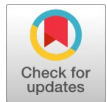


Factors Impacting Purchase Intention of Indian Consumers Towards Spiritual Products

Roy Salot



Abstract: *Purpose: The aim of the research is to ascertain the elements that influence the propensity of Indian consumers to buy spiritual merchandise. Design/methodology/approach: A quantitative approach was used. Primary data was collected from 150 Indian consumers through an electronic survey using a structured questionnaire with close-ended questions. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed using Varimax Rotation using SPSS software. Findings: The findings revealed Brand Perception, Religious Belief, Spirituality Factors, Brand Image, Packaging and Service Factors and Variety Factors as the determinants of purchase intention towards spiritual products for Indian consumers. Practical implications: This study offers valuable insights for marketers, manufacturers, and retailers of spiritual products in India. Businesses can adjust their marketing plans, product designs, and service offerings to meet the needs and preferences of Indian consumers by studying the factors that influence purchase intention. Originality/Value: While there has been considerable research on purchase intentions in various sectors, this study uniquely focuses on spiritual products in the Indian context. Given the cultural and religious significance of spirituality in India, understanding consumer behaviour in this niche segment is critical.*

Keywords: *Purchase Intention, Spiritual Products, India, Consumer Behaviour*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian market for spiritual products has shown significant expansion in recent years, with the industry reportedly scaling up to INR 30 billion by 2020, representing an amalgamation of traditional values and modern commerce (The Economic Times, 2019). This growth is reflective of the deep-rooted spiritual ethos within India, where consumers often seek products that resonate with their religious and spiritual ideologies. Behavioral economics, an interdisciplinary subfield combining insights from psychology and economics, explores the complexities of decision-making processes, deviating from the conventional premise of rationality. It offers a conceptual structure for comprehending and predicting the behaviours of diverse consumer types, acknowledging the biases and heuristics that guide human actions. In leveraging the principles of behavioral economics, researchers have gained valuable perspectives on consumer behaviour across different sectors and countries.

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Studies in the United States have used behavioral economics to understand the organic food market (Jones & Richardson, 2007), while European research has delved into sustainable consumption patterns influenced by psychological and social factors (Thøgersen, 2005). Despite the burgeoning market for spiritual brands, research delving into the behavioral drivers of consumer behaviour for such products in India remains sparse. Yet, recent shifts in education, lifestyle, and cultural dynamics have significantly transformed the Indian consumer landscape, which requires an understanding of these behavioral factors. Exploring the behavioral factors influencing consumer behaviour for spiritual brands can provide companies and brands within an emerging economy like India with deeper insights into their consumer base, enabling them to strategize for enhanced market share. As far as the researcher is aware, the existing literature scarcely addresses the intersection of behavioral economics and consumer behaviour concerning spiritual brands in the Indian context, marking this research as a pioneering effort in this field. Hence, this study seeks to investigate the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the preference of Indian Consumers towards Spiritual Brands

RQ2: What are the factors that affect the purchase behaviour of Spiritual Brands

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Spiritual brands and products have seen a significant evolution over the years, resonating deeply with the consumers' innermost beliefs, desires, and values. Their burgeoning popularity is not merely a commercial phenomenon but reflects a confluence of religion, tradition, culture, and consumerism. Spiritual products are commodities that have religious or spiritual significance and are often used as mediums to connect to a higher power or to attain inner peace [1]. Over the years, spirituality has metamorphosed from being strictly religious to a broader, more holistic understanding that encompasses wellbeing, tradition, and personal growth. This shift can be observed in the rising popularity of products like Ayurveda, which blend ancient wisdom with modern consumerism [2].

Spiritual brands refer to brands that receive endorsement from religious or spiritual beliefs and are frequently associated with influential spiritual leaders. The phenomenon of the commercialization of spirituality has experienced significant growth in recent years [3]. In recent times, there has been a notable surge in the appeal of these brands, particularly across the Asian region and the Indian subcontinent.



