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Analyzing Consumer Behaviour and Perceptions Toward Generic Medicines

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ABSTRACT

Generic medicines are transforming the way individuals in India access healthcare, particularly as prices continually rise. This research examines the level of satisfaction people have with generics throughout the nation, exploring factors such as their awareness of these medications, perceptions of quality, affordability, trust, and whether their physicians encourage their use. We employed straightforward surveys and some data analysis to understand what influences people's preferences for or against generics, regardless of their origin in India. The findings indicate that generics are becoming increasingly popular, with India being a significant contributor to their production, yet challenges remain. Not everyone is aware of generics, some are concerned about their quality, and trust can be inconsistent. Individuals desire clear information, reassurance in their use, and prompt assistance from their healthcare providers or pharmacists. We believe that prioritizing people's needs such as enhanced education, increased trust, and improved accessibility of generics could encourage broader acceptance. This research provides insight into how Indians perceive generics and presents actionable suggestions for pharmaceutical companies, healthcare professionals, and the government to enhance their effectiveness. It also paves the way for further research as the healthcare landscape evolves.

Keywords: Generic medicines, how people act, what they think, cheap healthcare, trust, knowing about generics, India

Introduction

Healthcare's becoming costly, and in India, where so many of us reside, that poses a significant issue. Generic drugs are like the economical relatives of brand-name medications; they contain the same ingredients and function the same but are considerably cheaper. India is significant in this realm; our generic market reached $50 billion in 2023 and could rise to $130 billion by 2030 (IMS Health, 2023). We produce about 20% of the world's generics, which is the reason people refer to us as the "pharmacy of the world." However, despite this, not everyone is utilizing them. We aimed to uncover why and how individuals throughout India perceive generics. This matters a great deal because generics could lead to substantial savings. If people are unaware of their existence or lack trust in them, though, we lose out. Some individuals believe that lower prices imply inferior quality (Hassali et al., 2009), although our government and organizations like the U. S. FDA assert that generics are equally safe and effective. We began questioning residents in Vadodara, Gujarat where a significant percentage of drugs are produced, about 30% of India's supply thinking this could provide insights applicable to all of India.

The dilemma is straightforward: generics are available and inexpensive, yet not everyone is opting for them. Older individuals commonly stick with brands they have relied on for years (Fraeyman et al., 2011), while younger or more educated individuals seem more open to using them. Major pharmaceutical companies also invest heavily in advertising for brand-name products, rendering generics less appealing. We intended to explore what barriers are keeping people from choosing generics.

Our primary objective was to understand how Indians perceive and interact with generic medications. We assessed their knowledge level, whether they believe generics are of good quality, and what influences their choices, such as price, advice from their doctors, or simply the availability at stores. We had two hypotheses to evaluate: perhaps individuals don't perceive a significant difference between generics and branded medications (we labeled this H_0), or perhaps they do (H_1). Additionally, we considered whether price isn't the primary factor influencing their choice of generics (H_0), or whether it is (H_1). We hope this research aids in determining ways to encourage more individuals to utilize generics so that healthcare remains affordable

Literature Review

A frequent issue is that individuals don't always have confidence in generics. Lacocca et al. (2010) discovered that people prefer familiar brands, believing that generics are less valuable due to their lower price. Himmel et al. (2005) interviewed individuals who were aware of generics but expressed dislike, stating they were not as effective or strong. Shrank et al. (2009) and Sewell et al. (2012) reported similar findings: some individuals

believe that generics lead to more side effects or are less effective, as 30% of respondents in Shrank's study chose branded products. In Bulgaria, Lebanova et al. (2012) indicated that 94% believed generics were inferior, a sentiment mirrored in Malaysia (Al-Gedadi et al., 2008) and Brazil (Bertoldi et al., 2005) as well.

