

**A STUDY ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF CONSUMERS
TOWARDS OTC (OVER-THE-COUNTER) DRUG AND
PROCESSES THEY USE TO CONSUME AND
DISPOSE OF PRODUCT AND SERVICES.**

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By

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Under the Supervision and Guidance of

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this dissertation titledis the bonafide record of my original research work. I declare that it has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been duly acknowledged in the text.

Mayuri Devkate

25/6/2021

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A Study on the Behaviour of Consumers towards OTC (Over-The-Counter) drug and processes they use to consume and dispose of product and services.

Abstract: The aim of this study is to investigate consumers perception and behaviour towards OTC medicines. The buying of OTC medicines is the practice for self-medications. The present study discusses the common ailments, the first course of action, the brand of the product, purchasing site and role of advertising, disposal of the unused and left-over drug and some of the important factors which influence consumer behaviour. The study highlights the consumers trust on brand, price and affordability making the importance of purchase decision. It had been observed that the majority of the people prefer buying OTC medicines, which could find misused by the consumers. However, it was also seen that consumers try and to be well-aware of the drugs before buying or consuming them.

Keywords: OTC (Over-the-counter) Medicines, Consumer behaviour, Common ailments, Pharmaceutical advertisement, Self-medication, dispose of OTC product.

Introduction

OTC (Over the counter) drug are medicines sold directly to the consumer without any prescription from healthcare professionals. The consumer can directly purchase the OTC drug at a Pharmacy store. The trend of OTC medicines use has increase in last few years. The availability of OTC medicines is lessening the economic burden in our healthcare system. similarly, there are various reasons such as easy affordability, and increased awareness among patients are liable for this trend. OTC medicines are safe and effective when you follow the directions on the label and as directed by your health care professional. OTC drug play a significant role within the pharma industry which is almost unknown to the consumers. Sometimes the consumer finds out the effect of medicines depending on their physical wellbeing after taking remedy of certain ailments. Suppose the primary drug won't work they shifted to other medicines

Revenue of the OTC market Globally 151.7B in 2020. The market is expected to grow annually by 5.1% in 2021-2027 (Sumant Ugalmugle, jan 2021). The Indian OTC market was worth USD 6.38B in 2020 and expected grow as a CAGR 19.4% to reach USD 15.48B by 2025 (Market data forecast, 2021). During Covid 19 the Indian OTC medicines market is segmented by

product and distribution channel like retail pharmacy, online pharmacy, and other distribution channels (intelligence, 2020). The growth of the Indian OTC drugs market due to consumer attitude towards self-medication and increasing geriatric population; these two major factor driving the overall market. Self-medication is an advantage for the healthcare industry to facilitate better use of Pharmacist clinical, increase access to OTC drugs and it will contribute to reducing the prescription cost. The availability of the OTC medicines is encouraging to consumer to seek drug treatment for every ailment (csillia major, 2010). For emergency mostly peoples store the medicines which used for common ailments. Many times, these medicines were expired or unused. So, it is important to dispose this medicine in appropriate manner. There are guidelines which are given by World health organisation (WHO) and United states food and drug administration (USFDA). some method is used to dispose the medicines like returning to manufacturer, landfill, waste immobilization. In India, the knowledge of disposing drugs lacking among common peoples (Udupa, 2013). once the medicines have not needed their disposal to become necessary because the drug is a chemical and once it expires it'll become a toxic agent. if the consumers have unused, leftover, or expired medicines it may occur as a result of excessive storage, non-adherence OTC medicines. (Jha, 2018) In India, the drug take-back programmer isn't functional. Most people are facing issues due to improper drug disposal methods such as throwing in garbage, flushing into the toilet, and burning which can cause environmental contamination.

