

SAJMMR

ISSN (online) : 2249-877X

## South Asian Journal of Marketing & Management Research



Published by  
**South Asian Academic Research Journals**  
A Publication of CDL College of Education, Jagadhri  
(Affiliated to Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, India)

Editor-in-Chief : Dr. B.C.M. Patnaik

Impact Factor : SJIF 2018 = 6.206

Frequency : Monthly

Country : India

Language : English

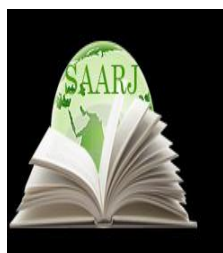
Start Year : 2011

Indexed/ Abstracted : Indian Citation Index(ICI), ISC IRAN,  
Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, ProQuest, U.S.A.  
EBSCO Discovery, Summon(ProQuest),  
Google Scholar, CNKI Scholar, ISRA-JIF, GIF, IJIF

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The vision of the journals is to provide an academic platform to scholars all over the world to publish their novel, original, empirical and high quality research work. It propose to encourage research relating to latest trends and practices in international business, finance, banking, service marketing, human resource management, corporate governance, social responsibility and emerging paradigms in allied areas of management including social sciences , education and information & technology. It intends to reach the researcher's with plethora of knowledge to generate a pool of research content and propose problem solving models to address the current and emerging issues at the national and international level. Further, it aims to share and disseminate the empirical research findings with academia, industry, policy makers, and consultants with an approach to incorporate the research recommendations for the benefit of one and all.



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(Double Blind Refereed & Reviewed International Journal)

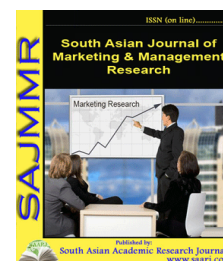


| SR.<br>NO. | PARTICULAR  | PAGE<br>NO | DOI NUMBER                            |
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# South Asian Journal of Marketing & Management Research (SAJMMR)

(Double Blind Refereed & Reviewed International Journal)



DOI NUMBER: **10.5958/2249-877X.2019.00024.9**

## SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR IN IRANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

*The present study was conducted in higher education of Iran to the relationship between spiritual leadership (SL) and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in higher education institution Qom, Iran. The results showed that SL score was at average level and OCB score was lower than mid-level. The results showed that there was significant multiple correlation between SL and OCB. Beta coefficients among SL and OCB were significant and no autocorrelation existed and regression model was significant. Important modifications were also observed as regards demographic variables. This paper shows to the importance of analyzing SL and OCB in Iranian higher education. It offers practical help to universities to develop SL and motivation activity so educational employees' leader emphasis on spiritual needs in the office produces valuable consequences for the individual and organization.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Spiritual leadership; Organizational citizenship behavior; Educational employees; Higher education*

### INTRODUCTION

Now the educational employees of any educational center are the core value creators in their higher education institutions. Noordin and Jusoff, (2009) believed that higher education institutions are but characterized by constant change and turbulence due to national policies and globalization. The success of any educational system depends upon the connection, effort and the involvement of the educational employees or their professional expertise. In fact higher



education institutions are a learning organization. A learning organization is one in which expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured and collective aspiration is set free (Senge, 1990). Thus, the staff of such organizations are considered as being open minded and merciful, able of thinking in group teams, and risk-takers with the ability to stimulate others. The major challenge for these organizations is developing, leading, motivating, organizing and retaining people to be committed to the organization's vision, goals, culture, and values (Ancona et al., 1999). Thus. Based on this review determined that "spiritual leadership (SL)" for the transformation to and continued success of a learning organization is necessary. SL attach into the essential needs of both leader and follower for spiritual survival hence they become more organizationally dedicated and productive (Fry, 2003). Fairholm (1996) believed that spiritual leaders lead individuals through intellectual discourse and dialogue, encourage self-directed free moral select tasks for the improvement of society, and give meaning and purpose to them about their work roles. Draft (2005) explains spiritual leaders are stimulating to their followers with a convincing vision, hope and belief in thus that they can do their best and when it is necessary, they challenge them. According to Fry (2003) SL for example "the values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to intrinsically motivate one's self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership". SL consists of approaches which are religious, ethical and value based. The three leaders' spiritual factors include:

