
CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand consumer perceptions of health and wellness products amidst growing public awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Using a qualitative approach, this research explores factors that influence consumer perceptions, such as trust, personal experience, preferences, and social influence. Data collection methods include in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with 20 respondents from diverse backgrounds in age, gender, and physical activity levels. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure a relevant variety of views on health and wellness products. The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis, producing key themes such as trust in product safety and effectiveness, preferences for natural over chemically-based products, and the influence of community and social media in shaping perceptions. The study's findings indicate that consumer perceptions of health products are significantly influenced by personal experiences and information obtained from social environments and media. Trust in the brand and the transparency of manufacturers in providing information also play an important role in shaping consumer decisions. Additionally, it was found that consumers tend to prefer products considered natural and that offer clear health claims. This research provides insights for producers in designing marketing strategies that can enhance consumer trust through transparent education and strengthen brand reputation.

Keywords: Consumer Perception, Health and Wellness Products, Qualitative Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Health and fitness have become two main aspects that are increasingly receiving attention in modern society, especially amidst the demands of a lifestyle that often ignores physical and mental health. According to Larsen (2022), health is not only limited to the absence of disease or infirmity, but also includes physical, mental, and social well-being (World Health Organization, 2021 in (Berger, Wen, Lang-Orsini, & Chukwueke, 2022)). In the digital era, changes in lifestyle have caused a shift in public perception regarding the importance of maintaining health and fitness, especially with the increasing openness of access to information and health products. A study by Lee et al. (2020) revealed that consumers today tend to be more critical and actively seek information about health products, especially in terms of product composition, benefits, and possible risks.

This increasing awareness has also driven the development of the health and fitness industry, which has expanded into various lines, such as supplements, healthy foods, fitness equipment, and digital health applications. This industry is projected to continue to experience significant growth. A report from Grand View Research (2022) estimates that the global health and fitness market will grow significantly in the next few years, driven by increasing public demand for products that support a healthy lifestyle. However, despite the rapid development in the provision of these products, there is still a significant gap in understanding between producers and consumers regarding perceptions and expectations of health and fitness products. In this case, consumer perception plays a central role in determining their attitudes and purchasing decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

This study aims to identify and understand consumer perceptions of health and wellness products, focusing on how factors such as beliefs, personal experiences, preferences, and social and media influences shape these perceptions. In the study of consumer behavior, perception is the process by which consumers receive, interpret, and organize information obtained from their surroundings (Yahya & Haryadi, 2023). Consumer perceptions of health products are often influenced by a number of factors, including direct experience with the product, reviews from other consumers, and exposure to information from the media. In the context of health products, for example, consumers may have a positive perception of products advertised as natural or organic, due to the assumption that natural products are safer and free from the risk of side effects (Aguirre Rodríguez, 2019). This is in line with the findings in a study by Chen and Chang (2018), which

showed that consumers tend to trust products that emphasize the authenticity and naturalness of ingredients, even though the price of the product is higher.

Trust is another important factor that influences consumer perceptions of health and wellness products. According to Oliveira (2017), trust is a positive expectation that consumers have regarding the integrity and competence of the manufacturer. In the context of health products, this trust can be formed through brand reputation, manufacturer transparency in providing product information, and safety assurance from health regulatory agencies. Research by Nuttavuthisit (2017) shows that trust in health products can affect consumer acceptance, where consumers tend to prefer products from brands they already know and trust. For example, brands that have been in the health industry for a long time may have a better reputation than new brands, making it easier to build trust with consumers.

In addition, consumer perceptions of health and wellness products are also influenced by their personal preferences for the types of products offered (Czeczotko, Górska-Warsewicz, & Zaremba, 2022). Some consumers may prefer technology-based products, such as health and wellness tracking devices or mobile applications that allow them to monitor their diet and daily activities. On the other hand, there are also consumers who are more interested in natural products, such as herbal supplements and organic foods, because of the belief that natural products are safer and more in line with the body's needs (Derkatch, 2022). These preferences are often influenced by cultural background, health conditions, and individual experiences in using certain products. For example, consumers who have a history of certain diseases or health conditions may be more likely to avoid products with added chemicals and choose more natural and safe alternatives (MacKendrick, 2018).

Social and media influences are significant additional factors in shaping consumer perceptions of health and wellness products. In a social environment, friends, family, and online communities can influence how consumers view a product. A study conducted by Yang et al. (2003) showed that consumers are often influenced by recommendations from those closest to them, especially when considering products that they are new to or unfamiliar with. In addition, social media also plays a major role in shaping consumer perceptions, where influencers and celebrities often collaborate with certain brands to promote health products. Consumers who follow influencers on social media are more likely to purchase the promoted product, due to feelings of closeness and trust in the influencer's recommendation (Ki, Cuevas, Chong, & Lim, 2020).