Background of the study

The OTC medicines are available without a physician prescription. This medicine is used to treat the symptoms of those illness in which the help of physician or health care practitioner does not required (Benjamin Wedro, 2020). In OTC drugs vitamins, supplements, minerals, herbs and certain medicine which are safe if consumer follow the label instruction (El-Khatib, 2019). The WHO (World health organisation) classified the OTC drug into ten categories: analgesics, laxatives, antithrombotic agents, antacids, cough and cold preparations, antihistamines, dermatological, throat preparations, nasal preparations and antidiarrheals. OTCs are accustomed treat an enlarged range of conditions, the illnesses or deficiencies are considered here. OTCs often do quite just relieve aches, pains, and itches. Some medicines can prevent diseases like tooth decay, cure diseases like athlete's foot, and help manage recurring conditions (A.Yafi*, 2019). Many countries have established regulations for their use. In India till this date there is no guidelines for licensing of OTC drugs, no separate categories allotted

for OTC drugs. The drug which does not come under the prescription medicines are generally sold as OTC drugs (Marathe, 2020).

As we know almost every country has been affected by unexpected Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). The WHO also declared emergency healthcare situation and released many guidelines to control its spread. Due to this pandemic situation most of people start self-medication. The demand of OTC drugs surged tremendously. With the advantage of OTC medicines, the misuse and adverse health effects cause concerns. Increase in pharmaceutical use has led to an enhanced awareness of the difficulty of unused medications and the harmful effect on the economy, environment, and people's health due to improper medicine disposal. Other than the measures employed to scale back the creation of unused medication (Milica Paut Kusturica, 2016). The medicines wastage is an unnecessary burden on healthcare system. The pharmaceutical industry mention that the most wastage of medicine are anti-histamine, painkillers, cough syrups, paracetamols etc. (Isam, 2019). Sometimes the medicines which are stored in cabinet and stored for long periods the consumer has lack of knowledge about the disposal of the drug, they are facing issues due to improper drug disposal methods such as throwing in garbage, flushing into the toilet, and burning which can cause environmental contamination. The other sources employed by the community which can lead to serious environmental and health hazards like toxicity, misuse, manufacturing of drug resistance problem and even life taking conditions arose.

Literature review

(Ashiek cheriyan, 2019) on his research article "OTC (Over the counter) Pharma product: A study on the behaviour of consumer" discussed that People don't approach a physician for the common ailments saving the physicians time as well as that of the patients. Here Over the counter pharma products comes into the lights. Consumer's behaviour keeps on changing due to various factors which cannot be predicted by the marketers. So, the manufacturing industries in all the fields observes their consumers keenly to avoid missing their market share. (Aashiek Cheriyan, 2019)states that the pharma companies are using new marketing strategies in order to attract the public towards OTC market. (Tamilarasi, 2019)The pharma companies always look upon their position and their competitor's strategies and then decide whether to continue with the same strategies or to alter it according to the changing scenario. (dadich, 2018) revealed in study that consumer preferred to use OTC medicine for treating common ailments which also presented that people are aware regarding use of OTC medicine. The pharmacist

plays an important role in pushing and providing information about new OTC brand product. (Tiwari, 2016) the study is about in the Nepalese context, the author discussed that Advertisement of OTC drugs shows a positive effect on the awareness level of the consumer but it does not correlate with the advertisement to alter the buying behaviour of OTC drugs on the other hand, it is very limited people have easy accessibility of T.V. or newspaper. only a few people trusted within the advertisement done through T.V. or newspaper, in this study it absolutely was observed that majority of individuals trusted within the recommendation of the medical hall than other media. (Sujit S Sansgiry, 2017) study “Abuse of Over-the-Counter medicine: a pharmacist’s perspective” concluded that the demand of OTC drug is increased day by day and abuse of drug potential also increased. The pharmacist has opportunity to counsel the patient and educate them. The abuse of drug should be controlled and provide better medication therapy. Author (nasim, 2019) in his study “How to Dispose of Expired, Unused Drugs- Indian Pharmaceutical Association” Revealed why Unused and expired drug of the drug is Important and why it is needed in India. There is no system placed where the consumers can directly send the medicines unused by them safe collection. The author also said that all drugs are chemicals and their improper disposal cause a serious impact on environment and public health. (Shehhi, 2019)on his research paper “assessment of consumer’s attitude towards leftover and expired medication at home” discussed about the problem of unused medicines is how widely spread all over the world. In his research he concluded that most of the consumer does not know how to dispose the drug and does not know about the harmful impact on environment and their own health. (ghosh) article on “Need for proper disposal of medicines in India”, discussed on Unused medicines should give back to pharmacist and they send back to industry to be recycled. This process protects the environment and people health. The take-back programme should be there.