**TABLE 1: SL SUBSCALES**

| <b>SL subscales</b> | <b>Description</b>  |
|---------------------|---|
| Vision              | It is about an appealing future of organization and its role is to encourage. <u>Key features</u> : showing high expectations, creating standards of perfection and being charming to stakeholders. |
| Altruistic Love     | In this dimension people have the sorrow instead of others. <u>Key features</u> : trust, being forgiving, grateful, honest, brave, modest, and merciful.  |
| Hope/Faith          | It aids the followers to be positive about future. <u>Key features</u> : trying to do the best, putting achievable goals, perfection and building expectations about reward and victory.            |

Resource: (Fry et al., 2011)

Therefore, the Spiritual Leader in the organization creates a sense of belonging, feel secure, appreciated; possess intensive care, interest for everyone (Fry et al., 2005). Polat (2011) found that there is a direct and meaningful relationship between spiritual leadership and other variables (organizational development, loyalty, commitment, job satisfaction, adopting to the job, organizational integration, identification, harmony, positive climate, morale, interaction and affinity between members, individual and organizational health, workplace peace, ethical environment, trust, collaboration, satisfaction, motivation, productivity, success, performance and efficiency). Consequently, research has developed significantly on the aspects that prompt employees' engagement in organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Podsakoff et al., 2009). Organ (1988) believed that citizenship behavior was in fact an individual behavior that is precautionary, not directly or explicitly documented the formal reward system, and it increases the effectiveness of the organization's performance. And so, organizational members for organizational survival and effectiveness, are necessary. They contribute to the functioning of their organization by engaging in extra role/voluntary behaviors. Such extra role behaviors include helping colleagues that has a heavy workload, not complaining about minor issues or

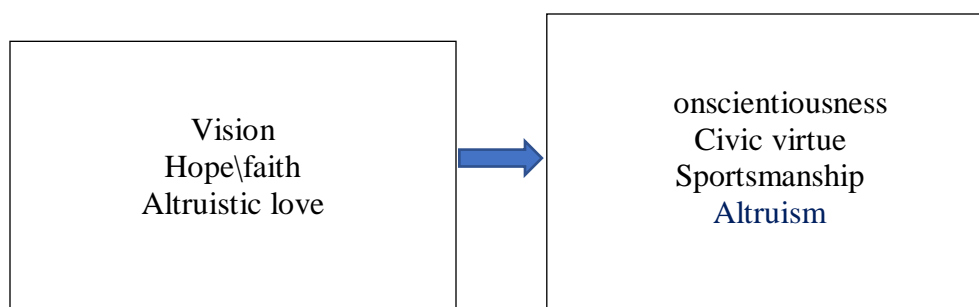
problems, and voluntarily attending and participating in meetings (Eyupoglu, 2016). Organ et al (2006) believed that employers have a higher level of OCB may show that they are interested in working with others, in training new people, in caring for the organization's property, and wishing to stay in their organizations. Individuals are autonomous for their OCB and they do not it to get formal reward system but yet still important for effective functioning of an organization (Organ, 1997). OCB have been stated to as a direct manifestation of collegiality (Hatfield, 2006). Organ (1988) deconstructed a five-factor model consisting of conscientiousness (discretionary behavior on the part of a staff that goes well beyond the minimum role requirements of the organization, in the areas of attendance, obeying rules and regulations), altruism (discretionary behaviors that aid a specific other individual or group in task related matters), civic virtue (constructive participation in the political life of the organization), sportsmanship (tolerating in good spirit the occasional hardships and deprivations that unpredictably befall persons in the course of organizational endeavors), and courtesy (constructive gestures that help prevent problems for colleagues) (Acaray, 2015).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A study found that there is a positive and significant relationship between perceived fairness, organizational commitment and leader supportiveness with OCB. This idea was supported by Shaw (1999) found the employee who are in a positive spiritual mood exhibit higher-level work performances, a fact that may highlight the significance of leadership based in spirituality.

