



# A Conceptual Framework on Consumer Preference Towards Menstrual Products

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## INTRODUCTION

Understanding of consumer preferences plays a vital role for a business to excel in the market place. Businesses must align their market offerings with consumer desires, so that, customer satisfaction can be enhanced, thereby, fostering loyalty and ultimately achieving success in the market. Forecasting and immediate response to consumer preferences helps businesses to develop competitive advantage which enables businesses to be ahead of competitors. Being in congruence to consumer preferences stimulates innovation, leading to the development of new and advanced products be it goods and / or services. Optimisation of operations and efficient management of risks associated with product failure can be efficiently managed by allocating the required resources based on consumer tastes and preferences. Catering to the diverse consumer choices and preferences will enhance the levels of customer satisfaction leading to higher levels of repeat purchases and helping the business in positives word of mouth advertising. Additionally, social issues like environmental sustainability and ethical sourcing, demonstrating corporate social responsibility and strengthening the market reputation and goodwill can be achieved by understanding consumer preferences. Ultimately, prioritising consumer preference is an indispensable for businesses to sustain and develop in present dynamic and highly competitive market.

Consumer preferences vary significantly among individuals towards menstrual products. Some consumers prefer comfort and ease of use, while others may prefer environmental sustainability and use of organic materials. Various factors such as, absorbency, affordability, reliability, convenience of use and availability also play an important role in influencing and developing consumer preferences. Understanding consumer preferences towards menstrual products is essential for manufacturers, retailers and policy makers. Thereby, manufacturers can develop and market products, with help of retailers, that effectively meet the needs and preferences of menstruating individuals. Further, the policy makers can address social issues by formulating appropriate policies and programmes. Conducting market research, understanding consumer feedback, and staying updated with the ever-evolving market trends will help the businesses to align the market offerings to the expectations and preferences of consumers. This process is even more

crucial as menstrual product market is highly sensitive and indispensable aspect of menstruating women's health and hygiene.

Menstruation is a natural and recurring event of women's life. This fact has led to the innovation and creation of a diverse range of menstrual products. These products include conventional products like pads and tampons along with modern products like menstrual cups and period underwear. Consumers choices are influenced by a complex interplay of individual requirements, comfort preferences, lifestyle considerations and environmental consciousness.

Consumer attitudes are further shaped by cultural, social, psychological, economic and personal factors. An open social discussion regarding menstrual health and hygiene coupled by awareness campaigns and educational efforts have capacity to influence the decision making in search of reliable and comfortable products. Moreover, economic considerations and cultural norms play a vital role in determining the accessibility and acceptability of various menstrual products in markets characterised by diverse demography.

A notable and growing trend focusing on environmentally friendly menstrual product alternatives can be observed in the recent years. Consumer preferences towards sustainable and reusable alternative products is increasing due to increase in the level of environmental awareness and consciousness. In simple terms, there is a change in consumer preference from conventional products towards modern reuseable and eco-friendly products. This change has emphasised the strategic need to align products, market offerings and strategies to suit the changing consumer needs along with societal values and expectations.

In this context, this article seeks to uncover the dynamics of consumer preferences towards menstrual products. This conceptual research article helps to offer valuable insights to explain the factors influencing consumer preferences. This theoretical framework is essential not only for shaping product development and marketing strategies but also for understand the components influencing consumer preferences.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An extensive review of literature was carried out in order to find out the quantum of research already conducted by other researchers and theorists. This review is a result of the analysis carried out by considering articles, theses, books and papers on consumer preference towards menstrual products. Some of them are explained in the following paragraphs.

**Yachana Mishra (2024)**, explains that, in many developing nations, menstrual hygiene management (MHM) remains a neglected issue, despite its significant impact on the lives of menstruating women and girls. Menstruating individuals often face social exclusion, mobility restrictions, dietary limitations, and may be unable to participate in daily activities. Due to the interaction of MHM with traditional social and cultural norms, waste management related to menstrual hygiene has received insufficient attention and consequently lacks comprehensive research. Consequently, there is a lack of information regarding the quantity and time required to degenerate the menstrual waste. Nevertheless, this article highlights critical issues that intersect with environmental concerns, as well as health, equality and dignity of women. It stresses the importance of addressing gaps in knowledge. Further, the article proposes certain solutions to the issues and challenges faced in MHM. Efforts to bridge these gaps are imperative for advancing environmental sustainability. Besides, promoting the well-being and rights of women in the context of menstrual hygiene management in developing nations.

**Karan Babbar (2023)**, elucidates that the awareness regarding sustainable products and cultural influences in the context of using menstrual cups. This study reveals that women exposed to menstrual cups through educational initiatives or mass media initiatives are more motivated to adopt them. For women residing in urban areas, the reduced stigma surrounding vaginal insertion of menstrual products, act as an additional motivating factor. These findings reveal that there is a need for fundamental shift in menstrual health policies, emphasising the need to move beyond merely promoting disposable pads. Also, there is a need for comprehensive efforts to raise awareness about sustainable menstrual options among menstruating women. Such initiatives can leverage on innovative strategies utilising mass media platforms and community networks to effectively disseminate information and encourage the use of menstrual cups.

