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HYPOTHESES

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RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDING

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GENERAL PRACTICES OF CONSUMERS DURING PURCHASE AND USE OF TEXTILE PRODUCTS: A SURVEY REPORT

DR. MINAKSHI JAIN ASST. PROFESSOR G. D. GOVERNMENT COLLEGE FOR WOMEN ALWAR

ABSTRACT

The Indian textile consumers are disorganized in addition to illiterate, poorly skilled and ignorant regarding the products to be purchased. They seem to be unaware of specifications, quality, price, durability, quantity, serviceability, end uses and care of the textile products. A questionnaire was administered to the Male and female college students and homemakers of Ajmer and Jodhpur cities of Rajasthan to judge their general practices during purchase and use of textile products. Most of the textile consumers have shown very poor practices concerning care and informative labels, checking of length and width of fabric, cash memo, measurements and other specifications as well as use and care of the textile products. Most of the respondents were unaware about the importance of cash memo, manufacturer's details, and product description on the cash memo. Even they did not follow the instructions given in the use and care labels. Majority of the respondents were found ignorant of the defects and problems like bleeding of colour of the textile product purchased by them.

KEYWORDS

Care Label, Cash Memo, Fiber Content, Knowledge, Textile Product.

INTRODUCTION

lothing is one of the basic needs of human beings. Every consumer makes purchases to satisfy his own needs or of others in the family. Textiles are used both as necessity and as luxury. It is used for all household purposes from cleaning to decoration, from protection to comfort. Proper care and maintenance of the fabric is required to make it serviceable for an appropriate duration. For this considerable amount of money is spent also on laundering, storage, dry cleaning, etc. It makes a major item of expenditure in the family budget and requires due attention. Buying is a complex process involving a number of decisions to be made as what to buy, where to buy, when and how much to buy? The process involves stages, such as awareness, information application, trial and adoption. Due to technological advancement, unlimited varieties of fabrics and blends have entered the market and still newer ones are being added. These varieties of fabrics are available at various selling points at different selling prices. Consumer is unable to judge the actual cost of the fabric. This is because of absence of informative labels on fabrics. Sufficient information about quality and price of fabrics needs to be mentioned on the labels. Name or registered identification number of the manufacturer, construction details, like type of yarns used, thread count and finishes applied are rarely mentioned on the labels, which can be valuable and informative for those who understand the meaning of these terms and may be helpful in quality judgment. Consumers must be aware in deciding on the purchase of any product, price to be paid in relation to quality, durability, quantity and service which will help them to be a better manager of their resources and emerge wise purchasers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In today's complex market situation the consumer is affected by numerous factors like fashion, price, income, location of shop, salesmanship or persuasion of salesmanship, variety of any good, quality and quantity of goods, custom, person's attitude and many more in money at his disposal.

Drake and Grimes (1958) conducted a study to find out use of label information on readymade dresses. It was reported that 80% of the women sometimes looked into labels on dresses; 53% made a practice of always or usually looking for labels. Women with high income and educational levels and those who belonged to age groups of 30-39 and 40-49 more often looked for labels than those in other groups. Those who sought label information during purchase reported using the information, especially the instructions on care of fabrics. Garg (1979) studied clothing practices of home science persons of Ludhiana, Hisar, Chandigarh and Delhi. It was found that brand name was checked by most of the respondents from all the places before buying readymade garments. Most of the respondents checked the labels, looked for the manufacturer's name, size, price, quality, trade name and washing instructions. Rajor and Miglani (1982) conducted a study on buying practices of clothing material and found that 28% respondents examined the quality of fabrics through the labels only. A good shopper checks prices and get protected against so-called "bargains" by being well informed on grades of quality. Consumer must be able to recognize age or lasting quality of the styles as well as the fabric in marked down bargains (Gill, 1998).

Kairon (1991) in a study conducted on 50 urban and 50 rural consumers reported that 24% of the rural consumers and 36% of the urban consumers always compared the prices for the purchase of clothing. 36% rural and 28% urban consumers rarely compared prices and 40% rural and 36% urban consumers never compared prices for purchase of cloth. She found that 40% rural respondents reported problem of overcharging and faulty measures followed by substandard quality (30%) and non-availability of products (6%). None of the rural respondents reported the problem of misleading advertisements in purchase of clothing. Among urban respondents, overcharging (18%), non-availability of the products (16%), misleading advertisements (16%), substandard quality (16%) and faulty measures (12%) were the prime problems in purchase of clothing. Vatsala (1991) in a study stated that the problems faced after purchase of clothes were identified as holes being formed in the textiles while in use and wash, though they were absent at the time of purchase; non fast colours, clearing of debts, shrinkage and lack of exchange facilities were some of the other problems.