In line with this, there is also attention to regulation and transparency of information in the marketing of health products. With the proliferation of health products on the market, some consumers may be concerned about the safety and authenticity of claims made by manufacturers. According to a report from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA, 2020), there has been a significant increase in the number of products under scrutiny due to misleading health claims. Therefore, for consumers who are increasingly aware of the importance of health, accurate and transparent information is essential in shaping their perceptions. According to Hwang and Lin (2016), clear and accurate information provided by manufacturers can increase consumer trust, especially for products that are considered high risk.

The significance of this study lies in its ability to provide deeper insights to stakeholders in the health and wellness industry, especially regarding marketing strategies that can increase consumer trust. By understanding the perceptions and factors that influence consumer purchasing decisions, manufacturers can design more effective marketing approaches, such as by promoting product authenticity and safety, and committing to information transparency. In addition, this study can also contribute to the development of literature on consumer behavior in the context of health products, considering that studies on consumer perceptions of health and wellness products in Indonesia are still limited.

Overall, this study will not only enrich the understanding of the dynamics of consumer perceptions, but also open up opportunities for further studies to explore how changes in health and technology trends affect consumer preferences. With a qualitative method that focuses on data collection through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGB), this study aims to identify key themes in consumer perceptions of health and wellness products. The analytical method used is thematic analysis, which allows researchers to explore the meaning of each perception expressed by consumers.

Through this approach, it is hoped that the research can provide a comprehensive picture of consumer perceptions in Indonesia towards health and fitness products, including the dynamics that influence these perceptions. The findings of this study are expected to provide practical recommendations for manufacturers in increasing consumer trust and understanding the increasingly complex and dynamic needs and preferences of consumers in this rapidly growing market..

METHODS

This research methodology uses a qualitative approach with the aim of exploring consumer perceptions of health and wellness products in depth. Qualitative methods are considered appropriate in the context of this study because they allow for a richer and more comprehensive understanding of consumer perceptions and preferences, as well as the factors that influence their decisions in choosing health and wellness products (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative approaches are also appropriate for exploring subjective and contextual elements that cannot be fully measured through quantitative methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Therefore, this approach aims to gain in-depth insight into consumer motivations, personal experiences, and views on health products.

This study utilized data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD). In-depth interviews were chosen because this technique allows researchers to dig deeper into individuals' experiences, thoughts, and perceptions of health and wellness products. Through in-depth interviews, researchers can obtain rich and detailed data and understand the nuances in participant responses (Kvale, 2007). To enrich the data, focus group discussions were also used, where participants could share their perspectives in an interactive environment, allowing the social dynamics that influence their perceptions to be revealed (Krueger & Casey, 2015). In FGDs, interactions between group members can also provide additional insight into how their perceptions may be influenced by others in their social environment, especially in the context of products involving health and safety aspects.

In determining the participants, this study used a purposive sampling technique, which aims to select individuals who have relevant experience and knowledge about health and fitness products. The purposive sampling technique allows researchers to focus on participants who fit certain criteria, such as age, gender, and health activity level, which can enrich the variation of perceptions in this study (Patton, 2002). A total of 20 participants were selected with diverse age backgrounds and activity levels, with the aim of capturing a broad spectrum of consumer perceptions of health and fitness products. In qualitative research, this relatively small sample size is considered sufficient because the emphasis is more on the depth and quality of data than the number of respondents (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

After data were collected through interviews and FGDs, data analysis was carried out using the thematic analysis method, which is useful for identifying, analyzing, and reporting important patterns or themes in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process begins with systematic data coding to find themes that are relevant to the research objectives. This method allows researchers to organize data into clearer categories and describe the relationships between themes that emerge in consumer perceptions of health products. In this context, thematic analysis is very effective in capturing key elements, such as preferences for natural products, brand trust, and social influences that emerge in consumer perceptions.

Ethical aspects are also a major consideration in this study. Each participant was given adequate information about the purpose of the study and its procedures, and they were asked to provide written consent or informed consent before participating. This is important to ensure that the rights of the participants are protected, and the confidentiality of their information is maintained (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). Thus, the methodology used in this study not only focuses on data quality, but also on the ethical integrity of the study..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study identified several key themes that reflect consumer perceptions of health and wellness products. Based on qualitative data analysis conducted using thematic analysis, the key themes found were trust in product safety and effectiveness, preference for natural ingredients, social and media influences, and the role of information transparency from manufacturers.