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According to [4] and [5], The Asian region offers a distinct setting for comprehending the limitations and relevant contextual factors that affect consumers and influence their product purchasing decisions. According to [6][23][24][25] and [7], An illustration of this may be seen in the case of Patanjali Ayurveda Ltd, an Indian corporation that has undergone significant expansion in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry. The revered spiritual leader Baba Ramdev is the founder and current supporter of this business, achieved a remarkable turnover of US\$1.4 billion during the fiscal year of 2016-2017. Baba Ramdev was named 27th in Fast Company's ranking on the 'Most Creative Business People of 2016' [8]. The phenomenon of embracing national culture within the domains of marketing and business has experienced substantial expansion, as the presence of patriotic sentiments frequently stimulates the consumption of domestically produced goods [9]; [10]. The fast expansion of spiritual brands, particularly in India, has posed a perplexing challenge for strategists in both multinational corporations (MNCs) and domestic enterprises [11]; [12].

The embrace of spiritual products can be attributed to several reasons. Consumers are increasingly seeking authenticity, purpose, and meaning in their purchases [13]. The interplay between spirituality and consumerism, driven by the need for self-expression, authenticity, and alignment with one's beliefs, makes spiritual brands particularly attractive [1]. Additionally, the cultural diversity in the Indian FMCG sector has strengthened the position of brands that draw inspiration from spirituality, creating a contradiction, suggesting a deep-rooted cultural and spiritual inclination [14]. Consumer preferences for spiritual brands stem from the intrinsic value they perceive in such products [1]. highlighted that spirituality and religiosity, when intersected with consumerism, form a unique matrix that drives consumer preferences. Furthermore, the SOBC (Stimulus-Organism-Behavior-Consequence) framework indicates that both internal and external factors have a significant impact on customer purchasing decisions when it comes to Ayurveda items in particular [2].

Numerous studies have delved into understanding the reasons behind the growing preference for spiritual brands. [13] explored the determinants driving the purchase intent of spiritual brands, while another study by [1] delved into the interplay between spirituality, religiosity, and consumerism. These studies collectively underscore the complex motivations behind the consumers' gravitation towards spiritual brands. In their seminal work, [1] embarked on an exploratory journey to comprehend the factors that drive consumer preferences for spiritual brands. They asserted that spiritual brands provide a unique blend of emotional, functional, and social benefits that resonate deeply with the consumers. The authors used both quantitative and qualitative approaches, revealing that spiritual brands filled a profound void in the market by catering to the consumers' need for belonging, self-expression, and alignment with their spiritual beliefs. The study underscored that spiritual brands, by building trust and offering products grounded in ancient traditions and wisdom, establish a deep emotional connection with the consumers.

Expanding upon their earlier research, [13] delved into understanding the determinants that drive the purchase intent

of spiritual brands. They found that consumers perceive spiritual brands as authentic and genuine, offering products that are not only spiritually enlightening but also of superior quality. According to their research, customers are more likely to purchase from spiritual enterprises if they perceive the brands as authentic and if the products align with their own personal values and beliefs [2]. took a different angle by focusing on Ayurveda products – a subcategory of spiritual products deeply rooted in Indian tradition. Using the SOBC framework, they revealed that consumers' buying intentions were significantly influenced by both internal (beliefs, attitudes, personal experiences) and external factors (cultural influences, peer opinions). This study was particularly insightful in demonstrating how traditional knowledge systems like Ayurveda have been successfully commercialized by blending them with modern marketing strategies. Collectively, these studies illuminate the multi-dimensional facets of spiritual brands and products. They reveal the deep emotional, cultural, and spiritual connection that consumers have with these brands, emphasizing the importance of authenticity, trustworthiness, and alignment with consumer values. Each research endeavour adds a unique layer to our understanding, confirming the rising significance of spiritual brands in the modern consumer landscape.

Spiritual brands frequently position themselves as being culturally and consumer-oriented, as opposed to profit-driven. One example is the phenomenally popular brand Patanjali, which is deeply ingrained in the identity of a large portion of India's population [15]. It is reasonable to hypothesize that Indians, due to their greater propensity for spirituality [16], represent a market for faith-inspired brands. Additionally, institutional support from the federal and state governments has contributed to the expansion of FMCG spiritual brands in India [17]. There are several potential factors that could account for the expansion of spiritual brands in India. Some examples of such factors are adherence to societal norms, particularly when endorsed by reputable brand advocates [18]; [19] the considerable perceived worth of spiritual products [13]; and the practice of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity [20]; [21].