Another study examined the effect of personality characteristics, conscientiousness, and agreeableness as antecedents of OCB and showed the relation between leader-member exchange and altruism (Podsakoff, et al., 2000). Spirituality at work leads to desirable behaviors presented by staffs through influencing their attitudes demanded by Geh (2010). Workplace spirituality has a significant positive impact on both OCB and job performance found by Rastgar et al (2012). Exposed research on whether there is a significant relationship between each of the components of spiritual intelligence and OCB searched by Doostar, et al (2012). When employees experienced meaningful work and a sense of membership to the organization, the intrinsic motivation effects because facilitated workers to perform work and a sense of membership to the organization (Chen and Yang, 2012). Kayaa (2015) found a positive relationship between SL and employee's common connectedness and togetherness with other colleagues at work by displaying OCB.

The present study attempts to address this issue by examining the relationship between SL and OCB. Fig 1



**Fig 1. Conceptual Model**

## HYPOTHESES

- The SL subscales and OCB in educational employees of Qom university there is significant multiple correlations.
- The SL subscales and OCB educational employees' opinions about on the basis of demographic variables is significant different.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study was descriptive, multivariate correlation. The research population includes all educational employees (Faculty members and employees) in Qom University 633 in individuals, 240 individuals were chosen as the sample using Cochran's *formula*.

$$n = \frac{\frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{N} \left( \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2} - 1 \right)}$$

## RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Data were composed by two questionnaires: SLquestionnaire, consisting of 3 variables including Vision, Hope/Faith and Altruistic love. The questionnaire contained 29 questions which eachquestionis determining SL according to Fry (2003) theory with five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) were used. OCBquestionnaire, consisting of 5 variables including Conscientiousness, Altruism Civic Virtue, Sportsmanship and Courtesy. The questionnaire contained 24 questions which each question is determining SL according to Podsakoff et al (1990) and Organ (1997) theory with five-point Likert scale (1=Never, 5=Always) were used. To collect the data, the samples were chosen through simple random sampling. Of the 240 returned questionnaires, 5 are incomplete. The residual 230 valid and complete questionnaires are intended for the quantitative analysis. To verify the questionnaires validity face and content method and authority opinions were utilized. Reliability coefficient of questionnaires were estimated through Cranach's alpha coefficient (Table 2). The questionnaires were distributed among the participants by researcher who tried to attend for clarification if needed and after two weeks the questionnaires were collected by the researcher. According to the researchers' follow-up and participants' cooperation, 95% questionnaires were returned to the researchers.

**TABLE 2. VARIABLES' ALPHA COEFFICIENTS**

| <b>Variables</b>  | <b>Cranach's alpha coefficient</b> |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Vision            | 0.80                               |
| Hope/Faith        | 0.91                               |
| Altruistic love   | 0.79                               |
| SL                | 0.89                               |
| Conscientiousness | 0.86                               |
| Altruism          | 0.78                               |
| Civic Virtue      | 0.83                               |
| Sportsmanship     | 0.77                               |
| Courtesy          | 0.85                               |
| OCB               | 0.82                               |

## DATA ANALYSIS

Mean scores of the SL and OCB were calculated through descriptive statistics. Besides, Pearson correlation 2-tailed, one way ANOVA, T-tests, regression model and path way mode were used to distinguish the relationship of the two key elements and variances between them with demographic variables. In the study used of SPSS, version 23, and the level of significance was measured as 0.05.

## RESULTS

Participants were 240 educational Employees University attending a public university in a city in Iran. Most respondents (78%) aged 35 to 55 years; the participants included 51.4% female and 48.6% male. The number of Social Sciences educational employees was 50.2%, Basic Sciences educational employees was 34.6% and those whose domain was Engineering Sciences were 15.2%. The number of single students was 87.2% and those married students was 12.8%.

**TABLE 3. SL SUBSCALES MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION QOM UNIVERSITY (M= 3, DF= 229)**

| Indicators          | M    | S    | d     | t <sub>obs</sub> | P     |
|---------------------|------|------|-------|------------------|-------|
| <b>SL subscales</b> |      |      |       |                  |       |
| Vision              | 2.80 | 1.85 | 0.291 | 3.410            | 0.000 |
| Hope/Faith          | 2.20 | 5.10 | 0.312 | 4.109            | 0.015 |
| Altruistic love     | 3.28 | 2.67 | 0.261 | 2.171            | 0.000 |
| Total               | 2.57 | 4.03 | 0.220 | 2.702            | 0.000 |

Table [3] shows that the means three subscales of SL the highest mean is Altruistic love (M=3.28), while the lowest mean is related to Hope/Faith (M=2.20).