Anshu (1993) studied the methods of assessing the quality of textile materials practised and reported that majority of respondents assessed the quality of textile material through feel of the fabric followed by label reading, reliance on self experience, consultation and discussion with shopkeeper, rubbing to assess weave and colour, assistance of friends and family members and through mill name. Some respondents also trusted on cost of material as an important yardstick of measuring the quality of textile material. The least important way used for quality assessment was burning test. Singh (1996) conducted a study on consumer awareness during purchase of clothing materials and reported that none of the respondents checked type of blend or percentage of blend and cloth labels, irrespective of their educational level. 90% of the women examined the cloth by touching the material followed by their past experience of it and colour fastness. They did not examine the material by burning or breaking the thread. It was also found that only 10% of the respondents were aware of pure woolmark and even they did not know about National Textile Corporation (NTC) mark. Maitra and Shailja (1996) found that though the rural consumers of Dharwad district were illiterate, they performed some visual or physical tests to check the quality of material. 74.4% respondents performed the test for durability of the material in the shop itself by raveling the yarn; 50% of them checked colour fastness, 55.55% amount of starch and 37.77% checked type of material through wetting, rubbing by hand, touching and feeling. It was also observed that majority of the respondents (60%) demanded receipt for their purchase in order to keep account. Only few (12.78%) did not insist for the receipt because of having full faith in the shopkeeper.

NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Unaware, ignorant and unorganized consumers, who lack technical knowledge of the product to be used, encourage unfair trade practices and dealings on the part of organized manufacturers or sellers. Consumer awareness – a will capacity of consumer to express his preferences and demand his right is still a long way

off. There is almost a total absence of consumer consciousness and consumer action. Unless a consumer is enlightened and has developed the social sensitivity to express his demand for quality and standards in consumer goods, the situation would remain unchanged (ISI Bulletin, 1976). When consumers have any complaint about fabric, they go to the shopkeeper. He may refuse to return or replace the fabric or may not listen to them. Very few of them approach the manufacturer or file a complaint in consumer court. It is because they are not aware of their rights, the existence of the consumer court or the procedure to be followed and redressal they may seek.

Consumers still lack knowledge about fabrics and fabric purchase. They are not aware of importance of reading labels, advantages of getting cash memo, pros and cons of buying from a particular shop, standard sizes of clothing and household articles, different textile regulations and other laws related to consumers. They do not know what their rights and responsibilities are. They lack knowledge about terms and symbols used on labels, qualities of fabrics made of different fibers. Even a consumer, who has knowledge, is not making proper use of it, because of lack of awareness. To become a rational consumer, impulsive buying should be avoided. The consumer should plan in advance and make a shopping list of amounts, sizes and numbers of fabrics/ garments needed and also the matching accessories. A good shopper checks prices and get protected against so called "bargains" by being well informed on grades of quality. Consumer must be able to recognize age or lasting quality of the styles as well as the fabric in marked down bargains (Gill, 1998).

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

In view of the above facts, an attempt was made to find out the general practices followed by textile consumers during purchase and use of textile products.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

LOCALE AND SAMPLE FOR THE STUDY

Keeping in view the problem and scope of the study, the respondents were selected from the municipal limits of Ajmer and Jodhpur cities of Rajasthan to represent an overall picture of the state as a whole. These two cities of the state were chosen for the simple reason of convenience of the investigator. Table 1 shows the groups identified for the preliminary survey.

TABLE 1: SAMPLE FOR THE SURVEY

S.No.	Sample	Sex	Specification	Group
1.	Students	Male and Female	UG and PG Students	I
2.	Homemakers	Male and Female	Married with children	II

GROUP I

The sample of group I comprised of college students from both Post Graduate and Under Graduate classes as well as both the sexes – male and female. To maintain group homogeneity, students were selected from two government and three non-government colleges of Ajmer city and Government University and three non-government colleges of Jodhpur city. These colleges were randomly selected from the currently running colleges in these cities. Equal number of students was selected from Post Graduate and Under Graduate classes.

GROUP II

Group II comprised of both male and female homemakers. In order to get a representative sample from both the cities, each city was divided into four zones. From each zone, one colony was selected by simple random technique for the purpose of research work.

