CHAPTER VII
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7. Findings

An endeavour has been made to analyse the role of packaging in modern societies. These bundles of benefits are nothing but a product which is meant for selling to prospective consumers, to maintain market worthiness of the product, to fulfil some basic norms in order to maintain its quality, efficiency, quantity etc in the same standard as it comes out from the processing unit. Outcomes which need to be addressed for the improvement of packaging in Assam are -

- Packaging scenario during pre-civilization period which refers to a stage wherein production of materials and foodstuffs were made as per the requirement of the producer along with their own requirements only and as a result the concept of excess production did not arise, which clearly indicate that the producer-cum-consumer need not depend on others manufacturing product. Thus, packaging had evolved into an industry and assumed an important place in marketing function.

- The whole gamut of food packaging is a very dynamic one and there is a constant change of its nature, habits and product demands. Moreover, an attempt has also been made to establish the fact that there is a positive correlation between the development of the economy and the development of packaging industry.

- Packaging scenario today is much different than that of the past. Packaging as well as purchasing was carried out in a very crude form with the passage of time. However, it has been experiencing several changes which not only ensured sales promotion but also glorified the entire packaging industry with the emergence of state of the art technology. The present packaging scenario of selected consumer food product under
study is not so adequate due to the non-availability of appropriate infrastructure and packaging materials. Hence, many commercial activities are suffering from the constraints. Thus, it reveals that the packaging materials are an integral part of modern day sales promotion and marketing. Marketing management plays a very important role for influencing the consumers’ decision as well as for the promotion of sales. Packaging is the backbone of sales promotion as well as the market economy. Emphasis should be given to improve sales promotion and market economy by making it attractive, hygienic and easily consumable. This would definitely help enhance the state’s economy.

- Agricultural products like rice and pulses were sold at various scale of packaging from 1kg to 25kg and of different spices of different small denominations. None of those agricultural packaging bear “Agmark Certificate” which ensures quality of the product and the compliance with a mandatory regulatory provision. Further, those agricultural packages also do not bear the date of packaging and expiry dates, address of manufacturer or packager, their contact number for future quires on probable complaints. As these norms are mandatory as per the packaging laws and any deviation from the standard packaging norm would invoke penal action by the concerned regulating agencies.

- A significant deviation had been noted in mineral water which as per the third schedule, only 650ml can be bottled but in practice it is found more in volume beyond the permissible limit.

- In an unorganized market the producers do not adhere to the regulatory norms.

- Both in the organized and unorganized sectors, many commodities are not packed in the recommended standard packages as specified in the third schedule. Moreover, as per the concerning regulation, those substandard packed goods do not even bear those
statutory wordings at the face of the packed goods as “Not a Standard Pack Size under the Standards of Weights & Measures (Packed Commodities) Rules, 1977” amounting to a clear violation of packaging regulations.

• Under the prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954 (PFA), this regulatory provision tries to uphold consumers health and safety by way of putting regulatory norms on both the packaging container and its levelling. Owing to non-compliance with PFA regulation on both Agro and non-agro products at organized and unorganized market at Guwahati Metro area, a good number of consumer goods have been identified as “MISBRANDED” under PFA.

• Both in the organized and unorganized markets, PFA regulations are not followed specially on those products relating to ready food, sweets, edible oil which is mostly locally manufactured /packed. Moreover, various types of small pouches containing some items like tobacco mixed with addictable components e.g. “Gutkha” made by Trimurty Fragrances Pvt. Ltd., Kanpur and the like are available in the unorganized market. These are very much hazardous and sometimes become dreaded to human life too. These items dare to observe any packaging regulations be it SWMA or PFA and hence this deserves immediate regulatory intervention to put a restriction on its production and consumption.

• Similar to the regulatory lapse stated above, it also violates concerned regulatory provisions of PFA by way of not mentioning name, address of the manufacturer/importer/vendor/packer, declaration of batch number or code number or lot number of packed goods. Liquid milk, locally packed product does not bear its ingredients, contact number of manufacturer/packer and also declaration of nutritional food values.
• An effort has been made to have a glance of the role played by the regulatory agencies over the food packaging services. Certain legislations have been passed to make packaging more systematic and scientific so that sales promotion can further be enhanced in the future. The very objective of packaging is to bring the manufactured goods under the network of its shelf-life maintaining weight, flavour etc. Besides, awareness programmes were undertaken to improve the consumers’ awareness. So, various rules and regulations to packaging were brought also to evolve a in which the importance of packaging was realized and the possible development of a mechanism to monitor its execution. These norms were also made applicable for packaging of food products.

