

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents with an overview of the study and a summary of the research findings as well as its implications for marketing strategy. Finally, recommendations for future research are also discussed.

5.1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The present study attempted to profile the dietary supplement users in terms of their demographics and psychographics. A review of previous studies on dietary supplements had shown that there are differences in demographics between users and non-users of dietary supplements. It has also been noted that studies using AIO statements to profile the psychographics of dietary supplements users were lacking although there were some demographic and lifestyle studies conducted before. Therefore, this study will help to add to the literature in regards to the dietary supplement user profile especially in an Asian country like Malaysia.

This study was conducted to profile dietary supplement users in terms of demographic and psychographics. Convenience sampling was employed due to cost and time constraints. The survey was conducted in three states in Malaysia, which are Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Perak. The data collection technique adopted for this study was the self-administered method using a twelve-page questionnaire measuring a 42 AIO statements and the usual demographic information. The final sample that was analysed was 247

respondents who are users of dietary supplements. Chi square, factor analysis and t-test were used in the analysis on the data collected.

5.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The results of the study showed that when using Chi-Square analysis, eight demographic dimensions were identified for analysis and comparison. Compared to non-regular users, a larger proportion of regular users of dietary supplements are Chinese, older individuals, those married with children and have a higher education level and personal income. The findings of this study is consistent with previous studies on dietary supplements or even OTC pharmaceutical products (Nayga 2001; Suber & Block 1990; Chong 1990) in which users of dietary supplements has been identified as having some of these profiles. However, differences between the two groups of users (regular and non-regular users) were only noted in terms of age, marital status, number of children and personal income while there was no significant difference between regular and non-regular users of dietary supplement in terms of other demographic variables with respect to gender, race, education level and occupation.

By using factor analysis, six psychographic dimensions were identified for analysis and comparison. The psychographic dimensions identified were exerciser, quality minded, health conscious, bargain shopper, brand trier and price/safety conscious. It was found that the psychographic profile of dietary supplement regular users as a group, could be considered as price conscious and brand triers. For marketing strategy formulation, these dimensions would

need to be taken into consideration when marketing dietary supplements to consumers.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has enhanced our understanding of dietary supplement user's psychographics or lifestyle where the findings may be useful to marketers retailers and even advertisers. The important finding of this study is that regular and non-regular users are different in their demographic and psychographics characteristics.

Demographically, the study has found that there are differences in terms of age, marital status, number of children and personal income for the two groups of dietary supplement users. Marketers for example can use the results of this study to segment their market accordingly. In this study, we can already identify three segments of consumers to target on: older individuals, married with children individuals and high-income earner individuals. For example if market segmentation is according to age, marketers can have an idea of the existing market size and market potential by extrapolating the census data. This information can then be used to formulate marketing strategies to reach the potential market and to communicate effectively with the target segments.

Furthermore to target the older individuals who consider taking dietary supplements as "nutritional insurance", marketers may look into providing more information about the various dietary supplements available. This is

because as they aged, they will be more concern about their health and will take a proactive role to learn more about alternative medicine. Marketers can consider bundling together various dietary supplements together in a “health package promotion” to deal with certain conditions of aging such as for osteoporosis and heart problems. Such condition-specific marketing strategy may help to increase product usage among elderly users when compared to marketing those products separately. Since many of them will be retired, retailers can also consider offering loyalty programs such as senior citizen privileges to encourage greater consumption of products. As for advertisers, advertising themes for products targeting older consumers can be designed by taking into consideration of their concern on health issues.

For the married with children group of consumers, marketers can also employ the condition-specific marketing strategy or some other strategies to reach to them. As these group of consumers are likely to lead a hectic lifestyle dealing with stress at work and at home, dietary supplements promoted to them should be identified and actively promoted using various mediums of advertising such as newspaper and magazine. Appeal such as to increase energy, improve well being and coping with stress are some of the aspects that can be considered when designing an advertising campaign for these group of consumers. For the high income earners group who has high disposable income to purchase dietary supplements, marketing activities targeting at securing brand loyalty may be considered. For example, marketers may consider working together with health clubs where high

potential customers may be around or by becoming sponsors of sports events to improve branding profile.

Besides demographics, knowledge of psychographics information is also valuable to dietary supplement marketers when developing promotional strategy. Insights and knowledge obtained on the key psychographics segments will aid marketers in determining the product positioning, the advertising, the media strategy and promotion strategy.

The major differences between regular and non-regular users of dietary supplements in terms of psychographics imply that marketers should treat regular and non-regular users as two different market segments and therefore two different strategies should be pursued. The findings of this study showed that dietary supplement users are price conscious and brand triers. Therefore, sales and special discounts would definitely appeal to the bargain shoppers. Specific-condition marketing where various dietary supplements were packaged together under a special introductory price would help add value to the dietary supplement products marketed.

Furthermore, more appropriate advertising messages and themes could be created and directed to the users of dietary supplement especially in the dimensions identified: price conscious and brand trier. For example, the product's value and the company's reputation to provide quality dietary supplement can be emphasized in advertising messages to appeal to these group of consumers.

For a new marketer who wants to penetrate the market with their new brand of dietary supplement, the knowledge gained from the psychographics of dietary supplement users will allow them to plan their strategy carefully for market entry. In this case, the marketer may decide on a low cost strategy to cater for the price conscious consumers.

As for the brand triers, they would welcome samples of new brand products for trial. These samples can be given away individually to consumers or package together with other dietary supplements when they are purchased. As brand triers may not be brand loyal, strategies should be made to gain their loyalty after trying out samples. In this case, perhaps a special introductory price could be given to them after finish trying the sample.

As we can see, findings from this study would allow the marketers to develop a better coherent strategy by making a comprehensive package of the marketing mix elements. This would then enable a more successful marketing of dietary supplements for marketers in such a competitive market like the dietary supplement market.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research into the subject may perhaps consider overcoming some of the shortcomings of the study. This study could be extended to the whole country as well to increase the sample size and reach. This is in order to enhance the research findings and to see if any significant difference would occur if a bigger geographical area were covered.

As Malaysia is a multiracial country, it would be of interest also to conduct a cross ethnic comparison to reveal difference across races. This cross ethnic comparison would provide new insights for marketing actions for dietary supplement marketing to the various races in Malaysia.

Since this study is limited to only users of dietary supplements, future research could look into including the non or potential users of dietary supplement as well. This is in order to uncover more knowledge about their demographic and psychographics profile to see whether there will be any difference when compared to the users. Marketers can then tap into another segment of potential market.

Furthermore, future research could also look into each of the individual dietary supplements products separately (e.g. vitamins, minerals, herbals etc) rather than as one general product to see whether there would be any differences in the findings.

Another fruitful area of research would be to see whether the approach used here can be extended to other products or services besides dietary supplements to ascertain significant factors in consumer decision making and psychographics profile for products like industrial products, trading and services, education institutions, retail outlets and others. Such an investigation would be useful to marketers in planning their communication strategies.