

## **Chapter VIII**

### **Findings, Suggestions & Conclusion**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

On the basis of the analysis of data and information as presented in Chapter VII, the inferences, findings and logical conclusion has been shown and presented in this chapter.

The following are the findings based on the analysis of data:-

#### **8.2 General Findings**

##### **a. Type of Commodities traded**

Rice and Wheat are the principal commodities traded by the members of Poona Merchants chamber in the wholesale grocery business in Pune city. This is followed by Pulses and 'dals', Spices and dry fruits, coarse cereals like Jowar, Bajri and others, 'rava', 'maida' and sago, and jaggery. A few members also deal in tea-coffee, coconut, edible oil, processed items and animal fodder.

It is important to remember that many traders deal in more than one type of commodity. Also, some merchants act as traders for certain commodities and at the same time, act as commission agent for other types of commodities.

##### **b. Location of shop**

All the respondents belong to the city of Pune and have their shops in the Market Yard at Gultekdi.

##### **c. Duration of Membership of the Poona Merchants Chamber**

Nearly 40% of the respondents have been the members of the Chamber for more than 30 years. 26% of the respondents have been members for less than 10 years. While 17% of the respondents have been members of the Chamber for 11-20 years and the same figure is also for 21 to 30 years.

It shows that the members are satisfied and loyal towards the Poona Merchants Chamber, and hence continue their membership for several years.

**d. Annual Turnover of members**

**Table no. 8.1 Annual turnover of members.**

Amount of turnover	Percentage of respondents
a. less than Rs. 50 lakhs	3
b. Rs. 50 lakhs to Rs. 1 crore	16
c. Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 5 crore	32
d. More than Rs. 5 crores	43
e. Information not given	6

Majority of the respondents are large sized trading firms having annual turnover more than Rs. 5 crores.

This is followed by the medium sized traders having turnover between Rs. 1 crore and Rs. 5 crores.

While 16% of the respondents have turnover between Rs. 50 lakhs to Rs. 1 crore.

Only 3% of the respondents have annual turnover less than Rs. 50 lakhs.

This shows that majority of the members of the Poona Merchants Chamber have large business turnover every year. They constitute a major proportion of the turnover in the wholesale grocery business in Pune city.

e. 85% of the respondents had never been an office bearer of the Chamber. Only 15% of the respondents had been office bearer of the Chamber like Member of the Executive Committee. **This shows that a large majority of the respondents are ordinary members of the Chamber.**

### 8.3 Findings regarding the functions of Poona Merchants Chamber

#### a. Relative importance of various functions performed by the Poona Merchants Chamber

The following table shows the relative importance of various functions performed by the Poona Merchants Chamber:-

**Table no.8.2      Relative importance of various functions performed by the Poona Merchants Chamber**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Function</b>
1	Representation( represent members' stand before the government)
2	Information (Library & Publications, information about tax and other legal aspects of running the business)
3	Common Service Functions(centrax facility, solving common problems in the market yard, ' streekaamgaar kalian yojana' etc. )
4	Promotion Function ( activities for expansion of wholesale grocery business)
5	Image Building ( Building goodwill and reputation of Chamber at the local, national and international level)
6	Maintaining relations with other trade associations and chambers of commerce
7	Social welfare work ( Ladoo-chivda program, educational, medical help to needy)

According to the members' viewpoint, Representation function is the most important function, followed by Information function and Common Service functions.

If the first three functions are performed effectively, it automatically results in the promotion of the wholesale grocery business in Pune city.

This is followed by Image Building and maintaining relations with other trade associations and chambers of commerce. These functions help the Chamber in effectively fulfilling the first four functions.

The last function is Social welfare work performed by the Poona Merchants Chamber, which too indirectly helps in image building.

## **b. Performance of the Chamber in various functions**

### **1. Representation**

20% of the members are highly satisfied and 71% of the members are satisfied with the Poona Merchants Chamber in the function of representation. Only 9% of the respondents found it to be unsatisfactory.

This is because the Poona Merchants Chamber has always taken the initiative before the government for solving its members' problems. In fact, whenever the need arose, it has provided leadership to not only the traders of Pune but also the other trade associations of Maharashtra.

