

# Complementary healthcare a natural gift in Asian culture

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Sharing knowledge and experiences with loved ones is key to South Asian culture and an international business expert explains this extends to giving natural health products as gifts.

Comvita South Asia general manager Ronnie Butt gave advice to suppliers on how to break into the South Asia market, at the Natural Products New Zealand Industry Summit (20 March).

Mr Butt later explained to *Pharmacy Today* pharmacists can use this information to better market to their Asian customers.

Natural products are high on the priority list in China – five of the top-25 selling products are in this category. This includes: a toothpaste made with traditional Chinese medicine, beauty collagen drinks and products containing essential oils.

Mr Butt suggests pharmacists make a note of dates for celebrations in the Asian community, such as Chinese New Year, and use it to promote natural health products.

It is considered thoughtful in the Asian community to give family and friends a natural health product which they have tried and

found effective, he says.

Pharmacists could also consider having in-store signs with Asian-language translations and, depending on the size of the Asian population in the local community, possibly even hiring staff who speak the dominant language.

There are two main consumer groups in South Asia who purchase natural health groups – the “silver-haired” consumers and the single, financially independent women.

The silver-haired consumers are the ageing population who are looking for preventative solutions to stay on top of their healthcare.

The single, financially independent female consumers are also looking to the future. They are concerned about their health and diet, and have the money to invest in these areas.

However, these women are also concerned about their appearance and spend money on skincare products, such as anti-ageing creams.

These consumers also favour New Zealand-made products, because they are concerned about the effect of environmental factors, such

as pollution, on products produced in Asia.

The best way to capture these groups’ attention is, “to make sure what we [natural health companies and retailers] are offering these consumers is something that can enable them and empower them to live a healthy, happy and vibrant life,” Mr Butt says.

He suggests to appeal to their senses – the design and look of the product are important, as well as its taste and feel.

However, even when they are keen to buy the product, consumers will often still be concerned about price, so try and find ways for them to test and see the product, he says. **MN**

Ronnie Butt