Purpose study

The aim of the study to investigate the consumer perception and behaviour toward selection of OTC medicine and impact of various marketing strategies and the knowledge of consumer about disposition of leftover or unused OTC medicines.

Research Objective

- The study was conducted to investigate the perception of consumer regarding brand awareness, adaptability of brand, safety and marketing strategies of OTC product.
- To evaluate the factors affecting the buying behaviour of OTC pharma products.
- To assess the factors influencing the buying behaviour of OTC pharma products.
- To investigate the general opinion of consumer and their perception of OTC drugs including misuse of the drugs.
- To check the knowledge and to create awareness regarding safe drug disposal system.

Research Methodology

This is a Qualitative study and exploratory in nature.

In this study opinion of 100 Consumers pan India were taken in to consideration. Purposive sampling was used, because the major criteria for the sample inclusion was complete lockdown within the geographical territory. it absolutely was predetermined that respondents during this study are especially from those locations where complete lockdown is imposed by the govt officials. The survey was done online between March 2021 to June 2021 during corona pandemic situation. This study is totally new; as pretested structured survey instrument/ questionnaire wasn't available. the planning of questionnaire and construct considered were discussed with consumers their recommendations and further their adaptability, working condition, medicines promotion and marketing method the variables were opted. Further, during questionnaire formation, other variables like consumer opinion, advantages, drawbacks, simple use, service delivery and problems faced by consumer were kept in mind and brought into consideration. The questions were multiple choice questions and ranking order. Data analytics also done in this research article.

Data Analysis:

The data analysis reveals and it is often concluded that after identifying consumers attitude on OTC drugs, percentage analysis was carried out to know the consumer behaviour and their perception towards OTC drug.

Table 1

Age wise classification of respondent

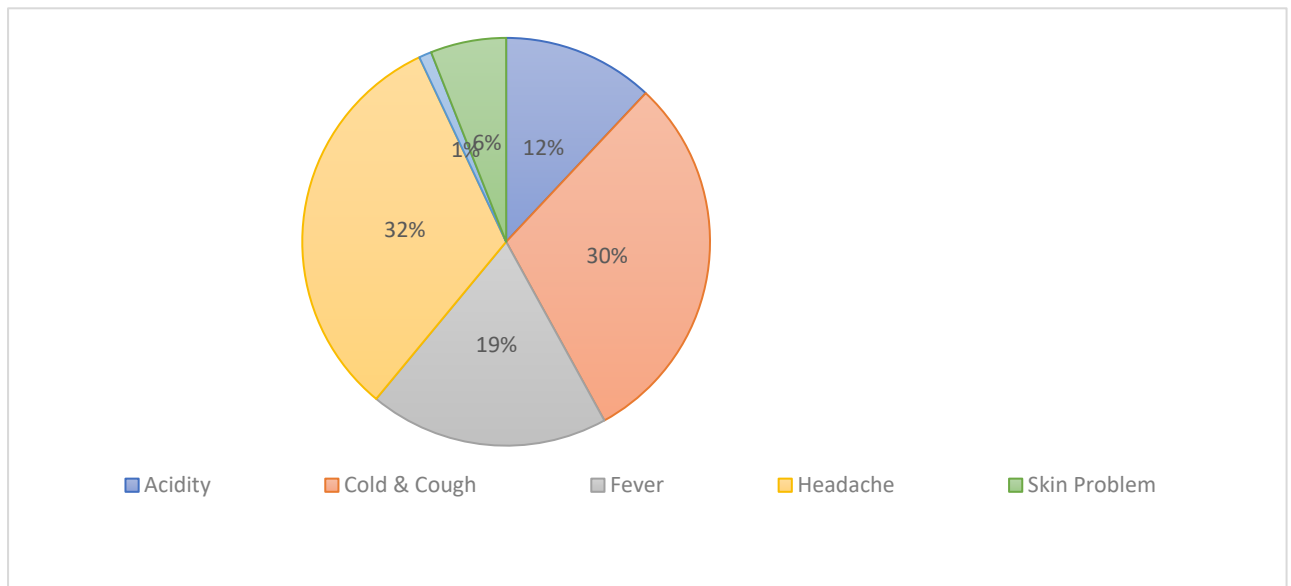
	Age Group	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	18-29	40	39%
2	30-39	29	28%
3	40-49	19	19%
4	>50	12	14%
Total		100	100 Percentage

