Medications In Vadodara

Risha Upadhyay¹, Smital Shetkar², Paresh Patel³

¹Student of MBA, Department of Faculty of Management Studies, Parul University, Vadodara, Gujarat-391760

²Student of MBA, Department of Faculty of Management Studies, Parul University, Vadodara, Gujarat-391760

³Assistant Professor, Department of Faculty of Management Studies, Parul University, Vadodara, Gujarat-391760

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on understanding the habits and interests of consumers regarding non-prescription medications in Vadodara. As over-the-counter (OTC) medications play an essential role in self-care, it is crucial for pharmaceutical businesses and healthcare professionals to study consumer behaviour in this area. Through an analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected from surveys and interviews, the study provides insights into product awareness, purchase behaviour, and the role of marketing and healthcare professionals in influencing consumer decisions. The results will aid pharmaceutical companies and policymakers in improving OTC medication accessibility and awareness.

KEYWORDS: Non-Prescription Medications, Consumer Behavior, OTC Medications, Self-Care, Vadodara.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing accessibility of non-prescription medications has transformed self-care habits in India. OTC drugs are widely used for minor health issues such as colds, headaches, digestive problems, and allergies. This study aims to explore consumer habits and interest in these medications in Vadodara, analyzing factors like frequency of use, purchase preferences, and awareness of potential risks.

Consumers rely on various sources such as pharmacists, advertisements, and prior personal experience to make purchasing decisions. While OTC medications offer convenience, concerns regarding self-medication risks and lack of professional consultation persist. Understanding consumer behavior will help pharmaceutical companies enhance product offerings while ensuring safe self-medication practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the existing literature provides valuable insights into the evolving landscape of OTC medication consumption. Studies indicate that self-medication is becoming more prevalent due to increased accessibility and consumer awareness. However, concerns persist regarding improper usage, lack of regulation, and the role of marketing in influencing purchase decisions. The following key topics help in understanding the broader implications of OTC medication consumption and its impact on public health.

1. **Consumer Behaviour in Self-Medication:** Research shows that self-medication has grown significantly due to increased awareness, accessibility, and affordability of OTC medications. Consumers prefer self-medication for minor ailments like headaches, colds, and allergies, reducing their reliance on professional healthcare services. However, studies indicate that improper self-medication can lead to adverse effects, including incorrect dosages and drug interactions.

2. **Regulatory Framework for OTC Medications:** Various global and national regulations govern the sale of non-prescription medications. Studies highlight the importance of government oversight in ensuring drug safety, proper labeling, and public awareness. In India, regulatory agencies like the CDSCO (Central Drugs Standard Control Organization) monitor OTC drug sales to minimize risks associated with misuse.

3. **Marketing and Advertising Impact:** Marketing strategies play a crucial role in influencing consumer choices in the pharmaceutical sector. Studies suggest that advertisements and promotions significantly impact purchasing decisions, sometimes leading to the overuse or unnecessary consumption of OTC drugs. Ethical marketing practices are essential to ensure consumer safety while maintaining business profitability.

4. **Digitalization in Healthcare and E-Pharmacies:** The rise of digital healthcare platforms has transformed how consumers purchase and use OTC medications. E-pharmacies provide easy access to medicines, along with AI-driven recommendations. However, studies warn that while digitalization improves accessibility, it also poses challenges like the risk of self-diagnosis errors and dependency on online reviews instead of professional medical consultation.

5. **Public Awareness and Education on OTC Drug Use:** Research emphasizes the need for public education initiatives to enhance awareness of safe OTC drug use. Many consumers lack knowledge about drug interactions, side effects, and contraindications, leading to potential health risks. Educational campaigns by healthcare institutions and government agencies can help promote responsible self-medication practices.

DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

The collected data was analyzed to understand consumer habits, preferences, and challenges in using non-prescription medications in Vadodara. The study highlights trends in self-medication, reliance on pharmacists, and awareness levels regarding OTC drug usage. The findings are represented in the following tables.