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study article addresses the following research inquiries, as previously stated:

RQ1: What is the preference of Indian Consumers towards Spiritual Brands

RQ2: What are the factors that affect the purchase behaviour of Spiritual Brands

A consumer survey was conducted in Ahmedabad, Gujarat to address these research inquiries. The survey had a sample size of 400. A digital survey was conducted by distributing a Google Form that contained the research questionnaire. A Likert scale and closed-ended questions with a structured questionnaire made up the instrument. The Likert scale were adapted from scales mentioned in research works of [1] and [22][26][27].

There were 206 responses in all, which translates to a 51.5 percent response rate. The sampling method used was convenience sampling.

IV. FINDINGS

A. Descriptive Statistics

The participants' demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1. The data reveals that the female respondents were the majority, accounting for 66 percent, whereas males accounted for only 34 percent. The majority of respondents (32 percent) fell within the age range of 36-45 years, while 31.1 percent of respondents were under the

age of 18. Only 5.8 percent of the participants fell between the age bracket of 26-35 years. The majority of the respondents (55.3 percent) had an annual income of more than INR 10,00,000 while respondents with an annual income in the range of INR 5,00,001 – 7,00,001 and INR 7,00,001-10,00,000 were the same (13.6 percent each). A mere 6.8% of those who took the survey reported an annual income below 2,50,000 INR. Most of the respondents (35 percent) were students followed by 34 percent of the respondents who were occupied in business. Only 20.4 percent of the respondents were homemakers. Most of the respondents (38 percent) were graduates, followed by 33 percent of the respondents being High school students.

Table 1: Demographics of the Survey Participants

1. Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Female	70	34
Male	136	66
Total	206	100
2. Age	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 18 years	64	31.1
19 years – 25 years	16	7.8
26 years – 35 years	12	5.8
36 years – 45 years	66	32
More than 46 years	48	23.3
Total	206	100
3. Annual Income	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Less than Rs. 2,00,000	14	6.80
Rs. 2,00,001 – Rs. 5,00,000	22	10.70
Rs. 5,00,001 – Rs.7,00,000	28	13.60
Rs. 7,00,001 – Rs.10,00,000	28	13.60
More than Rs.10,00,000	114	55.30
Total	206	100
4. Education of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage
High School	68	33.00
Graduation	79	38.30
Post graduate	56	27.20
Doctorate	3	1.50
Total	206	100
5. Occupation of Espondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Student	72	35.00
Homemaker	42	20.40
Business	70	34.00
Salaried	22	10.70
Total	206	100

B. Attitude and Behaviour Towards Spiritual Products

As Table 2 shows, majority of the respondents (88 percent) said they did not listen to any spiritual guru while 30.1 percent of the respondents listened to their spiritual gurus on social media. Only 1.5 percent of the respondents listened to them on CDs or DVDs bought from ashrams. 31.1 percent of the respondents bought spiritual offering products followed by 28.6 percent of the respondents who bought no spiritual products. 46.1 percent of the respondents bought spiritual products from near-by stores. Food and Beverage, Grocery items, Healthcare, Personal care, Apparel and Dresses were the spiritual products purchased

only once a month, while spiritual offering items, jewelry and souvenirs were purchased once a month or not at all. Majority of the respondents preferred to spend up to INR 2000 for any category of spiritual product followed by respondents buying in a range of INR 2001-5000. Very few respondents spent more than INR 30,000 for any category of spiritual products.

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Table 2: Attitude and Behaviour Towards Spiritual Products