The above table analysis indicates that 39% of the consumer is from the age group of 18-29 years, 28% of respondents are from the age group of 30-39 years, 19% of the respondents are from 40-49 age group and remaining 14% of respondents are from 50 and above age group. The study analysis projected that majority of respondents are from the age group of 18-29.

2. We asked consumer about non-prescription medicine use.

In survey the questioner asked to responded that does they prefer self-medication. 91.2% responded are using OTC drug, 8.2% were said no.

3 Common ailments or symptoms preferred in self-medication.



In the questioner the respondent were asked which type of common ailments or symptoms you preferred in self-medication. As shown in chart the 32% respondent showed that mostly the respondent prefers self-medication in headache, 30% respondents prefer self-medication in cold and cough. 19% of respondents take self-medication in fever, body pain and skin problem. Rest of 12% of respondents use self-medication in acidity problem. Some of respondents use self-medication in allergies and boosting the immunity.

4. Pharmacist advice to consult the doctor for very long-time medical problem.

The consumer was also asked that does pharmacist advise them to consult the doctor if they need long-term medical problems. The 85.3% of consumer response yes the pharmacist advise them to consult a doctor where 14.7% of respondents replied no

5. Consumer behaviour on use of more than one OTC drug in more than one symptom in same time.

62.7% of consumers responded that they were rarely used more than one OTC drug if there's over one common ailment at the same time whereas 17.6% response that they were more likely to use more than one OTC medicine at the same time. The remainder of 19.6% never use more than one OTC medicine at the same time if they have over one common ailments.