**TABLE 4. OCB SUBSCALES MEAN, STANDARD DEVIATION QOM UNIVERSITY (M= 3, DF= 229)**

| Indicators           | M    | S    | d     | t <sub>obs</sub> | P    |
|----------------------|------|------|-------|------------------|------|
| <b>OCB subscales</b> |      |      |       |                  |      |
| Conscientiousness    | 2.49 | 3.79 | .351  | 3.246            | .000 |
| Altruism             | 2.31 | 2.77 | .201  | 2.668            | .037 |
| Civic Virtue         | 3.23 | 0.53 | .0393 | 2.531            | .010 |
| Sportsmanship        | 3.03 | 2.04 | 0.223 | 1.983            | .030 |
| Courtesy             | 2.28 | 2.84 | 0.44  | 1.456            | .000 |
| Total                | 2.48 | 2.78 | 0.31  | 1.943            | .000 |

Table [4] shows that the means five subscales of OCB the highest mean is Civic Virtue (M=3.23), while the lowest mean is related to Courtesy (M=2.28).



**TABLE 5. CORRELATIONAL MATRIX OF SL AND OCB SUBSCALES IN QOM UNIVERSITY**

| Indicators        | Courtesy | Sportsmanship | Civic Virtue | Altruism | Conscientiousness | Altruistic love | Hope/Faith | Vision |
|-------------------|----------|---------------|--------------|----------|-------------------|-----------------|------------|--------|
| Vision            | 0.175*   | 0.223**       | 0.080*       | 0.280*   | 0.265**           | 0.552*          | 0.410**    | 1      |
| Hope/Faith        | 0.296*   | 0.242**       | 0.158*       | 0.181*   | 0.075             | 0.633*          | 1          |        |
| Altruistic love   | 0.034*   | 0.076*        | 0.081        | 0.163*   | 0.161*            | 1               |            |        |
| Conscientiousness | 0.103*   | 0.102*        | 0.134*       | 0.164*   | 1                 |                 |            |        |
| Altruism          | 0.234*   | 0.341**       | 0.104*       | 1        |                   |                 |            |        |
| Civic Virtue      | 0.377*   | 0.212**       | 1            |          |                   |                 |            |        |
| Sportsmanship     | 0.313*   | 1             |              |          |                   |                 |            |        |
| Courtesy          | 1        |               |              |          |                   |                 |            |        |

\*p &lt; 0.05

\*\*P &lt; 0. 01, two-tailed tests.

Research results showed, there was a relationship between SL and OCB subscales in Qom University (Table 5).

**TABLE 6. MULTIPLE REGRESSION BETWEEN SL SUBSCALES AND OCB**

| Indicators<br>Source | ss    | df  | ms    | R     | R <sup>2</sup> | F <sub>obs</sub> | P     |
|----------------------|-------|-----|-------|-------|----------------|------------------|-------|
| Regression           | 24.62 | 3   | 8.36  | 0.871 | 0.759          | 48.26            | 0.000 |
| Residual             | 31.45 | 227 | 0.181 |       |                |                  |       |
| Total                | 56.07 | 230 |       |       |                |                  |       |

Table 5offerings the results of multiple regression analysis as regards the effects of SL subscale son OCB (p=0.000). Multiple correlation coefficients are 0.871 and modified determination coefficient is 0.759. Thus 75.9 percent of response variable can be explained by a combination of SL subscales.