1. Mode of listening to Spiritual Guru	No. of Respondents		Percentage						
Podcast	18		8.7						
I don't listen to any spiritual guru	88		42.7						
Temples/Ashram	18		8.7						
In-person	17		8.3						
Social media such as Instagram, YouTube etc.	62		30.1						
Ashram bought CD/DVD	3		1.5						
2. Category of Spiritual Products Bought									
		No. of Respondents		Percentage					
None		59		28.6					
Personal Care Products (Shampoo, creams, soaps etc.)		25		12.1					
Health Care Products (OTC medicines, ointments etc.)		30		14.6					
Souvenirs (temple makes, photo frames, keychain etc.)		8		3.9					
Food and Beverage (Biscuits, Juices etc.)		11		5.3					
Jewellery (Necklace, pendants etc.)		1		0.5					
Grocery Items (Salt, Lentils, Flour etc.)		6		2.9					
Spiritual Offering Products (religious books, incense sticks, worship items etc.)		64		31.1					
There are more than one		1		0.5					
In store whichever looks packaged well		1		0.5					
Total		206		100					
3. Place of Purchasing Spiritual Products									
		No. of Respondents		Percentage					
None		60		29.1					
In-store nearby		95		46.1					
Spiritual Guru website or application		15		7.3					
E-commerce retail website or application		36		17.5					
Total		206		100					
4. Frequency of Purchasing Spiritual Products									
		Online Food and Beverage	Grocery Items	Healthcare	Personal Care	Spiritual Offering	Apparel and Dress	Jewellery	Souvenir
Do not purchase		21.36	25.73	34.95	26.70	58.74	28.64	60.68	69.42
Once a month		32.04	30.58	38.35	43.69	25.73	37.86	22.33	16.99
Twice a month		18.93	22.82	15.53	16.50	9.22	19.90	11.65	8.25
Three times a month		10.19	7.28	5.34	6.31	2.91	8.74	3.40	2.91
More than three times a month		17.48	14.08	5.83	6.80	3.40	4.85	1.94	2.43
5. Amount spent on Spiritual Products									
		Online Food and Beverage	Grocery Items	Healthcare	Personal Care	Spiritual Offering	Apparel and Dress	Jewellery	Souvenir
0 – Rs. 2,000		77.67	77.67	75.73	75.73	76.21	79.13	77.18	79.13
Rs.2,001 – Rs.5,000		14.08	14.08	16.02	16.50	15.05	12.62	12.62	13.59
Rs.5001 – Rs.10,000		6.31	6.80	7.28	6.80	6.80	5.83	6.80	5.34
Rs.10,001 – Rs.30,000		0.49	0.49	0.49	0.00	1.46	1.94	3.40	1.94
Rs.30,001 – Rs.50,000		0.97	0.49	0.00	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.00	0.00
More than Rs. 50,000		0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

C. Opinions of Respondents Towards Spiritual Products

Participants were instructed to rate their level of agreement with specific statements regarding spiritual products using a 5-point scale ranging from Strongly

Disagree to Strongly Agree. These statements were obtained from pre-existing studies on spiritual products. Further, the means were calculated for these statements and then group means were arrived at. These parameters were ranked as per their group means and the results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Statistical Analysis of Participants' Viewpoints Towards Spiritual Products

Parameter	Items	Mean	Group Mean
Brand ambassador and brand image of spiritual guru	Spiritual brands are popular due to spiritual gurus linked with them	4.0922	3.953
	Spiritual brands make profits due to spiritual gurus being their brand ambassadors.	4.0534	
	Spiritual brands have the benefit of positive image of spiritual guru linked with them.	3.7136	
Spirituality	I believe there is a connection between all things that I cannot see but can sense	3.8204	3.706
	I believe in a higher power/universal intelligence	4.0291	
	I meditate to gain access to my inner spirit	3.534	

	I have a relationship with a higher power/universal intelligence	3.4417	
Intrinsic religiosity	I often listen to hear religious talks, sermons, or prayer meetings on TV, radio or in person.	3.1311	3.225
	I try to live my life as per my religious beliefs and follow many rituals.	3.233	
	I often go to a religious place	3.335	
	Religion gives me comfort when I am troubled or sad.	3.2961	
	I enjoy reading books about my religion	3.1311	
Availability, range of products and affordability	Spiritual brands are affordable.	3.3107	3.219
	Products made by spiritual brands are easily available in the market	3.5534	
	The quantity of product offered by spiritual brands is more.	2.8252	
	Spiritual brands have a larger variety of products.	2.9272	
	Spiritual brands have added more products in addition to FMCG products.	3.4806	
Quality and purity of products	Spiritual brands symbolise purity	3.1408	3.148
	Spiritual brands offer better quality	2.9175	
	Spiritual brands are 'swadeshi' i.e., indigenous	3.5583	
	Spiritual brands have attractive packaging and labelling	2.9757	
Green and environment-ally friendly	Spiritual brands are environmentally friendly and safe to use	3.2136	3.095
	Spiritual brands are organic and herbal in nature	3.2184	
	Spiritual brands are free from side effects as they contain natural ingredients.	2.8544	
Value perception	I like to use spiritual brands as I consider them to be better in quality.	2.5437	2.710
	I like to use spiritual brands as these products have natural ingredients and lesser preservatives.	2.9515	
	I use (like to use) spiritual brands being sold by a spiritual/religious leader because products by them are pure and divine	2.6359	
Extrinsic religiosity	I go to religious events as it helps me to make new friends.	2.1893	2.572
	I go to religious events to enjoy interactions with other people.	2.7476	
	I go to religious events to feel socially secure and cared for.	2.8204	
	I enjoy interacting with my friends from religious events more than my other friends.	2.5291	
Normative Community Pressure	I am motivated to use spiritual brands because I believe they are nationalistic brands.	2.3981	2.516
	I am motivated to use spiritual brands because it makes me feel part of my community.	2.4563	
	I am motivated to use spiritual brands because I can contribute to my nation.	2.6942	