Your identity influences perceptions. Fraeyman et al. (2011) observed that older or less-educated individuals in Belgium were not receptive, sometimes struggling with the packaging. Lambert et al. (1980) found that older, wealthier individuals in Florida avoided generics, assuming they were less effective, while younger individuals were more willing to save money. Ahire et al. (2015) in India reported that 60% of scientifically educated individuals recognized generics were acceptable, yet over 70% didn't utilize them, as knowledge does not equate to action.

The roles of doctors and pharmacists are significant. Keenum et al. (2012) found that women on TennCare were aware that generics were cheaper, but only 45% opted for them, as doctors (29%) and pharmacists (35%) were not very supportive. Heikkilä et al. (2007) mentioned that in Finland, more individuals started using generics when pharmacists advocated for them, though some still preferred the traditional options. Salhia et al. (2015) noted that Saudi doctors did not frequently prescribe generics due to a lack of knowledge, whereas Gupta et al. (2014) found that Indian doctors appreciated them.

Pricing is an important factor, though not always decisive. Smit and Bredenkamp (2013) indicated that generics lowered drug costs in South Africa. Ganther and Kreling (2000) stated that cost savings prompted individuals to switch, but they were more selective with serious health conditions, like heart issues. Figueiras et al. (2007) in Portugal observed that people were hesitant to choose generics for major health concerns.

Advertising also has an impact. Kotler and Keller (2016) argue that advertisements for branded drugs foster loyalty, making generics seem unexciting. Rojas (2018) found that price variations were influenced by local wealth, indicating that generics must be appropriately priced. Ibrahim et al. (2010) in Australia claimed that cost is a factor, yet doctors' opinions and concerns about side effects deter users.

Not everyone is informed about generics. Hassali et al. (2009) suggested that education and previous experience influence perceptions of generics. Pereira et al. (2003) found that Canadians were uncertain about the safety of generic warfarin. Colgan et al. (2015) and Dunne and Dunne (2015) reported that many people, including doctors, believe that generics are not as effective.

Objective

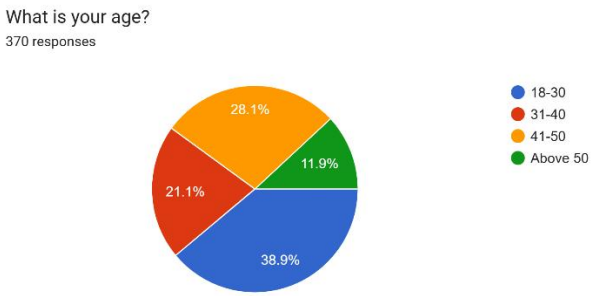
1. Impact of price on consumer behavior and loyalty toward generic pharmaceutical products.

2. Consumer awareness, knowledge gaps, and misconceptions about generic medicines.

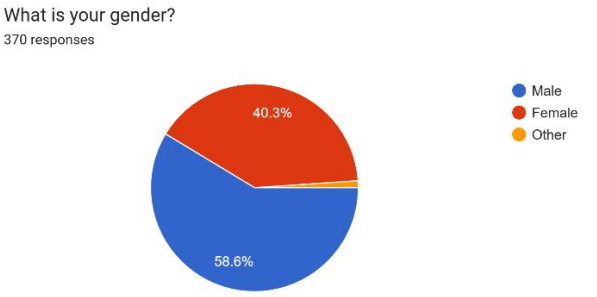
3. Role of education and healthcare provider recommendations in influencing consumer confidence and adoption.

Summary of Data Collection:

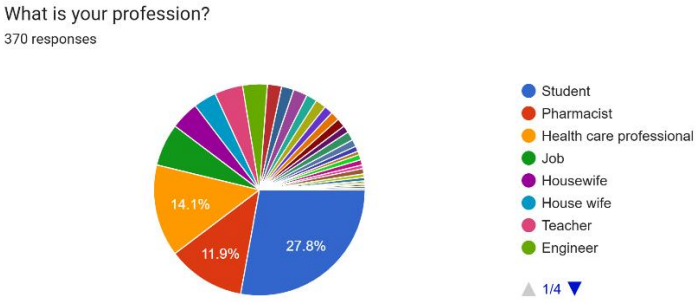
1. AGE: The survey outcomes reveal that 38. 9% of the participants belong to the age group of 18-30 years. Additionally, 21. 1% of the participants are from the 31-40 years age group, while 28. 1% are between the ages of 41-50 years. Finally, 11. 9% of the participants are over the age of 50 years**.**