1. Confidence in Product Safety and Effectiveness

One of the important findings of this study is that trust in the safety and effectiveness of a product plays a major role in consumers' decisions to purchase health products. Respondents interviewed showed a tendency to prefer products that have been proven safe and have a good reputation. Most participants stated that they often seek information about product safety through online reviews, certification from regulatory bodies, or recommendations from medical professionals.

Table 1. Product Safety and Effectiveness

Aspect	Number of Respondents Support	Percentage (%)
Product Safety	15	75%
Product Effectiveness	17	85%
Brand Reputation	13	65%

Source: Data processed 2024

Based on the table, these results show that the majority of respondents are very concerned about the safety and effectiveness aspects before deciding to buy health products. This high percentage emphasizes the importance of product certification and brand reputation in building consumer trust.

2. Preference for Natural Materials

Another significant finding was consumer preference for products made from natural or organic ingredients. Most participants believed that natural products tend to be safer and more suitable for the body, and have a lower risk of side effects. Many respondents also associated natural products with long-term benefits and sustainable health.

Table 2. Natural Materials

Product Preferences	Number of Respondents Support	Percentage (%)
Natural/Organic Products	18	90%
Chemical Products	2	10%

With 90% of respondents choosing natural products, it is clear that there is a strong positive perception of the safety and health benefits of these products. These results demonstrate the need for manufacturers to consider natural ingredients in their product formulations.

3. Social Influence and Media

Social and media influences have been shown to be important factors in shaping consumer perceptions of health products. Several respondents mentioned that they often follow recommendations from family, friends, or influencers on social media. This influence is particularly evident among younger consumers who tend to be more easily influenced by trends and recommendations on social media.

Table 3. Social Media

Source of Influence	Number of Respondents Support	Percentage (%)
Family/Friends Recommendations	12	60%
Social Media Influencers	10	50%
Information from the Doctor	8	40%

With family and friends at 60%, the study found that social connections play a major role in health product purchasing decisions. However, social media also emerged as a significant factor, highlighting the importance of digital marketing and collaboration with influencers to reach consumers.

4. Information Transparency from Manufacturers

Another finding from this study is the importance of transparency of information from manufacturers in building consumer trust. Several respondents stated that they would be more likely to purchase health products that include complete information about the ingredients, benefits, and how the product works. Lack of transparency often leads to distrust and doubt about the safety of the product.

Table 4. Information Transparency

Transparency Aspect	Number of Respondents Support	Percentage (%)
Material Information	16	80%
Product Benefits Information	14	70%
Instructions for Use	13	65%

Interpretation: The table above shows that ingredient information is the most critical aspect of transparency that consumers expect, with 80% of respondents stating the importance of this information. This shows that consumers have a high need for honest and detailed information to feel comfortable buying and using products.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that consumers have high expectations for the safety, effectiveness, and naturalness of the health products they choose. The influence of the social environment and media further strengthens consumer preferences for certain products, indicating that external factors also play an important role in shaping perceptions. Transparency from manufacturers is another key factor that encourages consumers to make more confident purchasing decisions.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that factors such as safety, natural ingredients, social influence, and transparency are very influential in shaping consumer perceptions of health products. This data can be used as a guide for manufacturers to design products and marketing strategies that are more in line with consumer needs and expectations.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal various dynamics that shape consumer perceptions of health and wellness products, including factors of trust in safety and effectiveness, preference for natural ingredients, social and media influences, and transparency of information from manufacturers. This discussion aims to analyze these findings in depth and relate them to previous theories and research in order to provide more comprehensive insights into consumer behavior in choosing health products.

First, trust in the safety and effectiveness of the product emerged as a major factor influencing consumer purchasing decisions. Consumers tend to feel more comfortable and confident when choosing products from brands that have a good reputation or are already recognized in the market. This is in line with the research of Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) which states that trust is a key factor in the relationship between consumers and producers, especially in industries involving personal health and safety. Trust in brands and products is closely related to factors such as clarity of certification, information about ingredients, and support from competent health authorities. This study is also in line with the findings of Sweeney and Soutar (2001) which show that consumers tend to prefer products from brands they know and trust, especially when it comes to personal health.