From Table 3, it can be observed that the mean of factors pertaining to Brand Image of Spiritual Guru and Brand Ambassador is 3.953 which means respondents agree to the statements under this parameter. This is followed by Spirituality with a mean of 3.706 denoting that respondents agree on Spirituality parameters of spiritual products. The mean of Intrinsic Religiosity is 3.22 which shows that majority of the respondents are neutral towards the same. For the remaining parameters such as Availability, Range of Products, Quality/Purity Of Products, Green and Environment Friendly, Value Perception, Extrinsic Religiosity and Normative Community Pressure, the mean was in the range of 2.516 to 3.219, showing that respondents were neutral for the same

D. Factor Analysis

Respondents were requested to evaluate their degree of consensus on 34 statements related to spiritual products

Table 4: Statistics on Reliability

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
0.936	34
KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.914
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	3839.339
	df
	561
	Sig.
	0.000

Additional research might proceed with confidence in the instrument due to Cronbach's Alpha and KMO values exceeding 0.7. To find out what factors affect respondents' inclination to buy spiritual products, we ran a factor analysis. The study used an exploratory factor analysis as it attempted

using a 5-point Likert scale. A score of 1 indicated "Strongly Disagree," while a score of 5 indicated "Strongly Agree."

The instrument's validity was assessed through the administration of Cronbach Alpha and KMO Bartlett tests. The Cronbach Alpha statistic is computed to assess the internal consistency of the data and evaluate the reliability of the instrument. Data is deemed credible when the Cronbach Alpha exceeds 0.7. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test assesses the degree of homogeneity across variables, measuring the extent to which these variables are related to each other. On the other hand, Bartlett's test of sphericity examines whether there is any redundancy among variables that may be summarised by certain factors. Table 4 shows the Cronbach Alpha and KMO test values for the instrument.

to identify the factors that affect the purchase parameters considered by respondents for purchase of spiritual products. Seven factors were extracted that described 64 percent of the total variability in the original variable. Table 5 includes all of these factors and their loadings.



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Table 5: Factors and Factor Loading