The members face the following problems while conducting their business, for which they expect better representation by the Chamber:-

a. Problem of illegal retailers and wholesalers in the Market Yard, who operate without a license. In case other members deal with such illegal wholesalers, then even the honest members are penalized. However there is no system to know whether a particular wholesaler has renewed his license. Also, there was the problem of some traders in the Market Yard who also conduct retail business. This adversely affects the business of other wholesalers and is against the APMC laws. Recently the APMC has cracked down on such illegal retailers, and declared heavy penalty for the offenders, due to which now this practice has stopped.

b. The Pune Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee has issued licenses even outside the Market yard. Due to this reason, the business and turnover of traders in the Market Yard is declining. In addition, there is no adequate control and regulation over such traders who operate outside the Market Yard, they also illegally pay less amount of cess. While the

traders in the Market Yard regularly pay their cess and yet face harassment from APMC officials over petty mistakes.

c. The members of the Poona Merchants Chamber also face the problems related to documentation and procedural aspects of the Pune APMC, particularly the procedure for obtaining and renewal of license, and for transfer of license to successor.

d. There are also changes in the provisions of the APMC Act, other laws of the Central and State government, and particularly changes in the direct and indirect taxes. Members want information and assistance from the Chamber regarding how to deal with these changes.

e. The Poona Merchants Chamber has undertaken the function of Representation only when problems have arisen in the working of the wholesale grocery business. But the members expect that the Chamber should take some proactive steps for the expansion and growth of the wholesale grocery business.

## **2. Information**

All the members take the benefit of 'VanijyaVishwa', the monthly mouthpiece of the Chamber. They find a useful source of information about aspects relating to trade and business in general and wholesale grocery business in particular. Also, 90% of members take the benefit of circulars issued and information provided informally. 74% of the members attend the annual Conference. While 9% of the members take the benefit of library facility.

- 70% of the members felt that the performance of the Poona Merchants Chamber in the function of providing information to be satisfactory, while 28% found it to be 'highly satisfactory'.

- Only a few i.e. 2% of members were not satisfied with this aspect of the Chamber.

Thus we can say that the Poona Merchants is having excellent performance in the function of providing information.

The members of the Poona Merchants Chamber expect more information and guidance on the following aspects:-

a. The Chamber must provide information about the provisions of the current APMC Act in force in Maharashtra. Also, changes in the APMC Act must also be informed to the

members through 'VanijyaVishwa', conference, circular and others. The government is proposing to make changes in the APMC Act, hence traders want to have more information about this issue.

b. Many wholesale grocery traders are looking for expansion in the food processing business. They want information about opportunities in this business, government policies relating to it, availability of labour and the market scenario. Hence they expect that the Chamber must also provide information regarding the same.

c. The Poona Merchants Chamber provides information about the taxation aspects of the wholesale grocery business to all its members. But members need more help in this regard. Hence they expect that the Chamber can invite experts for this, so that the businessmen can take the benefit.

d. Traders also face problems related to the documentation involved under the provisions of various acts regulating the wholesale grocery business. A large number of complex forms are to be filled up and separate books of accounts need to be maintained as per the provisions of various tax laws like VAT and LBT. Thus traders want help of Poona Merchants Chamber regarding this documentation.

### **3. Common Services**

The members of Poona Merchants Chamber recognize that the Chamber has already initiated some structure and systems for solving the problems relating to the 'hamaals' or porters, 'dalals' or commission agents and 'streekaamgaar' or female workers. In addition, publishing of telephone diary and provision of Centrax facility has been because of the efforts of the Chamber.

**67%** of the members are satisfied with the working of the Chamber in providing common services. 28% i.e. more than one-fourth of the members find the working to be 'highly satisfactory'.

Only 5% of the members find the performance to be unsatisfactory.

## **Major Problems faced by the Member-traders**

### **(i) Lack of proper infrastructure in the Market Yard**

The major problems faced by the members are relating to lack of proper infrastructure in the Market Yard. There is power failure, problems of piling garbage, shortage of warehousing facilities and others. There is also the severe problem of water logging during monsoon, due to which the goods get spoilt and there is loss of stock. It is the responsibility of the Pune APMC to provide these facilities. The Poona Merchants Chamber undertakes correspondence and makes efforts on a consistent basis to inform the APMC about these issues.

### **(ii) Frequent changes in laws, rules and regulations**

There are frequent changes in the laws pertaining to direct and indirect taxes, procedural aspects, documentation involved and others. Traders find it difficult to keep themselves updated about these changes.

### **(iii) Shortage of transportation facilities**

The next major problem is that of shortage of transportation facilities. The number of shops in the Market Yard and the amount of business and transactions have increased manifold in the past decades and the roads are too narrow for the movement of huge trucks in which the goods are supplied. This leads to frequent traffic jams and causes a lot of inconvenience to the Member-traders.

### **(iv) Shortage of communication facilities, particularly internet facilities.**

Nowadays communication between the traders and their suppliers is done frequently through e-mail. Also information about various important aspects of the business are put on the websites of the concerned government offices. Hence the traders need the Wi-Fi facility for speedy communication.

