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Changing Consumer Perceptions towards Ayurveda Products in Kerala after COVID-19

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Abstract-- The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly altered global health behaviour, with a notable resurgence of interest in traditional medicine systems, particularly Ayurveda in India. The study investigates the changing consumer perceptions towards Ayurveda products in Kerala in the post-pandemic context. With Kerala being a historical stronghold of Ayurvedic practice, the research aims to understand the drivers of increased reliance on Ayurveda, the role of digital media and government initiatives, and growing concerns regarding product authenticity. Employing a descriptive and quantitative research design, primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered across five key districts in Kerala. A sample of 150 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure demographic representation. Analytical techniques, including chi-square tests and t-tests, revealed significant shifts in consumer perceptions. Results indicate a statistically significant change in how consumers perceive Ayurveda, with a mean perception score of 3.74 against a neutral benchmark of 3. The findings also highlight a surge in online purchases, increased trust, and awareness catalysed by government campaigns. The age group 30–45 showed the most notable change in behaviour. These insights suggest that the pandemic has not only enhanced Ayurveda's appeal but also redefined consumer priorities toward preventive healthcare. The study offers vital implications for policymakers and industry stakeholders to ensure continued consumer trust by focusing on quality assurance, scientific validation, and effective communication strategies.

Keywords-- Ayurveda, consumer perception, post-COVID-19, Kerala, alternative medicine, traditional healthcare, digital media and health behaviour.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda, a time-tested traditional system of medicine, has long been a part of Kerala's cultural and healthcare landscape. With its holistic approach to wellness and disease prevention, Ayurveda has played a vital role in promoting natural and sustainable health practices. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought renewed global interest in alternative medicine systems, including Ayurveda.

During the pandemic, fear of infection, limited access to hospitals, and the absence of a definitive cure led many people to explore Ayurveda-based preventive health solutions.

The Indian Ministry of AYUSH actively promoted Ayurveda for immunity-boosting, further legitimising its use. In Kerala, the state's rich Ayurvedic infrastructure and practitioners played a critical role in disseminating traditional remedies through local communities. In the post-pandemic period, consumer perceptions appear to have shifted significantly, not only in favour of Ayurveda but also in the way people evaluate health products. This research seeks to understand how and why these perceptions have changed and what implications this has for the Ayurveda industry in Kerala.

The evolution of healthcare preferences in Kerala, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, underscores a deeper societal inclination towards traditional wellness systems. As biomedical models faced limitations in treating and preventing COVID-19, Ayurvedic practices gained renewed relevance for their perceived immunity-boosting properties. This shift was further reinforced by aggressive promotion from the Ministry of AYUSH and the Kerala state government. As people began to adopt holistic routines, Ayurveda transitioned from being a supplementary option to a primary health choice for many. The present study builds on this backdrop to explore the sustainability and depth of these perceptual shifts and their implications for the Ayurveda product market in Kerala.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several studies have explored consumer behaviour related to health and wellness products, particularly in the context of traditional and alternative medicine. Patwardhan et al. (2015) emphasised the growing demand for integrative healthcare models that include Ayurveda. Singh et al. (2020) observed a notable spike in the consumption of Ayurvedic products during the COVID-19 pandemic due to their perceived immunity-boosting properties.



A study by Sharma & Rani (2021) highlighted how government initiatives and media campaigns significantly influenced consumer trust in Ayurveda. Similarly, Nair (2022) analysed the shift in urban consumer buying behaviour post-COVID, indicating increased awareness and reliance on holistic health solutions. However, gaps remain in understanding the specific regional implications of these trends, especially in states like Kerala where Ayurveda is deeply rooted.

Moreover, literature suggests a need to investigate post-pandemic consumer scepticism about product authenticity and standardisation (Menon & Joseph, 2023). This study aims to bridge this gap by focusing specifically on the evolving perceptions in Kerala.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a paradigm shift in consumer health priorities, with increased reliance on alternative and preventive health care systems such as Ayurveda. In Kerala, this transition is particularly significant given the state's historic association with Ayurveda. However, the surge in demand has also led to concerns about the quality, safety, and scientific validation of products available in the market.