PREPARATION OF TOOL FOR DATA COLLECTION

A questionnaire was prepared to study the general practices followed by textile consumers during purchase and use of textile products. The questionnaire, so administered to the respondent consumers, was in two parts – the first schedule consisted of questions related to personal profile of the respondents, viz. sex, education, occupation, income and age and the second schedule comprised of the questions related to the general practices followed by textile consumers during purchase and use of textile products. The questionnaire was supposed to possess content validity since each question was judged through pilot study and subject experts.

The data collected to assess the general practices followed by textile consumers during purchase and use of textile products was analysed by calculating percentage values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is evident from table 2 that 48.17 percent out of total 1200 respondents always look for care and informative labels, 36.58 percent sometimes bother for label. Only 30.75 percent check fiber content on the label before purchase, 20.00 percent respondents never check fiber content on the label and 6.50 percent respondents were unable to understand fiber content. Among all the respondents 25.33 percent always read sort no., manufacturer's name and address, 19.75 percent read it if they have time but 26.50 percent respondents never read it. Out of 1200 respondents, less than half (47.25 percent) always take care of textile products according to the labels attached to them, whereas 11.42 percent were unable to understand them and 9.08 percent never take care of their garments according to the instructions on the labels.

Table 2 shows that 45.00 percent of the respondents check length and width of fabric by watching properly when the shopkeeper measures it, 7.17 percent do not care for it, 5.08 percent measure the length by themselves at home after purchase and 42.75 percent respondents were very particular about it and watch properly when the shopkeeper measures it as well as measure the length by themselves at home.

According to 48.42 percent respondents, cash-memo is required just to verify the cost, 41.25 percent keep it as record for future use, 4.08 percent throw it into dustbin and 6.25 percent think that cash-memo is not required at all. Name and address of the dealers was checked by 3.67 percent respondents, cost of the purchased textile product seen by 17.25 percent, only 5.92 percent read specifications, like colour, length and sort number of the purchased textile product whereas 31.50 percent verify all these particulars on cash-memo. Most of the respondents consider that the "Use & Care" labels on textile products are useful for better use and care of the item, while 11.75 percent think that these labels misguide consumers as if the product is of good quality; 5.17 percent reported that these are to read and forget and 3.25 percent consider them as useless. When colour bleeds from dress, 38.67 percent go to the dealer and exchange the piece, only 6.92 percent got their money back, 42.00 percent just complain to the shopkeeper and 12.42 percent do not go anywhere because it is not a big matter for them. It can be observed from the table that a little more than half of the student respondents always look for care and information labels, rest of them are not precise about this. A little more than one-third of the student respondents always check fiber content on the label, before they purchase the fabric but 9.13 percent students were unable to understand this label. About one-fourth of the student respondents, 38.75 percent always take care of their textiles as directed in the labels whereas12.63 percent of them were unable to understand these labels.

A little less than half of the student respondents measure the fabric by themselves at home along with watching properly when shopkeeper measured it but 4.75 percent of them are not cautious for length and width of the fabric they purchased. 48.38 percent of the student respondents require cash-memo to keep it as record, followed by 45.00 percent who need it just to verify cost of the purchased item. Among the 800 student respondents 15.38 percent check only the cost of the purchased textile item on cash-memo, whereas 13.38 percent read and check name and address of the dealer, cost of the purchased textile product and other specifications on the cash-memo. The respondents who think that the "Use & Care" labels are necessary for better use and care of the textile products were 79.38 percent, while15.88 percent believe that the labels misguide consumers as the product is of good quality. In case colour bleeds from the dress of student respondents 36.75 percent go to the dealer to exchange the piece, whereas only 8.38 percent take their money back.