### **(v) Other problems**

The wholesale grocery traders also face the common business problems relating to employees, attrition, and others.

## **Findings related to the ‘Stree Kaamgaar Kalyan Yojana’**

The researcher conducted a survey of the ‘streekaamgaar’ or ‘female workers’ of the Chamber. From the data collected from the Chamber, there are around 140 such female

workers working in the Market yard. As per a survey of 30 female workers, conducted by the researcher regarding the 'Stree Kaamgaar Kalyan Yojana' of the Poona Merchants Chamber, the following information was revealed.

**(i) Number of years working in the Market yard**

The following table shows the number of years that the female workers are working in the Market yard:-

**Table no. 8.3 No. of years working in the Market yard**

Particulars	% of female workers
More than 25 years	76%
15 -25 years	13%
10-15 years	7%
Less than 10 years	4%

Most of the female workers, i.e. 76% of them have been working in the Market yard for more than 25 years.

In fact, the majority of the female workers are satisfied with the amount of wages and facilities provided under the 'StreeKaamgaarKalyanYojana', hence they continue to work there throughout their life.

While 13% and 7% of the workers have been working there for 15-25 years, and 10-15 years respectively.

Only 4% of the workers have been working for less than 10 years.

**(ii) Level of satisfaction regarding wages and facilities provided by the Grocery traders and Poona Merchants Chamber**

The following table shows the level of satisfaction of the female workers regarding wages and facilities provided by the Grocery traders and Poona Merchants Chamber:-



**Table no. 8.4 Level of satisfaction of female workers regarding wages and facilities provided by the Grocery traders and Poona Merchants Chamber**

Particulars	% of female workers
Satisfied	99%
Not much satisfied	1%

Almost all the female workers, i.e. around 99% are satisfied with the system of wages and facilities provided to them. In fact, they are very happy with the additional facilities, like provision of medical facilities and felicitation of meritorious children, which are not available elsewhere.

Above all, they are of the opinion that the Poona Merchants Chamber has imparted them respect and dignity, which is rarely given by employers to this profession.

This is also evident from the labour turnover rate, which is very low and most of the women work here throughout their life.

Only 1% of the female workers are not much satisfied.

A large number of such female workers have had primary education and the major cause of the dissatisfaction is the lack of better work opportunities for women in the Market Yard, rather than the wages and facilities provided by the Chamber.

**(iii)Grievance redressal**

99% of the female workers said that they rarely faced problems, related to their work and wages, and that the system works smoothly.

There is also no wage cut in case of absence.

Any rare problems, that may arise, are resolved jointly by the Poona Merchants Chamber and the HamaalPanchayat.

**4. Promotion**

In the era of competition, a business has to grow in order to survive. All the members are interested in expanding or diversifying their business activities.

74% of the members are satisfied by the performance of the Poona Merchants Chamber in the area of promotional activities. 12% find the performance to be ‘ highly satisfactory’.

14% of the members found it to be ‘ not satisfactory’.

Most of the members believe that the expansion of their business is their personal responsibility. However they do accept that the activities of the Chamber make the conduct of their business significantly smoother, and thus indirectly it helps in the promotion of their business.

The members have the following expectations from the Chamber in the function of promotional activities:-

**i) Information about grocery and related businesses**

Majority of the members feel that the wholesale grocery business is in a saturation phase. Since most of the members have been in the wholesale grocery business since generations, they want to expand in related businesses.

They expect that the Chamber should arrange expert guidance on such related businesses, how to establish and manage them, government policies related to the same and others.

**ii) Information about the Food Processing Industry**

Many members intend to go into the food processing industry like making ‘rava’, ‘maida’, pickles, ‘besan’, and related products. They expect that the Poona Merchants Chamber should arrange expert guidance in this respect, like how and where to establish such an industry, government policies for it, how to have attractive packaging, branding, advertising and such aspects.

**iii) Taking advantage of new opportunities offered by the changes in the APMC Act**

The APMC laws are on the path of change. The government is now encouraging direct marketing, farmer-consumer markets, private markets and the like.

Even online websites for selling grocery items are flourishing.

Hence, the members expect help from the Chamber regarding how to deal with this change.

## **5. Image Building**

The function of image building refers to a chamber's activities to enhance its image among the stakeholders and in the society. Every Chamber of Commerce has to make efforts to enhance its image among the stakeholders and in the society, so that it can effectively perform its other functions too.

The Poona Merchants Chamber has consistently adopted the following practices, which has contributed to building its positive image among the members and in the society:-

- a. Promotion of ethical practices in the wholesale grocery business.
- b. Building up systems to reduce the disputes among the traders and other stakeholders in the wholesale grocery business.