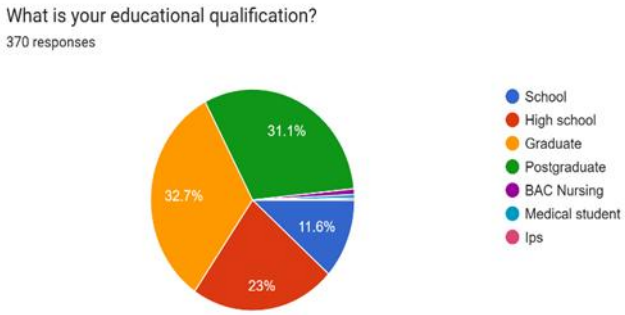
2. GENDER: The survey outcomes indicate that 58. 6% of the participants are male, whereas 40. 3% are female. Furthermore, 1. 1% of the participants identify as other.



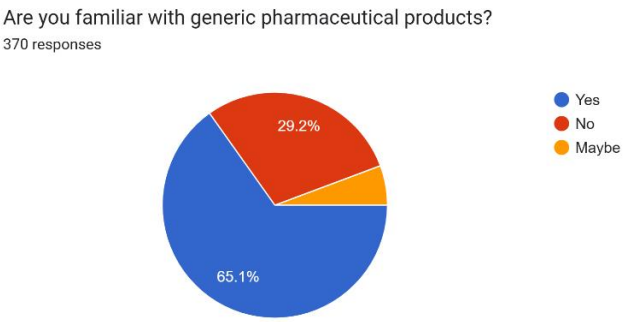
3. PROFESSION: The survey outcomes demonstrate that 27. 8% of the participants are students, while 11. 9% are healthcare professionals. In addition, 14. 1% of the participants are pharmacists, and the remaining 46. 22% fall into the “others” category.



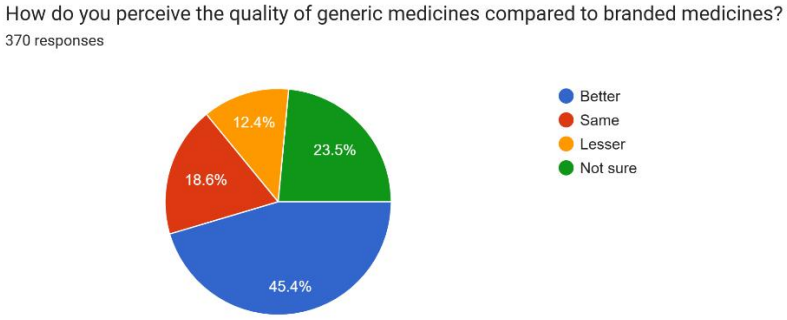
4. EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION: The survey results suggest that 11. 6% of the participants hold a school-level qualification, while 23% have completed high school. Additionally, 35. 3% of the participants are graduates, and 31. 1% possess a postgraduate qualification.



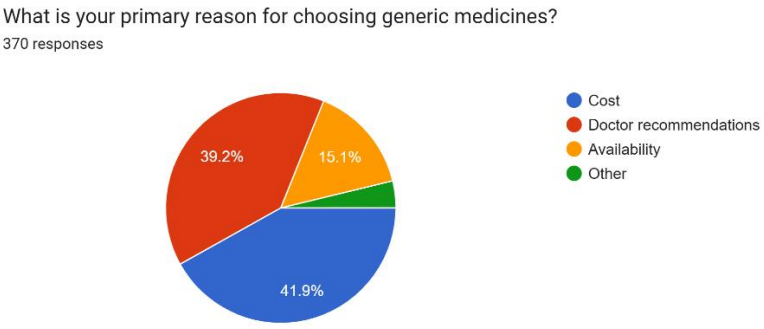
5. AWARENESS OF GENERIC MEDICINES: The survey outcomes reveal that 65. 1% of the participants are aware of generic medicine, while 29. 2% are not aware of it. Additionally, 5. 7% of the participants are uncertain about generic medicine.