**TABLE 7. CORRELATION BETWEEN SL SUBSCALES AND OCB**

| Indicators<br>SL subscales | β     | Beta  | Vif   | t <sub>ob</sub> | P     |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| Constant                   | 6.107 | -     | -     | 10.581          | 0.000 |
| Vision                     | 0.235 | 0.212 | 0.116 | 2.023           | 0.005 |
| Hope/Faith                 | 0.121 | 0.122 | 0.089 | - 1.231         | 0.003 |
| Altruistic love            | 0.256 | 0.191 | 0.068 | -1.513          | 0.000 |

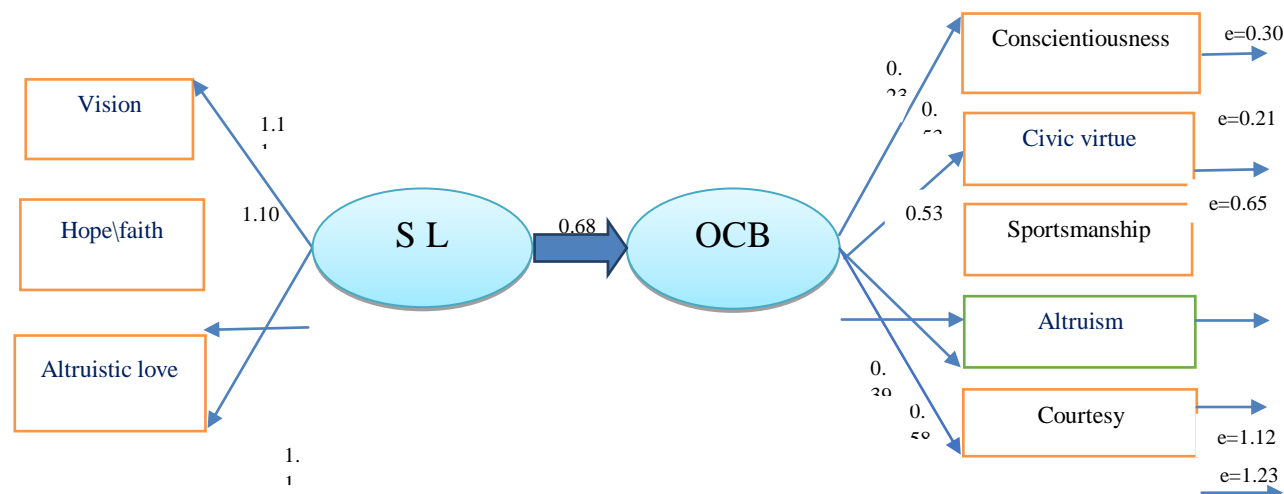
According to the finding of table 4, the Beta coefficient of Vision and OCB was 0.212, Hope/Faith and OCB was - 0.122,Altruistic love and OCBwas0.191 which are all statistically

significant ( $p = 0.000$ ). Variance inflation factor for predictor variables was between at least 0.068 and 0.116, which shows that there is no autocorrelation among them (Table 7). So the regression model is a significant and predictive model can be shown as follow:

$$Y = 6.107 + 0.235 x_1 + 0.121 x_2 + 0.256 x_3$$

According to finding of multivariate analysis (MANOVA) showed that observed F at confidence level of  $p \leq 0.05$  for SL subscales and OCB according to demographic characteristics are not significant.

Figure 2 presents the results of correlation between SL subscales and OCB, path way model can be showed as follow:



**Figure 2. Path way model SL subscales and OCB**

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research results showed that SL score was at average level and two subscales of SL such as Altruistic love and Vision were higher than mid-level but level of Hope/Faith was lower than mid-level. Thus, results showed that OCB score was lower than mid-level and two subscales of OCB such as Civic Virtue and Sportsmanship were higher than mid-level but and three subscales of OCB such as Conscientiousness, Altruism and Courtesy were lower than mid-level. Workers who are in a positive spiritual mood exhibit higher-level work performances, a fact that may highlight the importance of leadership based in spirituality found by Shaw (1999), Results of this study are nearly well matched with this found. The intrinsic motivation effects because facilitated employees to perform excellent OCB when employees experienced meaningful work and a sense of membership toward the organization found by Chen and Yang (2012), results is similar to this study. In general, there are significant multiple correlations between SL subscales, including Vision, Hope/ Faith and Altruistic love and the OCB in the studied university. The beta coefficients have been as 0.212 between Vision and OCB, 0.122 between Hope/Faith and OCB, 0.191 between Altruistic love and OCB of which are statistically significant. The variance inflation factor for explanatory variables has been at least 0.068 and 0.116, which demonstrations that there is no conformity between them. Results of this study are almost compatible with a study that found that the correlation between perceived fairness, organizational commitment and leader supportiveness with OCB (Organ and Ryan, 1995). Another study observed the effect of personality characteristics, conscientiousness, and agreeableness as antecedents of OCB and