For example, 'Dispute Redressal committee' and 'StreeKaamgaarKalyanYojana' of the Poona Merchants Chamber, also providing support to and co-ordination with the 'HamaalPanchayat' of the wholesale grocery business.

- c. Organising many activities for social welfare like the 'LadooChivda Program'. Also, the 'Ladoo-ChivdaProgram' gained entry in the Limca Book of records in the year 2007 under the category 'Largest Sale'. After that the program scaled new heights and in the year 2012, the Chamber gained entry in the Guinness Book of World Records for 'Largest serving of laddoos'. This enabled the Poona Merchants Chamber to get state and national level publicity and contributed to its image building.

- d. Starting the Poona Merchants Chamber Relief Fund, through which medical help and educational help is provided to the needy.

- e. Institution of Award for Ideal Businessman- 'AdarshVyapariUttamPuraskar' and also Award for Best Reporter 'AdarshPatrakarPuraskar'

- f. Organisation of annual State-level Conference and inviting delegates from all over Maharashtra.

- g. Providing guidance to other trade associations of Maharashtra

- h. Felicitation of meritorious children of members, 'hamaals' and female workers

This practice of the Chamber promotes image building among the members.

- i. Obtaining ISO 9001-2008 certification.
- j. Celebration of important events of the Poona Merchants Chamber on a large scale and publication of souvenir.
- k. An important point to note is that the Poona Merchants Chamber enjoys such credibility with the government that when there was a shortage of ‘ tur dal’ in October 2015, and the prices reached Rs. 200 per kg. the government decided to confiscate the ‘ tur dal’ with the black marketers and sell it to the common public at Rs. 100 per kg. At that time, the government provided the ‘ dal’ to the Poona Merchants Chamber and entrusted the responsibility of selling it at Rs. 100 per kg. to the common public of Pune.

**Opinion of members regarding the performance of the Poona Merchants Chamber in the function of Image Building**

66% of the respondents are satisfied with the efforts of the Poona Merchants Chamber in the function of image building.

While 31% of the respondents are ‘highly satisfied’ with the performance of the Chamber in the function of image building, while only 3% find it to be unsatisfactory.

Thus we can say that the Poona Merchants Chamber has exhibited excellent performance in the function of image building.

**6. Maintaining relation with other Trade Associations and Chambers of Commerce**

The following are the issues on which the Chamber has provided guidance to other Trade associations of Maharashtra:-

- a. Current issues and problems relating to the wholesale grocery business.
- b. Direct and indirect taxes in the wholesale grocery business
- c. Rates of ‘hamaali’ i.e. wage rates for ‘hamaals’ or porters in the wholesale grocery business, and rates of deduction or levy therein.
- d. Rates of TDS (Tax deducted at source) on payment to the Mathadi Board
- e. Regarding implementation of Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

f. Correspondence with the government regarding maintaining the office of the Additional Commissioner of Sales tax (Appeal) at Nanded or associating it with the office at Aurangabad

g. Regarding ban on the sale of unpacked or loose edible oil.

h. Process of election at the Chamber

### **Opinions of members regarding the performance of the Poona Merchants Chamber in the function of maintaining relations with other Trade Associations and Chambers of Commerce**

66% of the members are satisfied with the Poona Merchants Chamber in the function of maintaining relations with other trade associations and chambers of commerce. 29% of the members are 'highly satisfied' with the Chamber in this respect, while only 5% are not satisfied.

Thus we can conclude that the Poona Merchants has exemplary performance in the function of maintaining relations with other trade associations and chambers of commerce.

## **7. Social welfare**

### **(i) Social Consciousness**

100% i.e. all the respondent members agreed that the Poona Merchants Chamber should use its funds for social welfare. This shows the social consciousness of the members, and the trust they have for the Chamber and its office bearers.

### **(ii) Increased Goodwill and Service to Society**

95% of the members believe that if the Chamber undertakes activities for social welfare, it will lead to increased goodwill, which will help the Chamber to effectively fulfil its other functions like Representation and Promotion.

While 93% of the respondents also feel that the Chamber undertakes these activities with the pure objective of service to society.

Thus we can conclude that more than 90% of the respondents feel that both the objectives can be fulfilled by spending on social welfare.

**(iii) Satisfaction level of members regarding the working of the Chamber in the function of providing social service.**

66% of the members are satisfied with the working of the Chamber in the function of providing social service.

While 33% of the members find the working to be 'highly satisfactory'.

Only 1% of respondents find the working to be 'not satisfactory'.

The above data shows the excellent performance of the Chamber in the function of providing 'social service'.