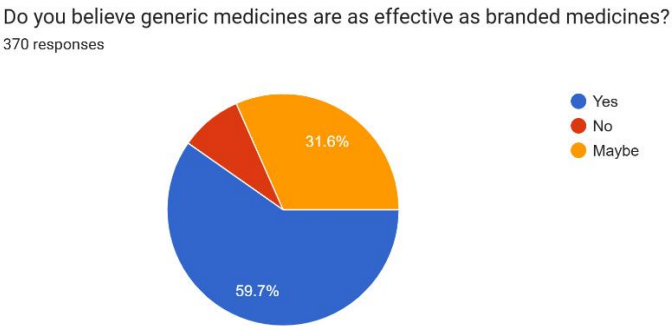
6. QUALITY (GENERIC VS. BRANDED): The survey outcomes indicate that 45. 4% of the participants view generic medicine as superior to branded medicine, while 18. 6% think it is comparable to branded medicine. Additionally, 12. 4% of the participants believe that generic medicine is inferior to branded medicine, and 23. 5% are uncertain about it.



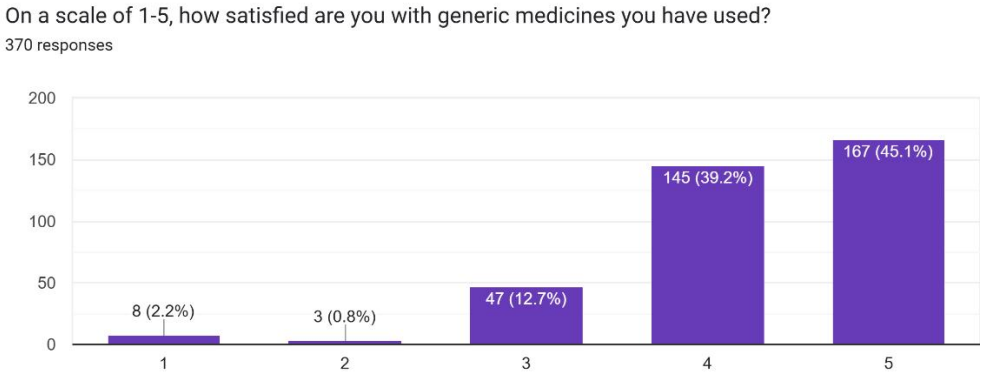
7. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CHOICE OF GENERIC MEDICINES: The survey outcomes indicate that 41. 9% of the participants are influenced by price when selecting medicine, while 39. 2% depend on doctor recommendations. Additionally, 15. 1% are influenced by availability.



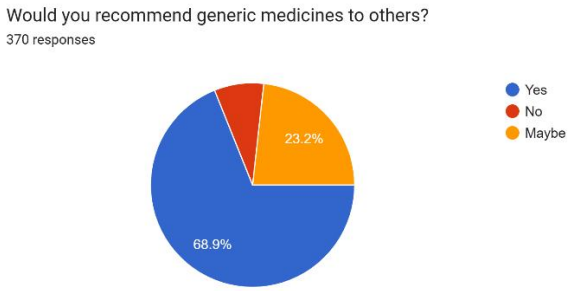
8. BELIEF IN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GENERIC MEDICINES: The survey findings suggest that 59. 7% of the participants believe that generic medicine is as effective as branded medicine. Conversely, 8. 6% believe that generic medicine is less effective than branded alternatives. Additionally, 31. 6% of the participants are uncertain about the effectiveness of generic medicine



9. CONSUMER SATISFACTION WITH GENERIC MEDICINE: The survey results reveal that 45. 1% of the participants are very satisfied with generic medicine, while 39. 2% are satisfied. Additionally, 12. 7% of the participants have a neutral stance, 0. 8% are dissatisfied, and 2. 2% are very dissatisfied with generic medicine.



