

Consumer Behavior towards Sanitary Napkins: A Study of Rural Women in Haryana

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Abstract

This study investigates the awareness, buying behavior, and consumer preferences of rural women towards sanitary napkins in Haryana. A sample of 621 respondents was selected to represent the rural population of Haryana, a northern state of India. Women in the reproductive age group were selected for the study. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires during field surveys, covering demographic details, awareness sources, purchasing patterns, and product preferences. Analysis was carried out using percentage methods to interpret the findings. The study found that most women learned about sanitary napkins through family members (55.4%), and general stores (47.5%) were the most common purchase point. A majority (35.4%) spent between ₹60–90 on sanitary napkins, showing preference for moderately priced products. Most respondents (66.3%) purchased the product themselves, reflecting growing independence. Among product features, longtime usability was the most preferred, followed by adhesion, thickness, and antibacterial qualities. This study suggests that awareness campaigns should actively engage family members and use local media to effectively reach in rural areas. Manufacturers should focus on improving product quality while reducing prices to make sanitary napkins more accessible in rural areas.

Keywords - Consumer Behavior, Sanitary Napkins, Rural Women, Haryana

Introduction

Menstruation, commonly referred to as a period, is a natural biological process that forms an integral part of the female reproductive cycle. It typically begins between the ages of 9 and 14, a stage known as menarche, though the exact age may vary depending on factors such as genetics, nutrition, and overall health. The menstrual cycle usually recurs every 28 days on average, but the duration may range from 21 to 35 days. Menstrual bleeding generally lasts for 3 to 7 days, during which women may experience a variety of physical and emotional symptoms including abdominal cramps, lower back pain, bloating, fatigue, mood swings, headaches, and skin breakouts. (kaur et.al., 2018)

To manage menstrual flow, women adopt different types of products such as sanitary pads, old cloth, menstrual cups, and reusable pads. The choice of product is often influenced by convenience, personal preference, economic conditions, cultural acceptance, availability, and the level of awareness. It is also observed that product preferences vary significantly between urban and rural areas. (Lather and Singh, 2021) Among these options, sanitary napkins (sanitary pads) are the most widely marketed and commonly used menstrual hygiene product in India. These are absorbent pads made primarily from cellulose, cotton, and synthetic materials, designed to be worn externally on underwear to absorb menstrual blood. Sanitary pads are available in both disposable and reusable forms, making them a popular choice across different segments of society. (Chanana , 2016)

Consumer buying behaviour refers to the actions and decision-making processes of individuals or households when purchasing goods or services to satisfy their needs and wants. It includes all stages, from recognizing a need, searching for information, evaluating alternatives, making the purchase, and finally the post-purchase evaluation. This behaviour is influenced by a combination of personal preferences, cultural norms, social influences, psychological factors, and economic conditions. (Kotler and Keller,2016). In the context of sanitary napkins, consumer buying behaviour reflects how rural women in Haryana gain awareness about menstrual products, the factors that shape their preferences, the frequency of their purchases, and the socio-economic or cultural influences that determine their willingness or hesitation to adopt such products.

Objectives Of The Study

- To examine the awareness and purchasing habits of rural women regarding sanitary napkins in Haryana.
- To Determine The Factors That Affect Rural Women's Choices Regarding Sanitary Napkins.

Review Of Literature-Awareness plays a key role in menstrual hygiene management. **Surana et al. (2020)** pointed out that although menstruation is a natural biological process, in rural communities it continues to be surrounded by taboos, stigma, and silence. Conversations on this subject are often considered socially inappropriate, leaving many young girls uninformed until their first menstruation. The absence of timely education creates confusion, fear, and reliance on unhygienic practices. **Ranga & Kanika (2022)** found that awareness about sanitary napkins is primarily spread through female family members, while schools also serve as

important sources by providing free sanitary pads. These studies suggest that intra family communication and institutional support are crucial for improving menstrual health awareness in rural areas.

Despite awareness, adoption of sanitary napkins remains limited in many rural regions. **Ganguly et al. (2025)** observed that high costs and limited availability often compel women to use traditional alternatives, increasing the risk of infections and reproductive health problems. This situation is worsened by infrastructural challenges, including inadequate sanitation facilities, lack of clean water, and poor waste disposal systems. These findings emphasize the urgent need for affordable menstrual products and improved supporting infrastructure.