**Findings related to the 'Ladoo Chivda Program'**

-The 'LadooChivda Program' has been undertaken by the Poona Merchants Chamber with the objective of providing good quality products at a reasonable price, thereby fulfilling their social responsibility. As per a survey of 50 consumers conducted by the researcher on the Ladoo-Chivda program, this objective has been fulfilled as almost 92% of the customers bought the products because of these reasons.

**8.4 Findings regarding the Opportunities and Challenges in the Wholesale grocery business in Pune city**

**a. Challenges in the wholesale grocery business in Pune city**

**i) Changing regulatory environment**

The major challenge is the changing regulatory environment. It refers to the changes in the APMC Act, direct and indirect taxes like LBT and related issues and also the issue of Foreign Direct Investment in retailing.

**iii) Shortage of physical infrastructure**

Shortage of physical infrastructure is the next major challenge. The market yard has a shortage of physical infrastructure, like roads, godowns and others.

**iii) Change in demand and customer expectations**

The next major challenge is the change in demand and customer expectations.

The customer now want the products in small quantities and attractive and durable packaging. The shortage of time and modern lifestyle has made the customers go in for online shopping of groceries. Also the customers now prefer to go to malls. These malls buy their goods directly from the producers. Thus the business of wholesalers has gone down and profit margin of wholesalers is going down.

#### **iv) Advancement in technology**

Change in technology is yet another challenge faced by the wholesale grocery business. The shortage of time and modern lifestyle has made the customers go in for online shopping of groceries. This is also a challenge that the wholesale grocery business is facing. Online businesses can have their own supply chain and thus bypass the wholesaler. In addition they also reduce the turnover of the grocery retailers who are the customers of the wholesalers. Thus technological changes pose a challenge for the wholesale grocery business.

### **b. Opportunities in the wholesale grocery business in Pune city**

When asked regarding the opportunities in the wholesale grocery business, most of the members had the following opinion:-

#### **i) Expanding food processing industry**

The wholesale grocery is in the midst of change. There is a change in the demand and expectations of customers, as well in the market scenario. Thus many wholesale grocery traders intend to expand their business by going in the food processing industry, which could be a part of forward integration or backward integration. The market for processed products like 'poha', 'rava', 'maida', ready-to-eat products, spices and various 'masalas', instant food products, pickles, 'chutneys' and related products is increasing.

#### **ii) Increasing demand for imported food products**

With the demand for world class cuisine, the market for imported products like olive oil, imported herbs and spices is also increasing. Many traders are also interested in knowing how to have a business in these products.

### **iii) Increasing demand for organic food products**

The demand for organic 'dals', cereals, jaggery and other such products is increasing. Many traders are already dealing in organic jaggery, they are also interested in fulfilling this niche demand, in other products.

## **8.5 Challenges/ Problems before the Poona Merchants Chamber**

### **i) Conflicts among the members**

The recent issue of the retailers in the Market Yard has brought to the fore differences of opinion amongst the members of the Poona Merchants Chamber. The motto of the Chamber is 'United we stand, divided we fall'. This is a great challenge that the Chamber needs to resolve in order to continue its existence..

### **ii) Changing macroeconomic environment**

The macroeconomic environment of the wholesale grocery business is rapidly changing. In this scenario, the Chamber will have to carve out its separate identity in order to continue to grow. Hence the challenge before the current leadership of the Chamber is how to achieve this objective.

### **iii) Less amount of resources**

The number of members is around 500 right from the eighties. There has not been much increase in the number of members because the number of wholesalers in the market yard is limited. This is also a constraint.

Constant number of membership and low membership fee leads to less resources with the Chamber, which leads to lack of adequate number of employees to enhance the level of working. This ultimately leads to lack of professional setup in the Poona Merchants Chamber.

## **8.6. SWOT analysis of Poona Merchants Chamber**

### **a. Strength**

a. Established organisation



b. Goodwill and reputation amongst the traders, customers, government and general public in the state of Maharashtra.

c. Unity amongst traders

d. Leadership Skills among the younger generation of members of the Poona Merchants Chamber

**b. Weakness**

a. Difference of opinion on the issue of retailers in the Market yard.

b. Small setup, less number of employees.

**c. Opportunities**

a. Changes in the Maharashtra Agricultural Produce Marketing (Regulation) Act,

b. Changes in the Market scenario and demand.

c. Emergence of online purchase and sale of grocery items.

**d. Threats**

a. Emergence of Malls and its adverse impact on the wholesale grocery traders.

b. Constant number of members- The future generation of wholesale grocery traders does not want to come into this business, because of low margins.

If the number of wholesalers in the grocery business declines, the Chamber can face a threat to its existence.