• The aforesaid rules play a significant role in packaging of various products and commodities but these are not adequate and substantial to combat with the menace of violation of the norms of packaging. A constant feedback and a follow up action are needed to improve the regulatory mechanism in order to cope up with the changing situation and circumstances.

• The packaging strategy is independent to other factors. This has been tested in the present research enquiry under hypothesis No.1. While 34.28% respondents strongly agree to the proposition; 25.70% respondents somewhat agree; 15.70% are undecided, 24.28% respondents somewhat disagree; and 2.84% respondents strongly disagree. From the test of hypothesis it is observed that the calculated value is much higher than the tabulated below. So, Ho is rejected. It implies that packaging strategy is independent to other factors.

• Packaging of food products being governed by regulatory authorities is independent and this has been empirically proved while testing the hypothesis No.2 that the 30%
respondents strongly agree, 20% respondents somewhat agree, 10% respondents cannot say, 25.14% respondents somewhat disagree and 17.14% respondents strongly disagree. It is observed that the calculated value is much higher than the tabulated value. So, Ho is rejected. Therefore, packaging of food products is governed by regulatory authority is independent.

- Consumer Perception on packaging for promotion of sale is independent. This has been empirically proved while testing the hypothesis No. 3 that the 42.85 respondents strongly agree, 7.14% respondents cannot say, 28.57% respondents somewhat agree, 11.42% respondents somewhat disagree, 10% respondents strongly disagree. It is observed that the calculated value is much higher than the tabulated value. So, Ho is rejected. Therefore product packaging is independent to any other factors.

- From the aforesaid abstract of the analysis of data, it can be inferred that except the hypothesis no.2, chapter-I, page no.5 (regulatory requirements of food products are not complied with) rest that is hypothesis no.1 (Packaging strategy is not dependent on other factors), hypothesis no.3 (Individual perception hardly matters for buying decision), and hypothesis no.4 (there is no application of technology for food packaging in Assam), these are hypotheses have been virtually rejected. So, one can understand from the aforesaid analysis that in case of hypothesis relating to regulation, the hypotheses no. 2 has been accepted. From the aforesaid result we find that the level of awareness among the consumers regarding regulation governing packaged products is relatively weak in Kamrup and Barpeta Districts.

- With the advent of science and technology in the field of “Packaging Industry”, more and more new materials are added in the fray. Though significant changes in packaging technology have been noticed in states other than NER states, but the same
has not yet been noticed in the state of Assam and other NER states owing to non-availability of packaging infrastructure. As such many consumer goods are sold at a price much below their cost of production as there is non-availability of preservation/proper packaging facilities.

- One of the important developments that took place in this Century is the application of “nano-technology” in the packaging concept. In fact, nano sized packaging has boosted up the turnover of food production. Food Packaging technology was further improved with the application of seven “Mineral Processing Technology” that maintains the natural flavour, colour, texture and containing lesser preservatives.

- For the paper and paperboard based packages, the technology available is more suited to small scale sector and considerable upgradation is needed for quality, higher speeds, machinery for production of leak-proof composite cans and web-labelling.

- Machinery for production of multilayer films and bottles is yet to be commercialized. Conventional die making technology for stretch blown and injection blown containers are observed to have constraints with respect to high material consumption and poor finish.

- The packaging machinery needs to be provided with systems as in the developed countries for increasing speed, automatic web splicing, special feeding mechanisms, types of materials and form, product mix. Facility for vacuum packaging and gas flushing and micro-processor control for form-fill-seal and thermoform-fill-seal machines are needed.

- Modified and controlled atmosphere packaging provide interesting features of long life, optimum product quality maintenance, good and reliable sealing, adaptability to meet various production programmers and such systems are of extreme importance in
growing context of packaging in the country. Such systems are yet to be developed and commercially adopted.

- Similar is the situation in respect of aseptic packaging, thermoform-fill-seal, bag-in-box, retort packaging and the like. Other significant areas include material handling, cartooning, lined carton system, blister packaging, micro-wave oven able packaging. Modernization and upgradation is needed for labelling, coating, marking, special coating etc. in the area of ancillary packaging machinery.

Packaging is only one means, though effective, in the overall post-harvest system, to prevent food spoilage and losses. The added features towards food conservation and preservation still need to be recognized. This endeavour demands a system approach to ensure improvement in the overall infrastructural facilities including cold chain movement. Simultaneously the laws and regulations pertaining to the food sector also need to be updated and streamlined and a mechanism be evolved to systematically implement them.