

ROLE OF SOFT SKILLS IN CONSUMER BUYING INTENTIONS TOWARDS PERSONAL HEALTH CARE PRODUCTS IN SMART CITIES POST COVID ERA

Abstract

The personal health care sector is rapidly progressing over the two years post covid era in the world. Stakeholders of health care sector i.e. Doctors, Customers, Patients, Governments, Hospitals, and all Supply chain are devoting more determinations and resources to deliver a continuous involvement through numerous networks. These changes led to major fluctuations in customer behaviour.

Post covid era Consumer buying activities and way of selecting the products are facing diverse changes and improvements. Personal health care sector is enabling for constant progress. Consumer behaviour started for using the soft skills in most of their needs and wants. The appearance of consumer behaviour patterns is due to Covid-19 is leading to the emergence of on the base of soft skill sets.

This study is of an exploratory and constructive nature. It is concerned with deepening the knowledge about the role of soft skills in consumer buying intentions carried by Covid-19 era on the personal health care sector in smart cities. The aim of the study is to study the consumer buying intentions and soft skills in the perspectives of health care products, to know role of soft skills in consumer buying intentions towards personal health care products in smart cities and to understand the recent trends in consumer buying intentions towards personal health care products in smart cities.

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This Study help to understand role of Soft skills in consumers buying intentions in 21st century becomes essential for the good health. This study also focuses to develop inclusive soft skill oriented behaviour of consumer at the time of consuming health care products.

Keywords: Consumer buying intentions, personal health care products, soft skills, smart cities.

I. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the consumer buying intentions and soft skills in the perspectives of health care products.
- To know role of soft skills in consumer buying intentions towards personal health care products in smart cities.
- To understand the recent trends in consumer buying intentions towards personal health care products in smart cities.

II. INTRODUCTION

India is emerging as a consumer centric country in the modern era. India is attracting the entire world as a customer base. India is emerging as the most populous country in the world this year itself. India is a country filled of diversity. Majority of the markets in 21st century are looking at India as a big opportunity for investment. Today's globalization, privatization, modernization and technology are leading to major changes in buying behavior of consumers.

Today's consumers around the world have been awakened by pandemics like COVID-19. Consumers have become conscious and seem to be prioritizing quality while consuming every product and services. Changes are seen in consumer behavior such as brand awareness; brand association, brand loyalty and many other alterations are prominent. The buying behavior of consumers across all categories of goods and services is seen to have changed as per the above point. Since covid-19, consumer purchasing behavior in the personal health care sector has changed rapidly. Consumers are mainly paying attention to the health of themselves and their entire family. Consumers understand that health is wealth. Therefore, today's consumers are buying personal health care products for many reasons.

The role of soft skills in the purchasing behavior of consumers in today's era is seen to be very important. Primarily soft skills are a set of internal qualities of a person. Acquiring skills while doing any task provides guarantees towards the success of that task. So it is imperative for the consumer to take the help of these skills while purchasing all kinds of goods and services. We can see that many scholars have studied the concept of soft skills in detail. There are two types of skills that consumers need. They are hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills are mainly technology based and soft skills are related to customer intelligence. Both these types of skills play an important role in the process from purchasing goods and services to consuming them. Even in that, the role of soft skills is seen to be leading. We get to see a comprehensive list of soft skills. Alison Doyle (2022)¹ listed following Soft skills:

- Adaptability
- Communication
- Compromise
- Creative thinking
- Dependability
- Leadership
- Listening
- Work ethic

- Teamwork
- Positivity
- Time management
- Motivation
- Problem-solving
- Critical thinking
- Conflict resolution
- Negotiation

III. DEFINITION OF SOFT SKILLS

According to the indeed editorial team, (2023) “Soft skills are personality traits and behaviours. Unlike technical or ‘hard’ skills, soft skills are not about the knowledge you possess but the behaviours you display in different situations.”⁽²⁾

Indeed editorial team, (2023) broadly classified types of soft skills, include:

- Communication
- Problem-solving
- Creativity
- Adaptability
- Work ethic

IV. CONSUMER BUYING INTENTIONS

Consumer buying intentions depend on many factors and keep changing accordingly. Every manufacturer, marketer has to constantly think and study consumer buying intentions. Their success depends on it. Consumer buying intentions are also known as buying behaviour. It evolves according to the different skills of the customers. It also depends on the continuous habit of the consumer and remains variable with time, situation, and place. To sustain in market, all these aspects have to be considered by personal health care producers and all involved supply chain factors.

India is becoming most youth populated country in the world. It is a democratic nation. Indian consumers are classified on the basis of age levels, income levels, region, religion, occupation, gender, marital status as well as social, demographical, cultural, behavioural and psychological factors which directly impacts on the buying intention towards the products and services. Marketers, producers and sellers have to focus on factors which impacts on consumer needs.