6. Source of information regarding branded OTC product.

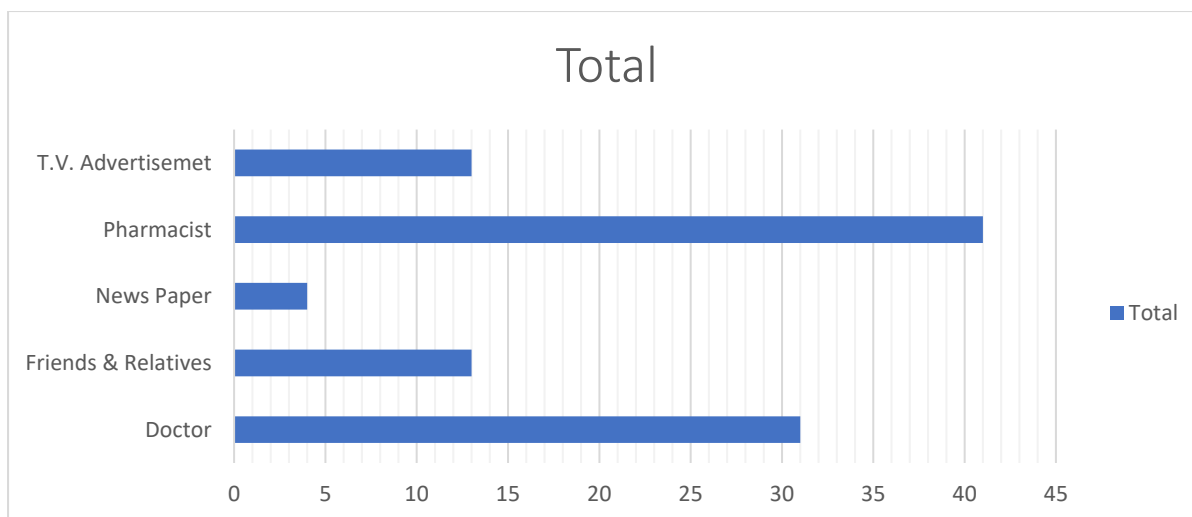


Figure 3. Source of information regarding branded OTC product.

The above figure 3 shows that the varied advertisement and promotional strategy for OTC brand medicine performed by the pharma company and its impact on consumers. 30.4% of respondents show that they came to know grasp about new OTC medicine brand through a physician. 40.2% of respondents showed that pharmacist provide them information about OTC drugs. 12.7% of respondents represent that T.V. advertisement make them aware of OTC drugs whereas 12.7% of respondents show that they get the OTC medicine information from friends and relatives. Also, respondents receive information through 1% of newspapers and 3.9% of respondents opined that the internet is another source of information about OTC medicine. Thus, the most source of data regarding OTC drug the information employed by the consumer is television advertisement, pharmacist, doctors, friends and relatives, internet, newspaper etc.

7. Factors considered for selecting OTC medicine product.

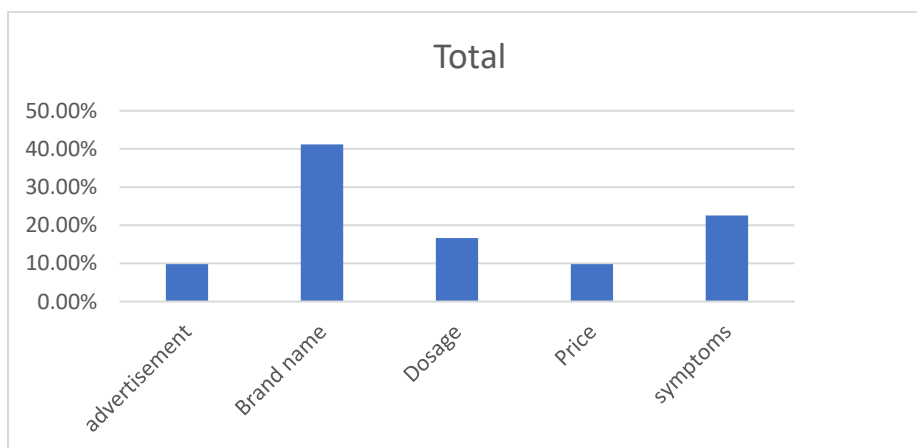


Figure 4. Consideration for selecting an OTC medicine

In the above figure. 4, the factors considering by consumer for selecting OTC medicine products is presented. 41.2% of consumers opined that brand name was considered while selecting the OTC product because it is easy to recognize. 22.5% response show that they consider symptoms that OTC medicine is going to be used. Of OTC drugs whereas 9.8% responded towards the price and of OTC medicine. 16.7% of respondents give an opinion that the dosage of OTC medicine was an important criterion for choosing OTC drugs Only 9.8% of respondents opined that advertisement was a very important factor for choosing OTC brand product.