TABLE 2: CONSUMER PRACTICES DURING PURCHASE AND USE OF TEXTILE ITEMS

	TABLE 2: CONSUMER PRACTICES DURING PURCHASE AND USE OF TEXTILE ITEMS							
S.N.	Consumer Practices	Frequency	I (Students)	II (homemakers)	Total			
			N = 800	N = 400	N = 1200			
1.	Look for care and	Always	420 (52.50)	158 (39.50)	578 (48.17)			
	informative labels	Sometimes	289 (36.13)	150 (37.50)	439 (36.58)			
		Never	6 (0.75)	29 (7.25)	35 (2.92)			
		Depends upon time	85 (10.76)	63 (15.75)	148 (12.33)			
		1 .	, ,		, ,			
2.	Check fiber content on	Always	281 (35.13)	88 (22.00)	369 (30.75)			
	the label before	Sometimes	338 (42.25)	175 (43.75)	513 (42.75)			
	purchase	Never	108 (13.50)	132 (33.00)	240 (20.00)			
	•	Cannot understand	73 (9.13)	5 (1.25)	78 (6.50)			
			(0.20)	(====)	(3.3.3)			
3.	Read sort no.,	Always	195 (24.38)	109 (27.25)	304 (25.33)			
	manufacturer's	Sometimes	277 (34.63)	64 (16.00)	341 (28.42)			
	name and address	Never	194 (24.25)	124 (31.00)	318 (26.50)			
		Depends upon time	134 (16.75)	103 (25.75)	237 (19.75)			
				=== (=====)				
4.	Take care of textile	Always	310 (38.75)	257 (64.25)	567 (47.25)			
	products according	Sometimes	319 (39.88)	68 (17.00)	387 (32.25)			
	to the attached labels	Never	70 (8.75)	39 (9.75)	109 (9.08)			
	to the attached labels	Cannot understand	101 (12.63)	36 (9.00)	137 (11.42)			
		camor anacistana	101 (12.03)	(3.00)	137 (11.12)			
5.	Checking length	Watch properly						
-	and width of fabric	during measuring	322 (40.25)	218 (54.50)	540 (45.00)			
	and main or labile	Do not care	38 (4.75)	48 (12.00)	86 (7.17)			
		Measure at home	46 (5.75)	15 (3.75)	61 (5.08)			
		watch properly and	394 (49.25)	119 (29.75)	513 (42.75)			
		measure at home	334 (13.23)	113 (23.73)	313 (12.73)			
		measure at nome						
6.	Cash-memo is	Verify the cost	387 (48.38)	194 (48.50)	581 (48.42)			
l °'	required to	Keep as record	360 (45.00)	135 (33.75)	495 (41.25)			
	required to	Throw into dustbin	27 (3.38)	22 (5.50)	49 (4.08)			
		Not required	26 (3.25)	49 (12.25)	75 (6.25)			
		Not required	20 (3.23)	45 (12.25)	73 (0.23)			
7.	Generally check on	Shop's name, add.	26 (3.25)	18 (4.50)	44 (3.67)			
l ''	cash-memo	Cost of the item	123 (15.38)	84 (21.00)	207 (17.25)			
	cush memo	Specifications	44 (5.50)	27 (6.75)	71 (5.92)			
		All of the above	107 (13.38)	271 (67.75)	378 (31.50)			
		All of the above	107 (13.36)	271 (07.73)	378 (31.30)			
8.	"Use & Care" labels	Misguide consumer	127 (15.88)	14 (3.50)	141 (11.75)			
J	are to	Read & forget	15 (1.88)	47 (11.75)	62 (5.17)			
	4.0.00	Better use & care	635 (79.38)	323 (80.75)	958 (79.83)			
		Useless	23 (2.88)	16 (4.00)	39 (3.25)			
		0361633	(2.00)	10 (4.00)	(3.23)			
9.	On colour bleeding	Make a complaint	344 (43.00)	160 (40.00)	504 (42.00)			
<i>9</i> .	from dress, go to	Exchange the piece	294 (36.75)	170 (42.50)	464 (38.67)			
	the dealer to	Get money back		16 (4.00)	, ,			
	the dealer to	· ·	67 (8.38)	' '	83 (6.92)			
<u> </u>	os indicata narcantagas	Don't go anywhere	95 (11.88)	54 (13.50)	149 (12.42)			

^{*}Figures in parentheses indicate percentages.

It can be observed from the table that only 39.50 percent of the homemaker respondents always look for care and information labels, rest of them are not precise about this. The homemaker respondents, who always check fiber content on the label, before they purchase the fabric, were only 22.00 percent whereas 33.00 percent never read it and 1.25 percent homemakers were unable to understand this label. More than one-fourth of the homemaker respondents always read sort number, manufacturer's name and address, while less than one third of the homemaker respondents never check it. Out of 400 homemaker respondents, 64.25 percent always take care of their textiles as directed in the labels whereas 9.00 percent of them were unable to understand these labels.

Less than one-third of the homemaker respondents measure the fabric by themselves at home along with watching properly when shopkeeper measures it but 12.00 percent of them are not cautious for length and width of the fabric they purchased. Among the student respondents, 45.00 require cash-memo to keep as record for future use, whereas only one third of homemaker respondents maintain record of it; 12.25 homemakers do not require cash-memo at all as compared to 3.25 student respondents. Among 400 homemaker respondents, 21.00 percent check only the cost of the purchased textile item on cash-memo, whereas two-third of the homemakers read and check name and address of the dealer, cost of the purchased textile product and other specifications on the cash-memo. The respondents who think that the "Use & Care" labels are necessary for better use and care of the textile products were 80.75 percent, while11.75 percent believe that the labels should be read and forget. When colour bleeds from the dress of homemaker respondents 42.50 percent go to the dealer to exchange the piece, whereas 13.50 percent do not consider it as a big matter.