Abdel Baset Hasounch (2003) in his book titled, consumer behaviour has presented and discussed the effects of cultural and social factors, family structure, age, life cycle, occupation, income level, lifestyle, personality, self-concept, motives, perception, learning, beliefs and attitudes on consumer behaviour. He also said that, consumer play four major behavioural roles in the market i.e. initiator, influencer, buyer and user.⁽³⁾

According to London and Dell Bitta, (1988) consumer behaviour is “the decision process and physical activity individuals engage in when evaluating, acquiring, using, or

disposing of goods and services’’. Consumer behaviour is a broad concept which includes the impact of cultural and social factors, family structure, age, life cycle, occupation, income, lifestyle, personality, self-concept, motives, perception, learning, beliefs and attitudes of the consumers. ⁽⁴⁾

V. PERSONAL HEALTH CARE PRODUCTS

Personal health care products are an integral part of every consumer's daily life and health. After the covid era, the importance of this has been further highlighted. Every citizen has become health conscious and is paying close attention to the purchase of health care products. The list of these items is very comprehensive. Factors such as gender, age, income, occupation, living conditions, education of consumers have a radical effect on the purchase and consumption behavior of these health care products.

Table 1: Top Ten Best Toothpaste, Hair Oil & Soap Brands in India-2018

Sr. No.	Toothpaste Brands	Hair Oil Brands	Soap Brand
1	Colgate	Parachute Advanced Coconut Hair Oil	Dove
2	Close-Up	Dove Elixir Hair Oil	Liril 2000 With Tea Tree Oil
3	Dabur Meswak	Bajaj Almond Drops Hair Oil	Pears Pure And Gentle Soap
4	Sensodyne	Sesa Hair Oil	Biotique Orange Peel Body Cleanser
5	Oral-B	Parachute Advanced Jasmine Hair Oil	Mysore Sandal Soap
6	Himalaya Dental Cream	Khadi Ayurvedic Vitalising Hair Oil	Hamam Soap
7	Pepsodent	Dabur Amla Hair Oil	Fiama Di Wills Skinsense Soap
8	Dabur Babool	Ashwini Hair Oil	Dettol Soap
9	Amway Glister	Dabur Vatika Coconut Hair Oil	Khadi Sandalwood Mud Scrub Bar
10	Vicco Vajradanti	Himalaya Herbals Revitalising Hair Oil	Himalaya Refreshing Cucumber Soap

Source: Compiled by the Researcher <http://www.trendingtopmost.com> , ⁽⁵⁾
<http://www.trendingtopmost.com> , ⁽⁶⁾ <http://www.stylecraze.com/articles/best-budget-hair-oils-available-in-india/#gref> (7)

VI. SELECTION PROCESS OF THE PERSONAL HEALTH CARE PRODUCTS FOR THIS STUDY

- 1. Usability:** Selected personal health care products are usable for the respondents and the consumers on daily basis.

2. **Availability:** Hair oil products, toothpaste products and bath soap products are easily available with compare to other personal health care products.
3. **Affordability:** Selected personal health care products are most affordable for the respondents with compare to the other personal health care products.

VII. SMART CITIES

In 2016, the Government of India started Smart City Mission. Main Purpose of smart city mission is to make 100 smart cities in the India.

Table 2: List of the Smart Cities of Maharashtra

Sr. No.	Name Of the Smart City
1	Pune (1-round)
2	Solapur (1-round)
3	Pimpri-Chinchwad (4 th Round)
4	Dadar Nagar Haveli (5 th Round)
5	Thane (3 rd Round)
6	Kalyan-Dombivali (3 rd Round)
7	Aurangabad (3 rd Round)
8	Nashik (3 rd Round)
9	Amravati (4 th Round)
10	Nagpur (3 rd Round)

Source: <http://smartcities.gov.in/content/> ⁽⁸⁾

VIII. ROLE OF SOFT SKILLS IN CONSUMER BUYING INTENTIONS TOWARDS PERSONAL HEALTH CARE PRODUCTS IN SMART CITIES POST COVID ERA.

Following soft skill sets play an important role in the consumer buying intentions towards personal health care products.

1. **Communication Skills provides ability in following ways to consumers at the time buying personal health care products:**
 - Skill to listen with objectivity of the content of personal health care products.
 - Skill to practice numerous forms of personal health care products.
 - Skill to speak effectively with individuals & groups and express a positive self- image.
 - Skill to express needs, wants, opinions and preferences related to products.
2. **Design and Planning Skills provides ability in following ways to consumers at the time buying personal health care products:**
 - Skill to identify alternative courses of action and predict future trends and patterns.
 - Skill to follow through with a plan and manage time effectively related to products.
 - Skill to accommodate demands for commitment of time, energy, and resources.
 - Skill to assess needs and set priorities related to products.

3. Research and Investigation Skills provides ability in following ways to consumers at the time buying personal health care products:

- Skill to use a variety of sources of information and to identify problems related to products.
- Skill to apply a variety of methods to test the validity of data related to products.
- Skill to design an experiment, plan or model that systematically defines a problem.
- Skill to formulate questions to clarifying a particular issue related to products.

4. Information Management Skills provides ability in following ways to consumers at the time buying personal health care products:

- Skill to sort data and to compile information related to products.
- Skill to apply information creatively to problems related to products.
- Skill to synthesize facts, concepts and to understand organizing principles.
- Skill to evaluate information against appropriate standards related to products.