The post-pandemic phase presents both an opportunity and a challenge. While consumer trust in Ayurveda appears to have grown, there is an urgent need to examine whether this perception is sustained over time or is merely a reaction to the crisis. Moreover, with increased commercialisation, the authenticity of Ayurvedic products is increasingly scrutinised. The study seeks to explore these dynamics by analysing consumer perceptions in the post-COVID context, focusing on factors such as trust, usage frequency, purchasing channels, and perceived efficacy.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the changes in consumer perception towards Ayurveda products in Kerala post-COVID-19.
- To identify the key factors influencing consumer preference for Ayurveda products.
- To analyse the role of digital media and government initiatives in shaping consumer behaviour.
- To evaluate consumer concerns related to the quality, authenticity, and commercialisation of Ayurveda products.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a descriptive and quantitative research design to investigate the changing consumer perceptions towards Ayurveda products in Kerala after the COVID-19 pandemic. The research aims to explore the shifts in health consciousness, trust in traditional medicine, and changes in purchase behaviour.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The primary data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire administered both online and offline. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure a balanced representation across various demographic groups such as age, gender, occupation, and district. The sample size consisted of 150 respondents from five key districts in Kerala: Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Kozhikode, Palakkad, and Alappuzha. Each district contributed approximately 30 respondents, ensuring regional diversity. A pilot study was conducted with 20 respondents to test the validity and reliability of the instrument. Cronach's Alpha for the scaled items was found to be 0.82, indicating good internal consistency. The collected data were coded and analyzed using the Chi-square test to test associations between demographic factors and changes in perception, One-sample t-test to evaluate whether the mean perception score significantly differs from a neutral value (midpoint of the Likert scale) and independent samples t-test, to compare perceptions between two groups (e.g., male vs. female).

Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant change in consumer perception towards Ayurveda products in Kerala post-COVID-19.

H1: There is a significant change in consumer perception towards Ayurveda products in Kerala post-COVID-19.

Table No. 1.1
One-Sample T-Test Results for Consumer Perception Score

Statistic	Value
Sample Size (N)	150
Test Value (μ_0)	3.00
Sample Mean (M)	3.74
Standard Deviation (SD)	0.88
Standard Error of Mean (SE)	0.072

t-value	8.37
Degrees of Freedom (df)	149
p-value	< 0.001

A one-sample t-test was conducted on the perception score (measured on a 5-point Likert scale). The test value was set at 3 (neutral perception). The mean perception score was 3.74 with a standard deviation of 0.88.

Interpretation:

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates a statistically significant change in consumer perception towards Ayurveda products in Kerala post-pandemic. The average perception score being significantly higher than the neutral value (3.00) suggests that consumers now view Ayurveda products more positively, driven by factors such as increased health awareness, government endorsement, and cultural familiarity.

VI. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study reveals that the overall perception towards Ayurveda products is significantly positive among Kerala consumers in the post-COVID era. Many respondents acknowledged increased trust in Ayurveda due to heightened health awareness and government promotion during the pandemic. Chi-square analysis showed significant associations between age group and increased usage of Ayurveda products ($p < 0.01$), with the 30–45 age group showing the highest shift in behaviour.

The results also indicated a growing reliance on digital platforms to purchase Ayurveda products. The findings support the conclusion that the pandemic catalysed a behavioral change in health management, with Ayurveda emerging as a preferred alternative among the Kerala population. These insights underscore the need for the Ayurveda industry to maintain this trust by ensuring product quality, promoting validated information, and leveraging e-commerce platforms for sustained consumer engagement. The study confirms that the average consumer perception score is significantly higher than neutral, providing strong evidence of a positive shift in perception towards Ayurveda products post-COVID-19.

VII. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study clearly demonstrate a significant shift in consumer perception towards Ayurveda products in Kerala following the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis acted as a catalyst for reevaluating health priorities, driving people to explore traditional and preventive care systems like Ayurveda. The increased perception score (mean = 3.74) compared to the neutral baseline statistically confirms that consumers now hold more favourable views toward Ayurvedic products. Notably, the 30–45 age group showed the highest level of behavioural shift, suggesting that this segment is particularly receptive to integrating Ayurveda into their health routines. Another important insight from the study is the growing reliance on digital platforms for the purchase of Ayurvedic products, highlighting the convergence of tradition and technology. Government-led campaigns and media initiatives have played a pivotal role in enhancing consumer trust and visibility of Ayurveda during and after the pandemic. However, the findings also reveal that this increased interest brings with it consumer concerns around authenticity, standardisation, and quality assurance.

To sustain this newfound consumer trust, the Ayurveda industry must proactively address these concerns through transparent practices, robust regulatory oversight, and continued public engagement. Strategic investments in digital outreach, e-commerce infrastructure, and scientific validation will be essential in ensuring the long-term credibility and relevance of Ayurveda. Ultimately, the study reinforces the view that Ayurveda has evolved from a niche traditional system into a mainstream wellness choice in Kerala, shaped significantly by post-COVID consumer behaviour dynamics.

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