**Chart no. 8.1 SWOT analysis of Poona Merchants Chamber**



### **8.7 Findings regarding the contribution of Poona Merchants Chamber for improving the structure and systems of wholesale grocery business in Pune city**

The Poona Merchants Chamber has successfully undertaken the following initiatives during the past decades for improving the structure and systems of the wholesale grocery business in Pune city:-

- a. Constituting and effective functioning of the Dispute Redressal Committee to resolve disputes among the traders.
- b. Constituting and effective functioning of Co-ordination Committee to maintain co-ordination between the member-traders and ‘hamaals’ of the wholesale grocery market
- c. Initiating a licensing system for ‘dalals’ or commission agents in the wholesale grocery market.
- d. Constituting and effective functioning of ‘Stree Kaamgaar Kalyan Yojana’ for the female workers in the Market Yard.
- e. Successful publication of monthly magazine ‘ VanijyaVishwa’ and providing it free of cost to all the members.

- f. Providing CENTRAX facility free of cost to the members
- g. Providing strong leadership and effective representation for solving the problems of wholesale grocery traders, not only in Pune city, but also in the state of Maharashtra.
- h. The Poona Merchants Chamber has made sustained efforts to improve the conditions of working of not only the wholesale grocery traders, but also the other stakeholders in the wholesale grocery business in Pune city, during the long span of its fruitful existence.

### **8.8 Findings from the survey of Stakeholders of the Poona Merchants Chamber**

The following are the findings from the questionnaire which were filled up by taking the interview of the stakeholders of the Poona Merchants Chamber:-

#### **i.)Activities and occupational status of respondents**

The following table shows the data regarding the activities and occupational status of the stakeholders from whom the data was collected.

**Table no. 8.5      Activities and occupational status of respondent stakeholders**

Name of the stakeholder	Percentage of respondents	No. of respondents
1. Consumer/Representative of Consumers	16	10
2. Apmc official	12	07
3. Commission agent	17	10
4. Hamaal	20	12
5. Female worker	20	12
6. Farmer	15	09

#### **ii) Opinion regarding the contribution of Poona Merchants Chamber in the promotion of Wholesale Grocery Business in Pune city**

82% of the respondents had the opinion that the Poona Merchants has contributed in the promotion of Wholesale Grocery business in Pune city. While only 8% had a negative opinion. 10% of the respondents were not aware about the Poona Merchants Chamber. These include mostly some consumers and farmers who are not aware of the activities of the Poona Merchants Chamber.

This shows that the Poona Merchants Chamber has a positive image, not only amongst the members, but also among the stakeholders.

In addition, when asked about the extent of contribution, 15% of respondents had the reply of 'High Contribution', while 72% of the respondents had the reply of 'Medium Contribution'. While only 13% of the respondents had the opinion that the Poona Merchants had made a low contribution in the promotion of Wholesale Grocery Business in Pune city.

### **iii) Ways in which the Poona Merchants Chamber has made a contribution to the promotion of Wholesale Grocery business in Pune city**

The following are the findings regarding the opinions of various stakeholders regarding the different functions performed by the Chamber and the percentage of stakeholders expressing that the Poona Merchants Chamber has made a significant contribution.

#### **a. Representation-**

70% of the respondents have responded favorably. This is because most of the stakeholders like the commission agents, 'hamaals' and even the APMC officials are aware that the Poona Merchants Chamber regularly undertakes correspondence and makes representation about the traders' interest before the APMC and the government. These stakeholders are also witness to the peaceful agitations conducted by the Chamber.

#### **b. Information**

76% of the respondents have responded favorably. Many stakeholders are aware about 'VanijyaVishwa', circulars given by Chamber, and also organization of state level conference by the Chamber.

#### **c. Common Service**

79% of the respondents have responded favourably. This is because the Chamber has initiated many common service functions with reference to certain stakeholders. For example, the Co-ordination Committee works to establish co-ordination between traders and hamaals, the 'StreeKaamgaarKalyanyojana' has been started for the welfare of female workers, the licensing system has been instituted by the Chamber for the 'dalals' or commission agents in the wholesale grocery business.

d. Promotion function

65% of the respondents have opined favorably. This is because they are aware that all the efforts of the Chamber are for promoting the wholesale grocery business and trade in Pune city.

e. Social Welfare work

58% of the respondents have responded favourably. Many stakeholders are aware that the Chamber provides medical and educational help to the needy. In addition, many stakeholders know about the 'Ladoo-chivda' program of the Chamber and also take the benefit of it.

f. Image building

54% respondents have responded favorably. Many stakeholders are not generally aware about the image building activities of the Chamber, and its relationship with other functions.

g. Maintaining relations with other trade associations and chambers of commerce

53% of the respondents have responded favourably. Many stakeholders are not generally aware about these activities of the Chamber.