Consumer decision-making towards sanitary napkins is shaped by multiple factors. **Mehta (2021)** found that women in Mumbai prioritize product features such as wetness lock, disposable bags, and pad thickness, while price and medical conditions had little impact. Similarly, **Lather & Singh (2023)** identified four key factors influencing buying behaviour in Haryana: health benefits, product promotion, economic considerations, and product price. Respondents prioritized comfort, prevention of side effects, and antibacterial properties, while promotional offers also played a role in shaping their purchasing decisions. **Poulose et al. (2024)**, applying the Theory of Planned Behavior, demonstrated that awareness, positive attitude, and social influence significantly shaped women's purchase intentions, particularly in rural areas. Together, these studies reveal that health, product quality, affordability, and social context are the most important drivers of consumer behaviour.

Several studies have drawn attention to the environmental implications of menstrual products. **Choudhary & Bhattacharjee (2018)** noted that most disposable sanitary pads contain nearly 90% plastic, which may take 500–800 years to decompose, thereby posing a major environmental challenge. In line with this, **Vas & Munjal (2025)** highlighted the rising eco-consciousness among women, with growing interest in biodegradable pads and menstrual cups. However, due to limited awareness and accessibility, adoption of these sustainable alternatives remains low. These studies underline the importance of promoting eco-friendly menstrual products alongside conventional options.

Need Of The Study

Menstrual hygiene is a crucial aspect of women's health and dignity, yet in rural areas of India, including Haryana it continues to be surrounded by silence, taboos. Although sanitary napkins are increasingly available in the market, their usage among rural women remains relatively low due to several factors such as limited knowledge, financial constraints, cultural restrictions, and accessibility issues. Most rural women still rely on traditional and unhygienic practices, which not only affect their health but also restrict their social participation and confidence during menstruation.

Despite various government initiatives and NGO interventions, there is still a gap in understanding how rural women in Haryana make decisions about menstrual hygiene products. Previous studies have largely focused on urban populations, while the rural context—where family influence, social stigma, affordability, and local availability play a dominant role—has not been sufficiently explored. Therefore, this study is needed to investigate the awareness levels of rural women, the sources through which they receive information, their buying patterns such as place of purchase, amount spent, and decision-making authority, as well as the product features they value the most. By exploring awareness and buying behavior, the research will help address health, social, and gender-related challenges

Research Methodology—The study was conducted in the rural areas of Haryana with the objective of examining consumer behavior towards sanitary napkins. A sample size of **621 respondents** was chosen, and data were collected from four districts of Haryana to capture a broader rural perspective. The sampling was carried out using the **convenience sampling method**, considering the accessibility of respondents and feasibility of data collection. For this purpose, a **structured questionnaire** was developed, consisting mainly of close-ended questions to obtain precise and quantifiable responses on awareness, purchase behavior, expenditure, and product preferences. The collected data were analyzed using **descriptive statistical tools**, specifically frequency and percentage methods, which helped in presenting the findings in a clear, systematic, and interpretable manner.

Results Table 1: Sources of Information about sanitary napkins

Sources of Information	Frequency	Percentage
Ads on TV	125	20.1
Friends	71	11.4
Sales promotion	26	4.2
Social media	55	8.9
Through family	344	55.4
Total	621	100.0

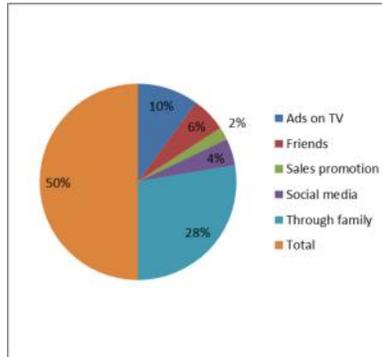


Figure1

Interpretation: Most women (55.4%) learned about sanitary napkins from their **family**, followed by **TV ads (20.1%)** and **friends (11.4%)**. **Social media (8.9%)** and **sales promotions (4.2%)** played only a minor role. This shows that in rural areas, **family remains the strongest source of information**, while modern channels like social media have limited reach.

Table 2: Place of Purchase

Place of Purchase	Frequency	Percent
Super Market	57	9.2
pharmacy	173	27.9
online	53	8.5
general store	295	47.5
any other	43	6.9

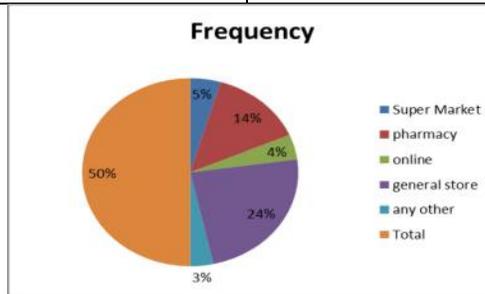


Figure 2

Interpretation: The data shows that the **general store (47.5%)** is the most common place where women purchase sanitary napkins, highlighting the reliance on easily accessible local shops in rural Haryana. **Pharmacies (27.9%)** are the second most preferred source, reflecting the association of menstrual products with health-related outlets. A smaller proportion of respondents purchase from **supermarkets (9.2%)** or **online platforms (8.5%)**, indicating limited access or lower digital adoption in rural areas. Only **6.9%** reported other sources.