Factor Name	Variables	Factor loadings	Square of factor loadings	Error	SCR	AVE
1. Brand Perception Factors	Spiritual brands don't have side effects because they are made up of natural ingredients	0.622	0.387	0.613	0.911	0.3874
	Spiritual brands offer a wide variety of products with better worth	0.555	0.308	0.692		
	Spiritual brands offer better quality	0.537	0.288	0.712		
	I go to a religious service because it helps me to make friends	0.588	0.345	0.655		
	I go to a religious service because it helps me to feel socially secured and cared for	0.535	0.287	0.713		
	I enjoy interacting with friends in a religious service more than my other friends	0.551	0.303	0.697		
	I am motivated to use spiritual brands being sold by a spiritual/religious leader as I consider them to be nationalistic brands	0.798	0.636	0.364		
	I am motivated to use spiritual brands being sold by a spiritual/religious leader as it makes me feel like I belong to my community	0.787	0.620	0.380		
	I am motivated to use spiritual brands being sold by a spiritual/religious leader as it makes me feel contributing to my society and nation	0.799	0.639	0.361		
	I use (like to use) spiritual brands being sold by a spiritual/religious leader because I consider them to be better in quality than brands by other companies	0.806	0.650	0.350		
	I use (like to use) Spiritual brands being sold by a spiritual/religious leader because products by them use more natural ingredients and less preservatives	0.668	0.446	0.554		
	I use (like to use) spiritual brands being sold by a spiritual/religious leader because products by them are pure and divine	0.849	0.721	0.279		
	2. Religious belief	I often hear religious sermons, talks or prayers on TV, radio or in person	0.587	0.344		
I live life according to my religious beliefs and follow rituals		0.731	0.534	0.466		
I often go to a religious place		0.807	0.651	0.349		
What religion offers me most is comfort in times of trouble and sorrow		0.669	0.448	0.552		
I enjoy reading books about my religion		0.548	0.301	0.699		
3. Spirituality Factors	I believe there is a connection between all things that I cannot see but can sense	0.653	0.426	0.182	0.894	0.4261
	I believe in a higher power/universal intelligence	0.608	0.370	0.137		
	I meditate to gain access to my inner spirit	0.713	0.509	0.259		
	I have a relationship with a higher power/universal intelligence	0.737	0.542	0.294		
4. Sustainability Factors	Spiritual brands are environmentally friendly and safe to use	0.644	0.415	0.173	0.903	0.4154
	Spiritual brands are organic and herbal in nature	0.630	0.397	0.158		
	Spiritual brands are easily affordable at better prices	0.639	0.409	0.167		
	Spiritual brands symbolise purity	0.696	0.484	0.234		
5. Brand Image Factors	Spiritual brands have easy availability of products in the market	0.579	0.335	0.112	0.894	0.3353
	Spiritual brands are popular because of the spiritual gurus associated with them	0.648	0.420	0.176		
	Spiritual brands are earning profits because of the spiritual gurus as brands ambassador	0.729	0.531	0.282		
	Spiritual brands have a good image of spiritual guru associated with the brands	0.726	0.527	0.278		
6. Packaging and Service factors	Spiritual brands have more quantity of the product	0.547	0.299	0.090	0.898	0.2993
	Spiritual brands have attractive packaging and labelling	0.635	0.404	0.163		
	I go to a religious service because I enjoy interacting with people there	0.542	0.293	0.086		

7. Variety of Spiritual Brands	Spiritual brands are expanding their products from FMCG to others	0.66	0.436	0.190	0.803	0.4356
	Spiritual brands are 'swadeshi' i.e., indigenous	0.731	0.534	0.286		

To assess the accuracy of the extracted factors, we calculated Cronbach Alpha to determine their reliability. We used Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to measure the amount of variance captured by the construct, and Standard Composite Reliability (SCR) to evaluate the internal consistency of the factors. The SCR has to be 0.7 and above while the AVE needs to be 0.5 or more. In the above-mentioned results, though AVE fluctuates between 0.3 to 0.4, it is acceptable as the SCR for all factors is 0.7 and above. Thus the extracted factors are considered to be reliable.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings from the questionnaire survey among consumers in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, present insightful perspectives on Indian consumers' preferences and purchase behaviour towards spiritual brands/products. The results offer a novel understanding which, when juxtaposed against earlier studies, provides a multifaceted view of the consumer psyche in the spiritual marketplace. In addressing RQ1, the study indicates a discernible preference for spiritual products associated with spiritual gurus, as indicated by the high mean score for brand ambassador and brand image (3.953). This aligns with the work of [1], which underscored the critical role of spiritual leaders in shaping consumer preferences. Similarly, the current study's observations resonate with the insights from [13], which posited that the brand image of spiritual leaders significantly influences purchase intentions. Our findings further reiterate the idea that spiritual brands benefit from the credibility and trust vested in spiritual gurus, mirroring sentiments from previous studies where the persona of spiritual leaders augments the brand's attractiveness.

Turning to RQ2, the survey delineates several factors influencing purchase behaviours. Spirituality (mean 3.706) and Intrinsic Religiosity (mean 3.225) emerged as strong determinants. These elements reflect a consumer base that is not only spiritually inclined but also engaged in religious practices. This observation is akin to the findings by [2], where consumer behaviour towards Ayurveda products was significantly influenced by spiritual and religious undertones.

Contrary to previous studies suggesting strong community influence on purchase behaviours, our study showed neutrality towards Normative Community Pressure (mean 2.516), suggesting a potential shift towards individualistic decision-making in spiritual purchases. This finding is intriguing when contrasted with the reinforcement of brands through cultural connections, as discussed by [14]. It may indicate a broader cultural divergence within the Indian FMCG market where spiritual branding could be becoming a more personal choice rather than a community-driven one. Quality and purity (mean 3.148) were seen as neutral to agreeable factors, aligning with earlier findings that purity is a critical attribute for spiritual products [13]. However, neutrality toward product quality suggests that consumers may harbour some reservations, possibly due to an increasing variety of available brands and differing standards.

