

**UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA**

**DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER ADVERTISING: TRENDS OF  
ADHERENCE OF DIGITAL ADVERTISING (FACEBOOK) OF  
HERBAL MEDICINE IN MALAYSIA**

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Herbal medicine products is the most common cancelled products in the market because of containing hazard substances or due to below standard quality set by the Ministry of Health. Thus, information of herbal products received by the public through media should be appropriate and according to the standard guidelines available.

**Objective:** This research aims to explore adherence of the advertising of herbal products in digital media, Facebook towards Medical Advertisement Board (MAB) regulation.

**Method:** This study was conducted in Malaysia within one month period, 1st April to 30th April 2015. The digital media of Facebook website was used to search for herbal medicine products advertisement. Herbal products that have 150 likes or more on the Facebook page were included in this study. A data collection form was developed for data collection purpose. All collected data from the herbal product advertisement were transferred onto the data collection form. All collected data was reviewed according to the guideline to determine the adherence of the herbal product advertising. Descriptive analysis was carried out by using Microsoft Excel software version 2013.

**Result:** A total of 79 products obtained within one month of period. Majority of the advertising of herbal products in Malaysia are in capsules formulation and do not display halal logo. All products that display ingredients adhere to the guideline MAB regulation and Drug Registration Guidance Document(DRGD). Although most of the products displayed MAL number registration, majority of the products used prohibited claim indications. Thus, majority of the herbal medicine products do not adhere to Malaysia regulation.

**Conclusion:** Thus, majority of the herbal medicine products do not adhere to Malaysia regulation. This study should make health authorities and policy-makers to control and monitor herbal products advertisement in Malaysia.



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of study

Traditional and complementary medicines (TCM) have become an essential part of health care and well-being of individuals <sup>[1]</sup>. Approximately 70-80% of the world population used herbal medicines <sup>[2]</sup>. Herbal medicine usage is not only popular among individuals, but also among primary health care providers in developing countries such as India and China <sup>[3]</sup>. In the recent years, trends of using herbal medicines increase in the developed countries as well <sup>[4]</sup>.

Malaysia is one of the developing countries that has a major potential to develop natural heritage resources to increase economy based on herbal products <sup>[5]</sup>. As Malaysia is tropical country and consists of multi-ethnic cultures, there is certainly emerging interest on TCM usage <sup>[6]</sup>. However, the majority of herbal products in the market do not have clinical trials evidence about its efficacy and safety <sup>[7]</sup>. A study revealed that 17.1% of Malaysians used herbs to treat their health problems while 29.6% of them consumed herbs for their health maintenance <sup>[8]</sup>. This showed that herbal medicines have gained the public acceptance. In addition, consumers also believe herbal medicines do not contain any harmful chemicals compared to commercially available pharmaceutical drugs. Ideally, the information of herbal medicine products to the public should be appropriate.

Nevertheless, the Malaysia Ministry of Health (MOH) have acknowledged herbal medicine as an essential part of national health care systems <sup>[9]</sup>. The Control of Drugs and Cosmetics Regulation that was established in June 1984 to monitor on pharmaceutical products which include traditional medicines <sup>[9]</sup>. Medicine Advertisement Board (MAB) has been established MAB Regulation 1976 to curb any of misleading of advertisement and to ensure safe practiced of self-medication by the members of public. Research has shown that pharmaceutical advertising serves as an important source of public health information <sup>[9]</sup>. Advertisement contributes to consumers' product choice and behaviour. Commercial advertising through printed