indicated the relation between leader-member exchange and altruism (Podsakoff et al., 2000). In addition, a study found a positive relationship between spiritual leadership and employee's common connectedness and togetherness with other colleagues at work by displaying organizational citizenship behaviors (Kayaa, 2015). The relationship among spiritual leadership and other variables such as organizational development, loyalty, commitment, job satisfaction, adopting to the job, organizational integration, identification, harmony, positive climate, morale, interaction and affinity between members, individual and organizational health, workplace peace, ethical environment, trust, collaboration, satisfaction, motivation, productivity, success, performance, efficiency found by Polat (2011). Workplace spirituality has a significant positive influence on both organizational citizenship behavior and job performance found by Rastgar et al (2012). Conducted research on whether there is a significant relationship between each of the components of spiritual intelligence and organizational residency behavior. Our findings indicated that SL score was at average level and two subscales of SL such as Altruistic love and Vision were higher than mid-level but level of Hope/Faith was lower than mid-level and also OCB score was lower than mid-level and two subscales of OCB such as Civic Virtue and Sportsmanship were higher than mid-level but and three subscales of OCB such as Conscientiousness, Altruism and Courtesy were lower than mid-level. Finally, there are significant multiple correlations between SL subscales, Vision, Hope/Faith and Altruistic love and the OCB in the studied university. In sum, Universities are the only organizations focused on dual core functions of knowledge creation and knowledge transmission through the process of research and teaching. The realities and changes within higher education do not only affect the image and status of an academic career, but also contribute to problems such as increased job dissatisfaction and work stress and a decline in commitment to the institution.

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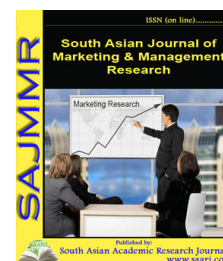
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# South Asian Journal of Marketing & Management Research (SAJMMR)

(Double Blind Refereed & Reviewed International Journal)



DOI NUMBER: **10.5958/2249-877X.2019.00025.0**

## HEALTH FOODS IN INDIA – FOLLOWING A NICHE MARKETING STRATEGY

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### ABSTRACT

*Targeting niche markets as a strategy needs a few requirements to be met. Niche Markets need differentiated products addressing the needs of a small slice of the market segment and in the process are able to charge a price premium thereby enhancing the profitability. Due to the expertise involved, competition in these markets is less and the segment is adequately sized to be able to visualize growth in the future. Health foods in India seem to meet these requirements so as to be labelled as a category following a niche marketing strategy. This paper analyzes this fact, researches the available literature and builds a conceptual model around it. This paper is very useful for researchers as studies on Niche Marketing in India have been very few and therefore this paper addresses a gap.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Niche Market, Mass Market, Market Segment, Health Products, Competition, Premium.*

### INTRODUCTION

Firms pursue definite strategies to target their identified market segments. A few companies go for a high volume game attacking the mass market to cater to a large customer base. The challenges in this approach are quite a few. Firstly, to satisfy today's new generation customers who are very demanding and therefore a "one size fits all" approach in mass marketing may not work. Similarly, a "take whatever is available" approach of mass marketing is also going out of circulation. Secondly, companies in this strategy are unable to command a premium for their products and the profit margins come under pressure. Consequently, a few other companies therefore do not go after the entire market with a mass offering but target a smaller segment of the market with well-defined products. Customers here are reasonably satisfied and the company earns better margins. Another few companies go after a very small slice of the market segment. The product is highly customized to address the requirements of the targeted segment of the



market and the firm is able to generate better profits. This strategy is often referred to as the “Niche Marketing”. In fact, it could be termed as a segment within a segment.