8. Reason behind using same OTC drugs.

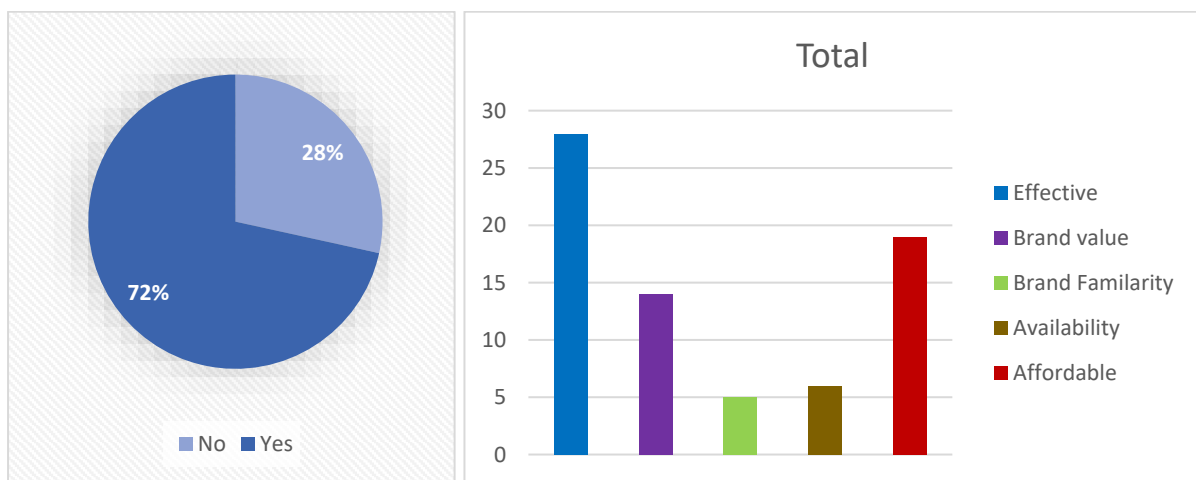


Fig 5a. Do you usually consume same OTC brands?
why?

Fig 5b If Yes, then

It was found that from the whole survey consumers 72% of respondents opined that they used the same OTC brand for minor ailments. The explanation behind consuming the same OTC brand is 28 respondents opined that the brand is effective, 19 consumers showed that the brand is affordable. where 14 responses opted for brand values. 6 consumers show that the Availability of the brand and 5 consumers showed that brand familiarity was the reason for choosing the same OTC Brand product.

9. Consumer attitude towards disposing Leftover or Unused OTC medicine.

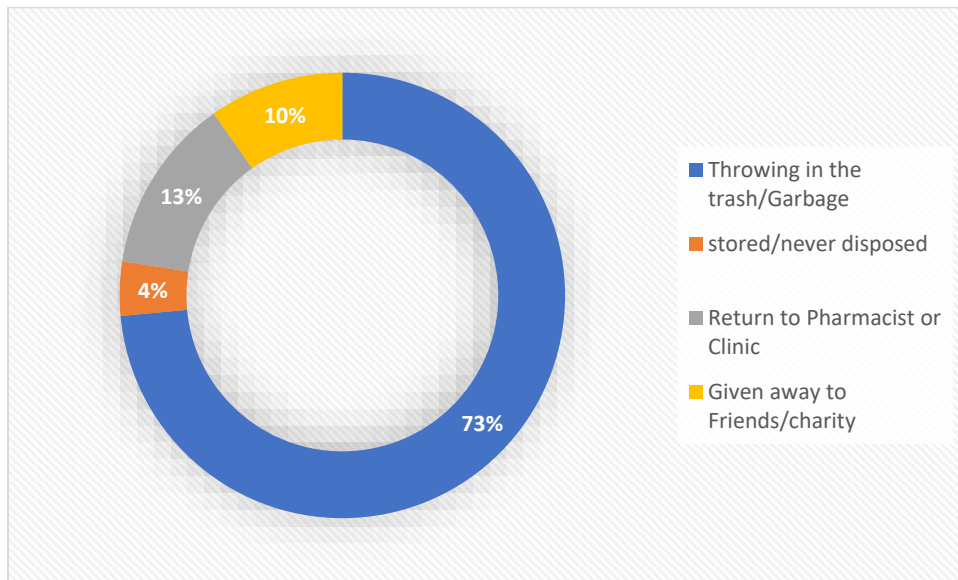


Figure 6 Consumer behaviour towards disposing leftover or unused OTC products.