In addition to trust, preference for products made from natural ingredients is also a significant finding in this study. Consumers tend to prefer natural products over chemical products, citing long-term safety and low risk of side effects. This preference can be attributed to the global movement that increasingly values natural and environmentally friendly products, as explained by Grankvist (2004), who stated that consumers have a high desire to maintain personal well-being by using products that are considered more "pure" and "natural." In this context, the preference for natural ingredients can also be seen as a response to distrust or concerns about products containing synthetic chemicals, which are often associated with potential negative side effects (Dixon et al., 2019). This view suggests that health product manufacturers need to pay more attention to the composition of their products and consider the use of natural ingredients in product formulations, especially for consumers who are highly concerned about health and safety.

Social and media influences have also been shown to be important factors in shaping consumer perceptions, especially in today's digital era. Recommendations from family, friends, and influencers on social media play a significant role in influencing consumer decisions. This is consistent with research by Yang et al. (2019) which found that consumers tend to trust recommendations from people they consider close or have more knowledge about health products. Social media plays an important role in strengthening consumer perceptions of health products, especially through influencers who often collaborate with certain brands to promote health products. In a study by Schouten et al. (2020), it was explained that consumers feel closer to influencers and tend to trust their recommendations because of a sense of closeness and connection, which leads to increased consumer interest in trying the recommended product. This social and media influence highlights the

importance of adaptive marketing strategies for digital media, where health product manufacturers can collaborate with influencers to reach a wider consumer base.

Transparency of information was also found to be an important aspect in building consumer trust and positive perceptions of health products. Many respondents in this study showed a tendency to choose products that provide detailed and transparent information regarding ingredient composition, product benefits, and how to use them. The need for transparency is driven by consumer concerns about possible side effects or health risks that may arise from the products they use. This finding is in line with the views of Hwang and Lin (2016), who showed that transparency in marketing health products can help increase consumer trust, especially in industries that involve sensitive aspects, such as health and safety. For consumers, clear and transparent information is not only a determinant of trust, but also provides more control over their choices in maintaining personal health.

From the perspective of manufacturers, the results of this study indicate that there is a need to design marketing strategies that focus not only on promotion but also on consumer education. In this case, manufacturers can take advantage of consumer preferences for natural ingredients by including information on the sources of ingredients used and clear and accurate health benefits. Emphasis on transparency can also be done by providing informative labels and explaining product content in detail. This strategy will support manufacturers' efforts in building consumer trust and improving brand reputation in an increasingly competitive market.

Overall, this study provides important insights for healthcare product manufacturers in understanding consumer perceptions and the factors that influence their purchasing decisions. The findings confirm that consumers have high expectations for the safety, naturalness, and transparency of the healthcare products they consume. In the context of the ever-evolving healthcare industry, a deep understanding of consumer perceptions is key for manufacturers to adapt to consumer needs and preferences, and build sustainable trust.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that consumer perceptions of health and wellness products are greatly influenced by several key factors, including trust in the safety and effectiveness of the product, preference for natural ingredients, social and media influences, and transparency of information from manufacturers. The findings of this study underline the importance of trust as a basis for consumer decisions in choosing health products, where brand reputation and quality assurance are dominant aspects. This trust is supported by the clarity of information provided by manufacturers, so that openness and transparency regarding the composition and benefits of the product are crucial in building a positive relationship between consumers and manufacturers.

Preference for natural products is also a significant factor influencing consumer perception. Consumers generally feel safer using products that are perceived to be free of synthetic chemicals, which they view as healthier and more sustainable options. This preference is driven not only by the desire to avoid side effects, but also by the global trend of increasing appreciation for natural and environmentally friendly products.

In addition, social and media influences play a major role in shaping consumer perceptions and interests in health products, especially in the digital era where consumers are increasingly connected to information from social media and online communities. Recommendations from family, friends, and influencers on social media can increase consumer trust in certain products, especially for younger consumers. These results indicate that manufacturers should consider collaborating with influencers and digital marketing strategies to reach a wider audience.

The aspect of transparency in the delivery of information by manufacturers is also an important finding. Consumers show a preference for products that provide clear information about ingredients, how to use, and detailed product benefits. This transparency allows consumers to make more confident decisions, increase trust, and reduce concerns about health risks. In this context, honesty and openness of information are important foundations for manufacturers in designing educational marketing strategies while building long-term trust.

Overall, this study provides insight for manufacturers into the increasingly discerning and selective perceptions of consumers in choosing health and wellness products. Manufacturers are expected to adapt to the desires of consumers who demand safety, effectiveness, naturalness, and transparency in the products they choose. This study not only enriches the understanding of consumer

behavior in the health industry, but also underlines the importance of an educational and transparent marketing approach to maintain consumer trust.

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