The findings also denote a favourable opinion on the availability and affordability of spiritual brands (mean 3.219). This supports the notion that the expansion of spiritual products into the FMCG sector has improved their market penetration, corroborating with [2], who found that consumer purchase intentions are enhanced by accessibility.

Notably, the neutral stance on environmental friendliness (mean 3.095) contrasts with the emerging global trend of eco-conscious consumerism, indicating that Indian consumers may not yet prioritize environmental impact in their purchasing decisions of spiritual products as highly as other factors. The exploratory factor analysis contributed to understanding the composite factors affecting purchase decisions. The emergence of Brand Perception, Religious Belief, Spirituality Factors, Brand Image, Packaging, Service, and Variety Factors as key determinants echoes the multifaceted nature of consumer decision-making observed in the SOBC (Subjective, Objective, Behavioral, Conative) framework by [2].

VI. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to explore the preferences of Indian consumers towards spiritual brands and the factors influencing their purchase behaviour. The study focused on consumers in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, by conducting a questionnaire survey, which had a sample size of 400 participants, garnered 206 responses, yielding a response rate of 51.5%. Important insights into the dynamics of the spiritual brand market in India are provided by the findings. The demographic analysis showed a higher female participation in the consumption of spiritual brands, with a significant representation from the age group of 36-45 years. The majority of the participants belonged to the higher income bracket, were educated, and had occupations ranging from students to business professionals. The survey's central findings indicated a neutral stance towards the environmental friendliness of spiritual brands but a positive agreement on their availability, affordability, and association with a spiritual guru's brand image. Interestingly, the intrinsic religiosity of consumers did not strongly influence their purchase behavior, as they appeared neutral to the quality and religious significance of the products. Respondents showed alignment with spirituality, indicating a preference for the products that foster a connection with a higher power or inner spirit. However, the elements of extrinsic religiosity and normative community pressure did not seem to be significant motivators in the purchase of spiritual products. The exploratory factor analysis uncovered seven factors accounting for 64 percent of the variability in purchase parameters, with Brand Perception and Image being the most significant. [2] also found that consumers' perceptions of brands significantly affect their propensity to buy, therefore our findings are consistent with theirs.

Factors Impacting Purchase Intention of Indian Consumers Towards Spiritual Products

Comparing the findings from the current study with preceding research reveals both convergence and divergence in consumer attitudes towards spiritual brands. While the reverence for spiritual leaders as brand ambassadors remains a powerful influence, there is a nuanced shift towards individualistic spiritual engagement rather than community-enforced behaviours. Furthermore, the importance of accessibility and affordability suggests a democratization of spiritual products in the market. The neutral stances on several factors, including quality and environmental friendliness, propose that while consumers recognize these aspects, they may not be the predominant drivers for purchase decisions. This could suggest an opportunity for brand differentiation based on these attributes. Collectively, these insights provide a compelling narrative of an evolving spiritual consumer in India, navigating between traditional influences and contemporary market dynamics. Further research could probe deeper into the reasons behind the neutrality observed in several factors, potentially unearthing underlying trends that could shape the future of spiritual branding and consumerism in India.

A. Limitations

There are a few caveats to this study. Limitations on generalizability stem from the study's reliance on convenience sampling and its exclusive focus on one city. A larger portion of India's population may not buy spiritual products, given that most respondents had high incomes and levels of education.

B. Implications

Theoretically, this research adds to the existing literature on spiritual branding by presenting the complex interplay between spirituality, religiosity, and consumer behaviour. Practically, it offers valuable insights for marketers of spiritual brands, highlighting the importance of brand image and the nuanced appeal of spirituality over traditional religious practices.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Subsequent investigations could explore a broader range of participants in order to enhance the applicability of the results. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted to observe changes over time. Moreover, qualitative methods could offer deeper insights into the motivations behind the consumption of spiritual products. Additionally, examining the impact of socio-cultural factors on consumer behaviour towards spiritual brands would enrich the understanding of this phenomenon.

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