Above figure, major data show that 73% of Respondent throwing the drugs into the dustbin is the most typical practice and it should result in a lack of knowledge regarding consequences of improper drug disposal. 10% Respondent opined that the unused or leftover drug gives to relatives or friends. 13% of Consumer are returning the unused medicines to the pharmacy store and 4% people stored the product and never disposed even after expired of product.

10 Pharmacist advice about how to dispose OTC drug.

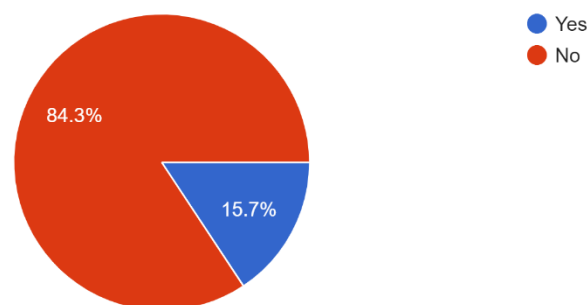


Figure 7 Does your pharmacist advice you how to dispose the OTC product?

The question also asked to consumer that does your pharmacist advice you about how to dispose the OTC product. The 84.3% of people response no. The pharmacist does not inform about the dispose procedure. 15.7% responded opined that yes.

Discussion

The study revealed that mostly the consumers preferred to use OTC medicine (Self-medication) for treating common or minor ailments which also shown that people are also aware of the use of OTC medicine. The pharmacist plays a crucial role in pushing and providing information about new OTC products. The majority of consumers show that they rarely use over one OTC medicine in addition to more common ailments this also shows that there should be effective measures should be made for correct use of OTC medicine. T.V. advertisement, internet, Doctor, the pharmacist was the foremost source of knowledge regarding branded OTC product from where consumers get the knowledge or information in detail. The consumer also considers the dos, name and symptoms of new OTC brand product. The awareness of the consumer is increased day by day so the pharmaceutical industry should be work on building the brand value and try to maintain the brand quality. Now a days the people are getting help from the internet so the pharma company should also focus on advertising. In packaging the information about symptoms and indication should be included for which OTC medicines were used. The consumer is also purchase same branded drug so the Pharma Industry should also work on availability and affordability of the OTC drugs. In the present study here also discussed about the Disposal of the leftover and unused drug. In the result it seems that it is an common practice for the consumer that whenever the unused OTC product or expired product and unwanted product the consumer will just throw in the dustbin or garbage and if there is liquid preparations they will flush in to sink. some people return to the pharmacist. Even though at the pharmacy store have medicine drop box system, the use of the box is seeming to be less during the survey. It shown that mostly the people are aware of this system. Mostly the consumer prefers dispose the medicines by themselves.

Limitation and scope for future research

In this study, the sample size is just too small to generalize the findings so as to formulate the specified conceptual framework, hence the study must be commissioned for further research and will be done Pan India level. As now the consumer become more turned in to their health,

medical insurance also plays a crucial role increasing awareness and hence, it's imperative that we analyse the behaviour patterns of buyer once they have an ailment and appearance out for remedies.

Conclusion

Based on this research study it can be concluded that people are aware of the OTC medicines for common ailments. OTC medicines are significant to the practice of self-medication. Though consumer chooses to visit pharmacy store, self-medication is additionally causal factor which influences a consumer to for OTC medicines. The brand of the drug is taken into account as one of the important features while purchasing OTC medicines. There's a necessity to educate the consumer about the safe and effective use of OTC drugs. Advertisements are playing a big role in creating awareness among people. Also, we know that every day thousands of medicines are released in the market to treat the disease for increasing the growth of the healthcare system. When the consumer no longer uses that drug, it should be disposed of properly. If the medicines are not disposing of properly there are chances of toxic effects on peoples.

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