Typically, products which are marketed as Niche satisfy a few well defined characteristics as below:

- The target market is a small slice of the total market segment catering to customers with clear cut requirements. Niche marketing strategy is usually followed by small sized companies catering to a local market but also by large firms trying to ward off competition from nimble small companies with a niche approach. To identify a profitable niche, effective marketing research is required.
- The niche products are usually priced on the higher side and generate higher profit margins. Customers are ready to pay a higher amount if their product is able to cater to their special requirements. Consumers, over the years have also acquired more experience than before. They expertly leverage technology to hunt for the best products and services which many a times are not mass marketed.
- Niche market segments do not face severe competition due to the expertise required in developing the product. Changing lifestyles of customers call for identifying their changing demands. The key to succeeding in Niche Marketing as a strategy is the degree of specialization that a firm is able to achieve. Providing a unique selling proposition (USP) helps in customer acquisition and retention. The aim is to scout for an unfulfilled need. However, if the product is easily replicable, the offering may get copied in a matter of few months and the market may not continue to be niche.
- The niche market segment is just about of adequate size for the company to meet its targeted business volumes. If the segment is too big in size, most likely it will attract competition and no longer remain a niche and if it too small, then the operations may not be viable.
- The segment usually has growth potential for the company to not only survive but also flourish.

The current category of “Health food products” in India tend to orient themselves to Niche Marketing strategy as they basically satisfy the requirements as stated above.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The studies in India in the area of Niche Marketing have been far and few. However, globally Niche Marketing as a strategy has been researched for a few decades.

According to (Fogliatto et al., 2012), the demand from Consumers for personalized products that are different from the regular has received more focus. This points out to the need for companies to carve out niche markets.

The term niche refers to a specialized product or service being offered to a segment of select customers. (Dalgic & Leeuw, 1994; Drea & Hanna, 2000).

As per (Dalgic and Leeuw, 1994; Echols and Tsai, 2005) a niche market indicates a homogenous and distinctive part of a market specifically differentiated from other offerings that are not occupying a niche position.

(Kotler, 1989) stated that Mass marketing is believed to generate more business, whereas niche marketing is believed to generate higher margins.

(Kjell Toften & Trond Hammervoll, 2013) stated that Niche Marketing referred to the process of creating, protecting and offering a product of value to a small slice of the market which indicated distinct needs. Additionally, since niche marketing provides for customer needs to be better addressed, the value added by a niche marketing company enables it to charge a substantial premium over costs.

(Erin Parrish, 2010) defined niche markets as specialized segments of the total market.

(Kotler and Keller, 2006) stated that what initially started out as a small niche market could provide potential for growth.

According to (Varadarajan and Jayachandran, 1999) customers are agreeable to pay higher prices for a niche product which addresses the requirements of the specific target segment more effectively than the offerings to a mass market.

Products offered to a niche market possess relative specificity in greater measure than the equivalent products offered to a mass market (Tobias Schaefer, 2014)

(Patsiaouras and Fitchett, 2012) indicated that acquiring niche products could serve the inner desire for conspicuous consumption – satisfying social needs by using the products as symbols to influence the perception of others about oneself.

(Brewer, 2003) stated that Consumers when they want to achieve the intended levels of differentiation as compared to the others would tend to opt for niche products.

(Kahn et al., 1988; Shani and Chalasani, 1992) indicated that niche market customers are defined as those who find themselves in a situation where mass market products commonly offered are unable to meet their needs.

## **HEALTH FOODS IN INDIA**

After studying the literature on Niche Marketing, the paper now looks at a few products in the Health foods category in India and tries to analyze if they fit the definition.

With the increase in health consciousness among Indian consumers, it is observed that supermarkets and retail chains in India are now having separate health food counters stocking a wide variety of foods ranging from sugar free biscuits to low glycemic index brown rice.

## **MARKET SIZE AND GROWTH POTENTIAL**

(Pandey and Sharma, 2018) state the population of diabetics in India is poised to reach a mark of 69.9 million by 2025 and 80 million by 2030. The reasons for the growth in such lifestyle diseased population are many – A very sedentary lifestyle due to the many hours spent in front of the laptop, desktop, tablet or the mobile, working couples increasingly tending to order outside food through delivery apps, teenagers aping the food habits of the western countries and increased stress at the workplace due to increased expectations from the employees. The above reasons have contributed to increased obesity levels and numerous instances of metabolic disorders like diabetes and hypertension continually on the rise. The medical specialists then order these individuals to go for a change in dietary habits and take health beneficial foods. Thus, Health foods in India have both a market of adequate size currently and also a good growth potential in the future. Chances are that the niche segment could turn mass given the rate at which lifestyle based diseases are afflicting the Indian population.