Table3

Amount Spent	Frequency	Percent
Less than 30	33	5.3
30-60	164	26.4
60-90	220	35.4
Above 90	144	23.2
Do not know	60	9.7
Total	621	100.0

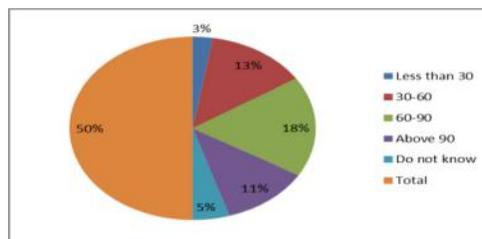


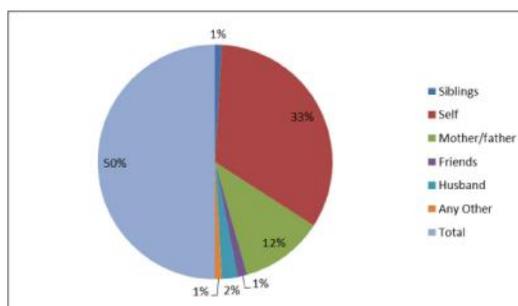
Figure3

INTERPRETATION: Most respondents (35.4%) spend Rs.60–90 on sanitary napkins, showing a preference for moderately priced products. About 26.4% spend Rs.30–60, while 23.2% spend above Rs.90, indicating a shift toward higher-priced brands. Only 5.3% spend less than Rs.30, and 9.7% were unsure of their expenditure.

Table 4

Buyer	Frequency	Percent
Siblings	12	1.9
Self	412	66.3
Mother/father	142	22.9
Friends	16	2.6
Husband	27	4.3
Any Other	12	1.9
Total	621	100.0

Figure4



INTERPRETATION: Most women (66.3%) purchase sanitary napkins **themselves**, showing growing independence. A significant share (22.9%) relies on **parents**, while smaller proportions depend on **husbands** (4.3%), **friends** (2.6%), or **siblings/others** (1.9% each). This indicates that **self-purchase is the dominant trend**, though family support, especially from parents, still plays an important role in rural areas.

Table 5: Preferred Features for sanitary napkins

Preferred Features	Frequency	Percent
Anti bacterial	78	12.6
Thickness	79	12.7
Strong adhesion	89	14.3
Higher absorption capacity	70	11.3
Longtime usability	294	47.3
Fragrance	8	1.3
Any other	3	.5
Total	621	100.0

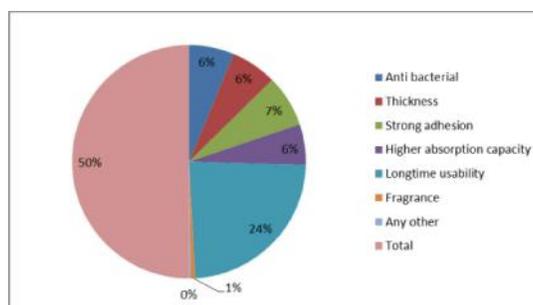


Figure5

Interpretation: The most preferred feature is **longtime usability** (47.3%), showing women value longer protection and convenience. Other key preferences are **strong adhesion** (14.3%), **thickness** (12.7%), and **anti-bacterial quality** (12.6%). Fewer women prioritize **higher absorption** (11.3%), while **fragrance** (1.3%) and **other features** (0.5%) are least important. This indicates that **durability and comfort are the top priorities** in choosing sanitary napkins.

Significance Of The Study

This study is significant because it not only deepens academic understanding of rural consumer behavior but also offers practical guidance for policymakers, social organizations, and product manufacturers in designing targeted awareness campaigns, strengthening distribution networks, and developing affordable yet quality products tailored to the needs of rural women to improve menstrual hygiene management in Haryana's rural areas.

Conclusion

The study reveals that family is the main source of awareness about sanitary napkins in rural Haryana, while modern sources like social media and sales promotions remain less impactful. General stores and pharmacies emerge as the main places of purchase, showing dependence on accessible and trusted outlets. Spending patterns indicate a clear preference for moderately priced products, suggesting that rural women balance affordability with quality. The majority of respondents purchase sanitary napkins themselves, reflecting growing independence and decision-making power and prioritize longtime usability and comfort in sanitary napkins. It is suggested that awareness programs, affordable and good quality product options, and improved access through rural outlets be promoted to strengthen menstrual hygiene practices.

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