More than half of the student respondents always look for care and information labels whereas only 39.50 percent of the homemaker respondents precise about this; 7.25 percent of the homemaker respondents and 0.75 percent students never read them. The homemaker respondents who always check fiber content on the label, before they purchase the fabric were only 22.00 percent, whereas 33.00 percent never read it and 1.25 percent homemakers were unable to understand this label as compared to 35.13, 13.50 and 9.13 percent student respondents. About one-fourth of the student respondents never read sort number, manufacturer's name and address, while less than one third of the homemaker respondents never check it. Out of 400 homemaker respondents, 64.25 percent always take care of their textiles as directed in the labels whereas only 38.75 percent of the students follow these labels. Half of the student respondents measure the fabric by themselves at home along with watching properly when shopkeeper measures it as compared to a little less than one-third of the homemaker respondents; but 12.00 percent homemakers and only 4.75 percent students were not cautious for length and width of the fabric they purchased. Less than half of the homemaker respondents require cash-memo just to verify cost of the purchased item, whereas only one third of them need it to keep it as record for future use. Two-third of the homemakers read and check name and address of the dealer, cost of the purchased textile product and other specifications on the cash-memo while only 13.38 percent students check all these entries. The respondents who think that the "Use & Care" labels misguide consumers about quality of the textile products were 15.88 percent students as compared to 3.50 percent homemaker respondents, while1.88 percent students

respondents and 11.75 percent of the homemakers believe that the labels should be read and forget. When colour bleeds from the dress of homemaker respondents 42.50 percent go to the dealer to exchange the piece, whereas 36.75 percent of the student respondents try for exchange.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that Indian textile consumers appear to be very much careless about textile purchase. Not only the homemakers but the young generation is also quite ignorant regarding the checking of specifications. Most of the consumers present themselves as prototype of poor buying practices and habits as they do not look for care and informative labels, they are not concerned about fiber content, indicating their deprived knowledge about the relationship between properties and end uses of the textile product they are purchasing. Most of the textile consumers are not considerate to an extent and they purchase regardless of the fulfillment of the buying purpose. The inability to understand the label again indicates their inefficiency of knowledge in relation to textiles although each and everyone is a textile consumer since birth. The findings of the study also reveal that students are relatively better as compared to the homemakers in terms of following the instructions given on the labels, as they take care of the textile products as guided in care labels attached to the products but homemakers are extremely ignorant. The consumers are reasonably careful in terms of the length and with of the fabric they are going to purchase as well as cash memo, but cash memo is mostly used to verify the cost only. Even some of the consumers think that care and informative labels and cash memo are useless, misguiding and are good for nothing except to be thrown into dustbin. A fair number of the consumers make complaints to the dealer and get the product replaced in case the colour bleeds, but some of the consumers do not even complain, again showing their ignorant behavior.

If people are not functionally competent, they become deprived consumers, unable to get most out of their economic deal or exchange and they are likely to fall easy victim of any current sharp practices. In the long run, the well being of innocent and ignorant consumers at home or at work suffers. Consumer education can help families become aware of their rights and responsibilities as consumers so that they will be able to function more effectively in a free market economy. It enables consumers to understand that there are alternative choices and courses of action open to them in the market and this implies much more than just finding the 'best brand' of a product. Consumer education involves provision of right information, proper guidance to take wise decision to purchase, tips for shopping round and choosing the best through intelligent bargaining. Consumer education is a self-insurance for consumer protection and guidance. It stresses practical training is best buymanship.

Therefore, it can be concluded that conduction of awareness programmes and campaigns is greatly required by Indian consumers and vital consumer education schemes altogether are necessary to nurture wise and intelligent textile consumer generation as it can guide them as well as improve their consumer practices during purchase and use of textile items.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- 1. A survey can be done to know the awareness of consumers regarding the prevailing fraudulent practices and strategies can be adopted to overcome these in their day-to-day life.
- 2. The present study was aimed only at general practices of textile consumers. This could be further explored to find out their knowledge and awareness.
- 3. Similar type of the study can also be undertaken in rural areas.

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