5. Human Relations and Interpersonal Skills provides ability in following ways to consumers at the time buying personal health care products:

- Skill to delegate tasks and responsibilities related to products.
- Skill to use argumentation techniques to persuade others related to products.
- Skill to make commitments to people related to products.
- Skill to be willing to take risks related to products.
- Skill to analyze behavior of self and others in group situations related to products.
- Skill to work under time and environmental pressures related to products.

6. Critical Thinking Skills provides ability in following ways to consumers at the time buying personal health care products:

- Skill to identify quickly and accurately the critical issues related to products.
- Skill to identify a general principle related to products.
- Skill to define the parameters of a problem related to products.
- Skill to apply appropriate criteria to strategies and action plans related to products.
- Skill to take given premises and reason to their conclusion related to products.
- Skill to create innovative solutions to complex problems related to products.
- Skill to analyze the interrelationships of events and ideas from several perspectives related to products.

7. Management and Administration Skills provides ability in following ways to consumers at the time buying personal health care products:

- Skill to analyze tasks related to products.
- Skill to identify resource materials useful in the solution of a problem related to products.
- Skill to delegate responsibility for completion of a task related to products.
- Skill to motivate and lead people related to products.

8. Valuing Skills provides ability in following ways to consumers at the time buying personal health care products:

- Skill to assess a course of action related to products.
- Skill to make decisions related to products.
- Skill to appreciate the contributions of art, literature related to products.
- Skill to identify one's own values related to products.
- Skill to assess one's values in relation to important life decisions related to products.

9. Personal Development Skills provides ability in following ways to consumers at the time buying personal health care products:

- Skill to identify, describe, and assess the relative importance of needs, values, interests, strengths, and weaknesses related to products.
- Skill to identify one's own strengths and weaknesses related to products.
- Skill to accept and learn from negative criticism related to products.
- Skill to persist with a project when faced with failure related to products.
- Skill to generate trust and confidence of one's actions related to products.

Above all detail soft skill sets help us to understand their role in consumer buying intentions towards personal health care products in smart cities.

IX. RECENT TRENDS IN CONSUMER BUYING INTENTIONS TOWARDS PERSONAL HEALTH CARE PRODUCTS IN SMART CITIES

Followings are the major recent trends in consumer buying intentions towards personal health care products.

- Consumers more focus on control over spending:
- Use of debit cards, credit cards and digital wallets increased for the propose of spending on personal health care products.
- Consumers worries about rising prices:
- Consumers focusing on Economic stability.
- Consumers developing ability to meet daily expenses.
- Consumers aware about their Household income level.
- Majority of the consumers preferring In-store shopping.
- Expansion of Exclusive in-store deals
- Focus on customer services.
- Consumers demanding for sustainable products
- Consumers buying more material frequently
- High spending on basis of social media. I.e. Instagram, Facebook etc.
- Variety of brands adaptation by the consumers.
- Consumers are retuning pandemic shopping activities.
- Increased Demand of consumers For Transparency in personal health care products.
- Consumers Accelerated Online Buying of personal health care products.
- Consumers involving Greater Human Element in User Interactions.

- Growing Importance of Content Marketing personal health care products.
- Increased Value-Based Spending on personal health care products.
- A Boom in Customer Automated Decisions for personal health care products.

Above all detail List help us to Understand Recent Trends in Consumer Buying Intentions towards Personal Health Care Products in Smart Cities.

X. SUGGESTIONS

As per this study and above details researchers suggest some important suggestion for this study. They are given below:

1. Suggestions for Consumers:

- Consumers may focus on quality standards of the personal health care products timely.
- Consumers may aware about safety and precautions about using personal health care products.
- Consumers must aware, identify, acquire, apply, develop soft skills sets primarily at the time of buying personal health care products.
- Consumers must aware about recent trends in consumer buying process.
- Consumer must aware about brand equity of the personal health care products regularly.

2. Suggestions for PHCP Manufacture:

- Manufacturers may focus, identify, and understand soft skill set of the consumers regularly.
- Manufactures may design, manufacture quality oriented personal health care products.
- Manufactures must care about safety of personal health care products.
- Manufactures may focus on just in time supply chain for personal health care products.
- Manufactures must aware about recent trends in consumer buying process for personal health care products.

Above all suggestions will definitely be helpful to personal health care producers and consumers effectively.

XI. CONCLUSION

This study primarily focus on the concepts of soft skill sets and consumer buying intentions towards personal health care products in the smart cities. This study concludes that, the role of soft skill sets in consumer buying intentions are very important in the perspective of both consumers as well as manufactures of the personal health care. Soft skills are the

internal quality set of the consumers which are essential factor for the growth and sustainability of the brand equity of the personal health care sector in modern era. After covid era awareness about market and personal health care products are rapidly expanding all over the world. This study also point out that recent trends in consumer buying intentions towards personal health care products help to understand the current scenario of health care sector to Consumers and manufacture in the concern of future sustainability. Researchers also suggest important suggestions for consumers and manufactures of the personal health care products to survive in this sector.

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