**Monika Jain, et. al. (2023)**, examine women's perceptions and preferences regarding organic menstrual products along with identifying key factors that influence their preferences. Comfort, availability, and price emerge as primary determinants of women's preferences. Further, researchers have investigated the perception of organic menstrual products among women, besides identifying challenges such as disposal, longevity, comfort, and availability. A notable finding is the lack of awareness regarding organic menstrual products. This lack of awareness is posing a significant obstacle to the widespread adoption of organic menstrual products. To address this gap, scholars suggest the implementation of targeted awareness programmes. Collaborative efforts involving gynaecologists, educational institutions, non-governmental organisations and governmental bodies are proposed to design and execute effective initiatives aimed at enhancing awareness and promoting the popularity of organic menstrual products across diverse demographic groups.

**Deepika Lather and Ajmer Singh (2021)**, examines taboos and misconceptions regarding the use of sanitary napkins, particularly in rural areas where cost and access can be challenging. They recommend promoting eco-friendly alternatives like banana fibre sanitary pads and reducing prices in order to increase demand. They also suggest that, packaging and advertising strategies should correlate with the requirements of rural consumers. They also suggest using environmentally friendly materials in order to minimise pollution.

**Karthika Aileen Berith Alex (2019)**, explains that, customer preferences are based on their expectations, likes, dislikes and inclinations towards a particular product. These expectations and inclinations towards these preferences is created by basic marketing techniques. Factors such as product features, personal and social factors, brand knowledge, advertisement and loyalty, will influence the consumer's tastes or preferences and influence their buying behaviour.

**Arun and Nivekha R. (2019)**, focus on the factors affecting buying behaviour of consumers on personal hygiene products in the Coimbatore district, where changing lifestyles have led to an increased demand for more specialised menstrual products and cosmetic items. Consumers are becoming active creators of new consumption experiences and are taking part in collaborative marketing.

**Amith Kumar (2019)**, defines consumer behaviour as the study of individuals, groups, and organisations and their relationships with goods and services, including emotional, mental, and social aspects that influence their buying behaviour and use of menstrual products. Marketers who want to succeed in today's fast-paced and ever-changing market need to understand consumers' needs, thoughts, behaviours, and the way they allocate their time and money.

**Anil Kumar Singh (2018)**, states that psychological factors, such as personality, taste, attitudes and lifestyle, influence consumer preferences, especially during special occasions like marriage. The demonstration influence also depends on the psychology of an individual, and everyone has different physiological, biological and social needs that influence their preferences.

**Nadira Parvin (2016)**, states that the impact of socio-economic factors on adolescent health has been widely recognised, stressing its crucial role in overall human well-being. Those from lower socio-economic backgrounds typically place less emphasis on health promotion compared to their counterparts from higher socio-economic strata. Moreover, individuals with lower socio-economic status often exhibit less motivation to pursue health education initiatives. Menstruation, with its long-standing social and psychological significance, continues to be surrounded by taboos, myths, and superstitions, even in modern societies that give priority to scientific enlightenment. The stigma associated with menstruation is a widespread phenomenon which is observed by diverse cultures worldwide.

**Kumar H. Hemanth, et al. (2014)**, examine how an individual's various roles in professional, personal, and social life influence their buying behaviour towards menstrual products. The buying behaviour will, also, vary due to differences in income levels.

For instance, an individual with an active lifestyle may prefer sportswear or fitness-related products.

**Ann Modro Borowski (2011)**, investigates the environmental and health concerns related to disposable tampons and sanitary napkins, which are made of synthetic materials that do not easily decompose. Menstruating women use a significant number of these products in their lifetime, which accumulates in landfills and can pose health risks due to the manufacturing and bleaching processes.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article focuses on extensive review of literature of secondary data collected from various books, national and international journals, publications from online journals which focused on various aspects of consumer preferences towards menstrual products.

## FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER PREFERENCES

Consumer preferences are influenced by various factors that affect how individuals make decisions and interact while choosing goods, services and brands. Understanding of these factors will provide businesses with valuable insights to adeptly address the needs of their target consumers. Some of the factors influencing consumer preferences are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

### 1. Cultural Factors

Culture plays a significant role in framing consumer behaviour. Culture encompasses shared values, beliefs, customs, and traditions within a specific group. Cultural factors significantly influence preferences towards products, patterns of usage and perceptions of brands. Cultural values and beliefs shape the way individuals perceive products, i.e., goods and services. For example, a culture that places high importance on family may prefer products that align with family values. Cultural traditions and customs determine certain consumption patterns. Products associated with cultural rituals or celebrations hold significant appeal.

### 2. Social Factors

Social influences also have significant impact on consumer behaviour. Social factors comprise of elements such as family, reference groups, social class and adherence to social norms influence decision-making. Social circles and peer groups have a substantial impact on framing consumer preferences. Recommendations and opinions from friends or influencers within a social network can strongly influence purchasing decisions. Consumers often identify themselves with one of the specific social classes. Their preferences are influenced by the lifestyles associated with that class. Brands and products are chosen to reflect social status and aspirations.