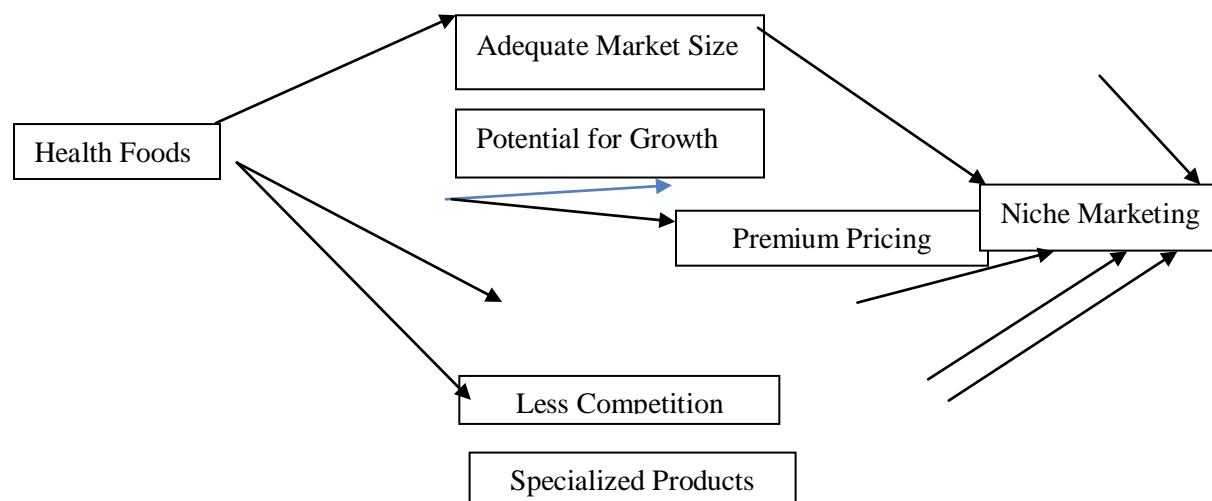
## COMPETITION

The competition in the 'Health foods segment' is lower than the conventional foods with hardly any established brands. The brands are mainly local and there are not too many national brands in the category. There are many local brands selling health oriented products like oil free snacks, organic sugar, natural salt, multigrain bread, soya biscuits, hand pounded rice, brown rice, different varieties of seeds, just to name a few. In fact, going 'organic' has become a niche business opportunity.

## PRICING

Whether the brands be it national or local, it is observed that the products in this category are priced higher than the regular brands. Thus while a regular branded white bread pack of 400g retails for around INR 25 the healthier wheat bread variant is sold for INR 35-40 ie at a premium. Over a few decades now, "Horlicks" has been positioned at the top of the minds in the beverages category. Over the past few years, it has been able to carve out niche segments like "Women's Horlicks" targeted at women, "Mother's Horlicks" aimed at mothers. These variants are aimed at a specific slice of the market segment and are priced at premium to the regular Horlicks. Also these segments have almost little competition and with an increasingly growing health conscious market segment of Indian women, there is adequate size and growth potential.

Based on the above discussion and the Literature Review, Health foods as a category could be termed to follow the principles of a niche marketing strategy and be summarized in the form of a model as below:



**Table I showing Health foods category displaying characteristics of Niche Marketing**

## CONCLUSION

As Indians get increasingly afflicted by lifestyle based diseases, the demand for health products catering to a niche segment of customers who are ready to pay a premium is only bound to grow. Both local and national companies are seeing this as an emerging opportunity of 'Niche Marketing'. Health foods as a category seem to satisfy all the requirements for applying a Niche Marketing strategy.

## SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Health foods as a category offers immense scope for future research. Product specific research on a particular health food could be undertaken. Case studies on brands successfully addressing niche markets can be attempted. Niche Marketing as a strategy has not been researched much in India and therefore offers a good potential for doing research.

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