10. WILLINGNESS TO RECOMMEND GENERIC MEDICINES: The survey results indicate that 7. 8% of the participants do not prefer to recommend generic medicine to others, while 23. 2% are uncertain about recommending it.



RESULT AND FINDINGS

Hypothesis 1: Consumer Behavior and Perception Towards Generic vs. Branded Medicines

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference in consumer perception between generic and branded medicines.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant difference in consumer perception between generic and branded medicines.

Chi-Square Test Results: Chi-Square Value: 0. 811 and p-value: 0. 847

Conclusion: Since the p-value (0. 847) is greater than 0. 05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in consumer perception between generic and branded medicines.

Hypothesis 2: Influence of Price on Preference for Generic Medicines

Null Hypothesis (H_0): Price does not significantly influence consumers' preference for generic pharmaceutical products.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): Price has a significant effect on consumers' preference for generic pharmaceutical products.

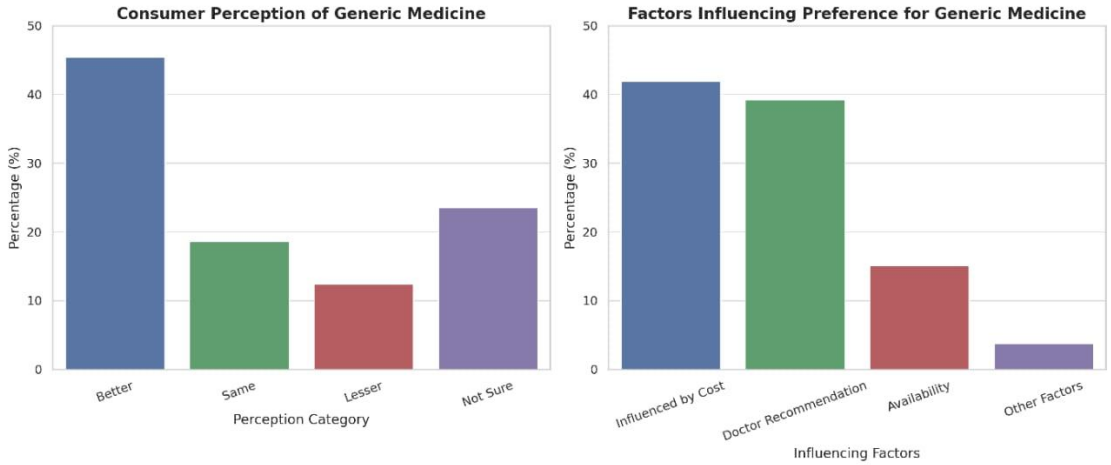
Chi-Square Test Results: Chi-Square Value: 2. 101 and p-value: 0. 552

Conclusion: Since the p-value (0. 552) exceeds 0. 05, we do not reject the null hypothesis. This suggests that price does not significantly influence consumer preference for generic medicines.

Final Interpretation:

1. Consumers do not significantly differentiate between generic medicines and branded medicines.

2. Price by itself is not a crucial element in shaping consumer preference for generic medicines.



Limitations of the study:

- The respondents mainly belong to the 18-30 age cohort, which may skew the results in a particular direction.
- The study required a considerable amount of time as data collection depended on digital platforms.
- The sample may not comprehensively represent all demographics, resulting in potential gaps in consumer behavior insight.
- Some respondents had limited knowledge of generic medicines, potentially affecting their responses.

Conclusion:

1. Consumer Perception: The study indicates no significant variation in how consumers view generic and branded medicines, suggesting that many consumers see them as equally effective.

2. Price Influence: The analysis indicates that price alone does not significantly affect consumer preference for generic medicines. Other factors, like recommendations from doctors and availability, are also important.

3. Awareness Levels: A considerable number of consumers are either unaware of or uncertain about generic medicines, emphasizing the necessity for improved education and marketing initiatives.

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