



Global TGI Barometer
January 2008
Issue 33: The lure of alternative medicine

A combination of reduced faith in conventional treatments and the growth in availability of alternative remedies has led to a rise in the popularity of alternative medicine around the world. However, there remains a degree of scepticism amongst many that alternative approaches lack credibility. Using the latest research from Global TGI, we investigate consumer attitudes towards alternative therapies in different parts of the world.

Divergent attitudes

The results of the studies suggest that acceptance of alternative therapies varies a good deal from country to country. This is likely to be caused by a combination of cultural factors and variance in the regulation of its use.

Focusing on the proportion of consumers in each country who say that they 'trust homeopathic medicine', we see a considerable divergence of opinion. Almost two thirds of consumers in India** say that they trust homeopathy compared with less than a fifth in the US and Great Britain.

Homeopathy supporters...

In India, alternative treatments are a well established means of combating illness, with an impressive 94% of people saying that they have faith in alternative remedies. Homeopathy is integrated into the general system of health care in India and our study shows that one in ten consumers have consulted a homeopath in the last year.

Other strong supporters of homeopathy can be found in Latin America and the Middle East. Around half of the population in Brazil, Chile, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates say that they trust homeopathic medicine.

...and cynics

In many countries, particularly in Europe, consumers are less convinced. At 15% agreement, Britons are the least trusting of homeopathy, and only 1 in 10 say that they prefer alternative medicine. Even in Germany, the birth place of homeopathy, just 27% of people trust this kind of treatment. France is the European market in which people are most trusting of homeopathy.

Why go alternative?

There are many reasons why many consumers are increasingly turning to alternative remedies to complement more conventional medicine. One theory is that consumers are choosing more and more to take responsibility for their



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own health and well-being. The internet has had a large impact in this respect, with consumers being given access to unlimited health information online. In the US for example, where we have seen a slow but steady increase in the proportion of people who say that they 'prefer alternative medicine to standard medicine' over the past five years, a third of the population now gathers healthcare information on the internet.

At the same time, people are becoming increasingly health-conscious. Taking Brazil as an example, 9 out of 10 people who trust homeopathic medicine say that they would pay anything where health is concerned, and one third claim that friends ask for their advice on health and nutrition matters. In Germany and Great Britain, half of those who trust homeopathic medicine believe that they should do more about their health.

Who uses alternative medicine?

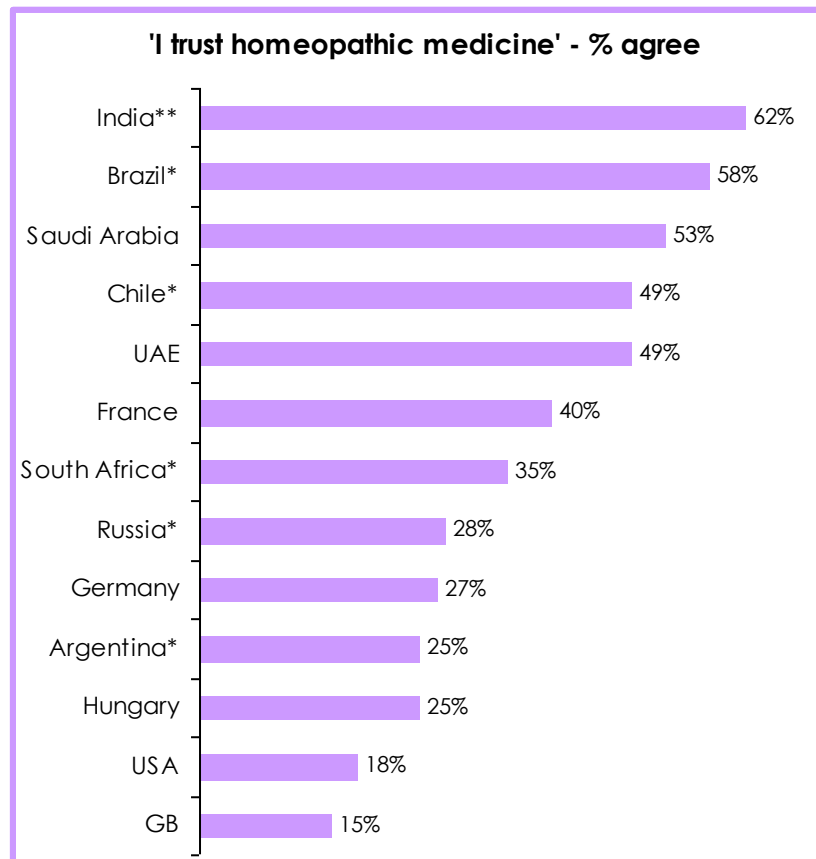
According to Global TGI research, people aged 35 and over are generally more likely than their younger counterparts to turn to alternative medicine, and acceptance of the practice appears to increase with age. In Germany for example, 30% of 45-54 year olds say that they trust homeopathic medicine, compared with just 20% of 18-24 year olds. The research also shows a clear gender divide, with women generally more in favour of alternative medicine than men. In Chile for example, women are 24% more likely than men to say that they trust homeopathic medicine.

An alternative cure

Homeopathy is typically used to treat chronic or recurrent conditions and our research shows that people who have faith homeopathic remedies are generally more likely to have suffered from such complaints. In the US for example, homeopathy supporters are 57% more likely than average to suffer from eczema or psoriasis, 29% more likely to have asthma and 22% more likely to suffer from allergies or hay fever. In France, people who have suffered the same ailments were found to be 50% more likely than average to have consulted an alternative health practitioner in the last 12 months.



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Base: Individuals aged 18+

* Respondents from urban areas only

** Respondents from ABC socio-economic groups in urban areas

Source: Global TGI

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Editors' Notes

Global TGI is an international network of single-source consumer and media studies, available in over 50 countries worldwide. Used by brand owners,



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media owners and agencies, it measures consumers' product and brand usage, media consumption and attitudes, based on large samples - over 700,000 respondents annually worldwide. A typical survey will cover around 4,000 brands and 500 product categories.

The Global TGI network of studies is operated by KMR Group. KMR Group is part of Kantar, WPP's insight, information and consultancy division. For more information, visit www.kmr-group.com.