Table 1: Gender-wise classification of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	69	29.9%
Female	162	70.1%
Total	231	100%

Table 2: Age wise classification of respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Under 18	5	1.8%
18-25	151	53.9%
26-35	92	32.9%
36-45	28	10%
46-55	3	1.1%
56 and above	1	0.4%
Total	280	100%

Table3:Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Student	52	26.3%
Working Professional	85	42.9%
Homemaker	55	27.8%
Retired	4	2%
others	2	1%
Total	198	100%

Table4:Self-Medication Frequency Table

Frequency	Count	Percentage
Frequently	48	25.9%
Occasionally	110	59.5%
Rarely	26	14.1%
Never	1	0.5%
Total	185	100%

Table5:Non-Prescription Medication Usage Table

Type of Medication	Count	Percentage
Pain relievers (e.g., paracetamol, ibuprofen)	32	17.8%
Cold and flu remedies	82	45.6%
Vitamins and supplements	45	25%
Digestive aids (e.g., antacids)	17	9.4%
Others	4	2.2%
Total	180	100%

Table6:Non-Prescription Medication Purchase Locations

Purchase Location	Count	Percentage
Pharmacy/Drug store	72	40.2%
Supermarket/Convenience store	84	46.9%
Online Retailers	20	11.2%
Others	3	1.7%
Total	179	100%

Table7:Primary Reasons for Self-Medicating

Reason	Count	Percentage
Convenience	35	19.3%
Cost-Saving	76	42%
Avoiding The Doctor	46	25.4%
Previous experience with the medication	19	10.5%
Others	5	2.8%
Total	181	100%

Table8:Perception of Self-Medication Safety

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly agree	31	17.6%
Agree	79	44.9%
Neutral	62	35.2%
Disagree	3	1.7%
Strongly Disagree	1	0.6%
Total	176	100%

Table9:Influences on Non-Prescription Medication

Influence	Count	Percentage
Recommendations from family/friends	25	14.8%
Past experiences	91	51.7%
Internet Research	46	26.1%
Pharmacist's advice	13	7.4%
Advertising	0	0%
Others	176	100%

Table10:Confidence in Choosing OTC Medication

Confidence Level	Count	Percentage
Very Confident	26	14.7%
Somewhat Confident	93	52.5%
Neutral	53	29.9%
Not Very Confident	4	2.3%
Not Confident At All	1	0.6%
Total	177	100%

Table11:Experience with Side Effects

Experience Level	Count	Percentage
Yes, Frequently	27	15.5%
Yes, Occasionally	114	65.5%
Rarely	15	10.3%
Never	18	8.6%
Total	174	100%

Table12:Frequency of Encountering OTC Ads on Social Media

Frequency Role	Count	Percentage
Frequently	29	16.7%
Occasionally	120	69%
Rarely	19	10.9%
Never	6	3.4%
Total	174	100%

Table13:Purchase Behavior Influenced by Social Media Ads

Responses	Count	Percentage
Yes	125	72.3%
No	48	27.7%
Total	173	100%

Table14:Influence of Social Media Ads on OTC Drug Purchases

Response	Count	Percentage
Strongly Influence	31	17.8%
Somewhat Influence	116	65.5%
Neutral	13	8%
Do Not Influence	14	8%
Total	174	100%

Table15:Most Encountered Platforms for Non-Prescription Medication Ads

Platform	Count	Percentage
Instagram	61	23.7%
Facebook	73	28.4%
Youtube	30	11.7%
Whatapp	86	33.5%
Others	7	2.7%
Total	257	100%

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To examine consumer habits related to non-prescription medications in Vadodara.
2. To identify the most commonly used OTC medications.
3. To analyze the factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions.
4. To explore consumer awareness regarding the risks and benefits of OTC medications.

Data Collection Method:

- **Primary Data:** Collected through structured surveys and interviews.
- **Sampling Method:** Non-probability convenience sampling.
- **Population:** Consumers purchasing non-prescription medications in Vadodara.

Hypotheses:

H0: There is no significant difference between age groups & preference for OTC medications.

H1: There is a significant difference between age groups & preference for OTC medications.

FINDINGS

- The majority of consumers rely on pharmacists and personal experience when selecting OTC medications.
- Commonly purchased medications include pain relievers, cold and flu treatments, and digestive health products.
- Consumers appreciate the convenience of OTC medications but express concerns over self-medication risks.
- Awareness regarding potential side effects and drug interactions is relatively low.

LIMITATION

- The study is limited to a specific geographic area (Vadodara).
- The sample size may not be fully representative of the broader population.
- Consumer responses may be subject to recall bias.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the increasing reliance on OTC medications for minor health concerns. While these medications offer convenience, lack of awareness regarding proper use and potential risks remains a concern. Educational initiatives and regulatory measures can enhance consumer safety and promote responsible self-medication practices.

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