### 3. Psychological Factors

Various psychological dimensions, including perception, motivation, learning, attitudes, beliefs, and personality traits contribute to the formation of consumer behaviour. An understanding of these factors enables businesses to design effective marketing strategies that satisfies the needs of their target audience.

### 4. Personal Factors

Individual characteristics such as age, sex, occupation, lifestyle, interests, and values influence consumer behaviour. Recognising the unique needs and preferences of different consumer segments allows businesses to tailor products and marketing efforts for greater success. Personal interests and lifestyle choices, such as health-conscious living or a preference for outdoor activities, guide product preferences.

## 5. Economic Factors

Economic conditions, income levels, and purchasing power are pivotal determinants of consumer behaviour. Economic condition, i.e., economic stability or instability, in a geographical region affects consumer confidence and preferences. During economic downturns, consumers may prefer essential products, whereas during prosperous times, they may indulge in buying luxury items. These economic factors will influence spending habits, brand choices and consumption patterns, making it essential for businesses to adapt their strategies to the prevailing economic circumstances in a given geographical region.

## CONSUMER PREFERENCES TOWARDS MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS

This article on consumer preferences towards menstrual products highlights the wide spectrum of individual choices. The factors that significantly influence the consumer preferences towards menstrual products are explained in the ensuing paragraphs:

### 1. Absorbency and Comfort

Consumer preferences vary regarding the desired balance between absorbency and comfort. Some menstruating women prefer maximum absorbency, while others favour products that provide comfort and softness.

### 2. Type of Product

Consumer preferences extend to the type of menstrual product chosen, like tampons, pads, menstrual cups, or period-underwears. Ease of use, familiarity and personal comfort will significantly impact these choices.

### 3. Eco-Friendly Options

A noticeable trend among the consumer is the increasing preference for eco-friendly menstrual products. Now-a-days, consumers are actively seeking sustainable and reusable alternatives, showcasing a growing awareness towards environmental conservation and the desire for more eco-conscious alternative products.

### 4. Brand Loyalty and Reputation

Consumers typically place their trust in well-known brands that emphasise on innovation, quality, safety, and transparency. Positive experiences or recommendations play a significant role in the selection of specific brands.

### 5. Affordability

Affordability is one of the key factors that influence consumer preferences. Majority of the consumers are characterised by price sensitivity in developing economies. Some individuals prefer cost-effective options, while others may afford to spend on higher-priced products with additional features or benefits.

### 6. Innovation and Features

Consumers are attracted towards innovative features that enhance the overall product experience, such as, leak protection, odour control and decent packaging. Products incorporating these features will gain consumer attention and preference.

### 7. Cultural and Social Influences

Cultural norms and societal perceptions contribute significantly on consumer choices. Cultural practices and

social trends impact the adoption of specific products or brands.

### 8. Impact of Awareness Campaigns and Educational Initiatives

Awareness campaigns and educational initiatives provide consumers with valuable information about menstrual health, including the importance of using safe and effective products. As consumers become more knowledgeable about their health needs, they are better equipped to make informed decisions when selecting menstrual products. This awareness empowers individuals to prioritise their health and choose products that align with their values and preferences.

### 9. Ease of Use and Convenience

Consumers who prefer practicality and efficiency may choose products that make their menstrual care routine easier and more convenient. For example, tampons with applicators allow for easier insertion, winged pads provide extra protection against leaks, menstrual cups offer long-lasting wear without frequent changes and compact packaging makes it easier to carry and store products.

### 10. Sensitivity to Ingredients

Certain consumers prefer products made with hypoallergenic or organic materials, especially, if they have sensitivities or concerns about potential health risks from certain ingredients used in the commercially available products.

Understanding this diverse spectrum of consumer preferences is crucial for businesses operating in the menstrual product industry. By recognising and responding to these multifaceted preferences, companies can develop their product offerings and marketing strategies to effectively meet the dynamic needs of the heterogeneous target consumers.

### CONCLUSION

Consumer preferences regarding menstrual products highlights the intricate and multifaceted nature of the decision-making process. From individual comfort considerations to the impact of cultural, social, economic and environmental factors, it is evident that there is no common solution. The growing emphasis on eco-friendly options and the influence of awareness campaigns and educational initiatives further highlight the evolving and dynamic landscape of consumer taste and preferences.

Businesses operating in the field of menstrual product industry should recognise the importance of adapting to these dynamic preferences. By understanding the diverse needs of consumers and responding positively to the expected product features such as absorbency, comfort, sustainability, convenience and affordability, companies can satisfy the consumer demand. Moreover, the role of branding, innovation and corporate social responsibility initiatives cannot be undermined in fostering consumer trust and loyalty.

As the industry grows, it will be essential for businesses to remain aware of these delicate preferences not only to meet but also to exceed the expectations of their consumers. Ultimately, a consumer-centric approach that values individual choices and aligns with broader societal trends will contribute to the sustained success and positive impact of menstrual product businesses.

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