**iv) Most of the stakeholders have the opinion that the Poona Merchants Chamber should make improvements on the following aspects:-**

- a. The wholesalers do not deal with the 'hamaals' in a polite way.
- b. The Poona Merchants Chamber should try to stop hoarding amongst the traders
- c. The rates of commission of the traders/ commission agents are very high and farmers get very less amount.

## **8.9 Problems faced by the Poona Merchants Chamber**

### **a. Low membership fees**

The Poona Merchants Chamber charges low membership fees, which are affordable for all the big as well as small member-traders of the Chamber. The annual membership fee for the year 2015-16 is Rs. 2809/- ( including taxes Rs. 309/- )

There is no separate category of membership or different membership fee for individuals, firms and companies.

The low membership fees leads to lower amount of resources. Hence the Chamber has to sustain itself in a limited amount of resources. Hence the Chamber cannot appoint more number of employees or appoint professional experts for better working of the Chamber.

#### **b. Problems related to the APMC**

The Wholesale grocery business comes within the purview of the APMC Act of Maharashtra. Hence the Chamber does not have full freedom, when it comes to the promotion of the wholesale grocery business. For solving the problem of infrastructure in the Market Yard, the Chamber has to continuously undertake correspondence with the APMC authorities, with low extent of results. Hence, in such matters, the Chamber has to undertake more effort but the results are low.

#### **c. Saturation in the wholesale grocery business**

The wholesale grocery business in the Market yard of Pune is now in the saturation phase. A few decades ago, Pune was the Main Market from where the goods were supplied to all the surrounding rural areas. Today, the Gultekdi Market Yard only has trade of grocery items for local consumption only. The wholesale grocery business in itself is in the midst of change. The number of traders in the Market yard has reached its upper limit. In addition, many licenses for wholesale grocery trade have been given even outside the Market yard. This has led to reduced turnover for the traders in the Market Yard.

Hence the number of members of Poona Merchants Chamber is not growing. In fact, the number of members is around 500 right from the year 2000 onwards. Most of the members now want to expand in related businesses like food processing, online retailing and others. Hence the Chamber now needs to provide leadership from that viewpoint. The Chamber may have to make amendments in its Memorandum and Articles for this purpose.

#### **d. Different and opposite expectations of the members**

The recent issue of the retailers in the Market Yard has brought to the fore differences of opinion amongst the members of the Poona Merchants Chamber. The motto of the Chamber

is 'United we stand, divided we fall'. Thus in order for the Chamber to continue its existence, it is imperative that the Chamber should resolve these differences.

### **8.10 Observations of the researcher regarding the Best Practices of Poona Merchants Chamber**

The researcher has attended a number of programs and functions of the Chamber during the past few years. On observing the performance and working of the Poona Merchants Chamber, the researcher found certain Best Practices followed by the Poona Merchants Chamber, which can serve as a guiding light to other Chambers of Commerce and trade associations.

- i. Democratic Pattern of the organisation and conduct of regular elections in a fair manner.
- ii. Regular meetings of the Council of Management.
- iii. Adoption of ethical practices and having a broad vision
- iv. Mature leadership which recognized that not only was the growth of the Chamber itself important, but also the growth of the wholesale grocery business in Pune city and also the various stakeholders like the 'hamaals' and 'stree kaamgaar' were also important for the smooth functioning of the business.
- v. Social Awareness of the Chamber like the 'Ladoo-Chivda Program' and the Poona Merchants Chamber Relief Fund.
- vi. Ensuring the adoption of international standards in the working of the Chamber, i.e. getting ISO 9001-2008 certification.
- vii. National and International Recognition of the Chamber like entry in the Limca Book of Records and Guinness Book of World Records.

## **8.11 Suggestions to the Poona Merchants Chamber**

Based on the above findings obtained from the analysis and interpretation of data, the researcher has the following suggestions for the Poona Merchants Chamber:-

**a. In the context of the function of Representation, the following are the suggestions for improving the contribution of the Poona Merchants Chamber:-**

**i) Representation for simplification of procedure for obtaining and renewal of licence-**

The Chamber must undertake representation for simplifying and speeding up the procedure for obtaining and renewal of licence for operating as trader or commission agent in the market yard. In addition the procedure for transfer of license to successor should also be simplified and made faster.

Also, representation must be made to remove the illegal wholesalers in the market yard. In addition, the harassment of honest traders, which is done if they deal with those traders whose license may not be renewed, must be stopped.

**ii) Representation for removal of cess**

The APMC charges cess on sale of goods(for rava, atta, maida, split dal, the cess is 0.5% and 5-6% is the rate of commission) made in the Market Yard. This cess is charged in order to provide relevant facilities which make trading easier. But it is found that the APMC is highly inefficient in providing these facilities. Thus the Poona Merchants Chamber must represent against collection of such cess from the traders and other operators in the Market Yard.

In addition, this cess is shown as part of bill, which results in increase in the prices for the customers. This high price is resulting in declining turnover for the traders in the Market Yard. At other APMCs, this cess is calculated on purchases of goods, and is collected at the gate. Hence it is included in the cost price.

**iii) Representation for bringing about equity and parity among all the license holders**

The APMC has issued licenses to traders even outside the Market Yard. This has resulted in reduced turnover for the traders in the Market Yard. In addition, there is no adequate control and regulation over such traders who operate outside the Market Yard, they also illegally



pay less amount of cess. While the traders in the Market Yard regularly pay their cess and yet face harassment from APMC officials over petty mistakes. Hence it was suggested that Poona Merchants Chamber should make representation for bringing equity and parity among all the license holders.

**iv) Representation for making the Market area Wi-fi enabled**

The Poona Merchants Chamber must undertake representation before the Pune APMC and the State Government for making the entire Market area Wi-fi enabled. This is because, the internet has become an important means of communication and information in the current business scenario, and it has become imperative to use it in every business.

**v) Representation for improving the infrastructure in the Market Yard**

The Poona Merchants Chamber must undertake representation before the APMC to improve the facilities of warehousing, transport and communication, drainage, power supply, garbage collection and others in the Market area.

**vi) Representation for expansion and growth of the Wholesale Grocery Business**

The Poona Merchants Chamber has undertaken the function of Representation only when problems have arisen in the working of the wholesale grocery business. But it is found that these efforts are not enough in the changing market scenario. Hence, it is suggested that the Chamber should take some proactive steps for the expansion and growth of the wholesale grocery business.

**b. Suggestions to the Poona Merchants Chamber for improving its function of providing Information.**

**i) Information about the provisions of the current APMC Act and changes therein**

The Poona Merchants must provide information about the provisions of the current APMC Act in force in Maharashtra. Also, changes in the APMC Act must also be informed to the members through 'VanijyaVishwa', conference, circular and others.

**ii) Information about related businesses**

Since, many traders want to expand in the food processing business, the Chamber must also provide information regarding the food processing business to the member-traders through

seminars, conferences in which outside experts could be invited. Information about opportunities in this business, government policies relating to it, availability of labour and the market scenario should be provided.

### **iii) Information about taxation aspects**

The Poona Merchants Chamber provides information about the taxation aspects of the wholesale grocery business to all its members. But members need more help in this regard. The Chamber must appoint a panel of tax consultants who would provide their services for the benefit of all the members. They could be paid remuneration, either by the Chamber or by the traders who opt to take the benefit of it. Negotiations could also be undertaken with the tax consultants, in such a way that their benefit could be obtained by the traders with lower amount of fee.

### **iv) Information about documentation involved under the provisions of various Acts**

The various acts regulating the wholesale grocery business require extensive documentation. In certain cases, different books of accounts are to be maintained as per the provisions of various tax laws and various forms have to be filled. Thus the Poona Merchants Chamber can appoint experts who could guide the traders in this respect.

### **v) Information about the creditworthiness of the members**

Most of the trade in the Market Yard is done on credit, Hence it is important for members to have information about the creditworthiness of other traders, to minimize the chances of bad debt and loss. Hence the Chamber can supply information about the creditworthiness of the members.

### **Suggestions for improving the scope and usefulness of ‘ VanijyaVishwa’**

In the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Chamber, it is mentioned that ‘ Promotion of Commerce Education’ as one of the objectives of the Poona Merchants Chamber. Keeping this in view, the researcher has the following suggestions for the Chamber which could be effectively implemented through the medium of ‘ VanijyaVishwa’.

#### **1. Conducting competitions for Commerce students**

The Poona Merchants Chamber can conduct Essay Competition/ Case Study Contest for Commerce students through ‘ VanijyaVishwa’. In the same way, quiz competition can also

be conducted. The competitions can be publicized in ‘ VanijyaVishwa’ and also information could be given to various colleges and students can be invited to participate. The competitions can be conducted in association with some teachers of leading commerce colleges. This will enable the students and teachers to gain first hand practical knowledge of the actual working of wholesale grocery business, and also lead to publicity for the Chamber.

## **2. Offering short term minor research projects to Commerce teachers**

Short term minor research projects relevant to the wholesale grocery business can be given to Commerce teachers, and those findings can be published in the Diwali issue of ‘VanijyaVishwa’. This will benefit, both the teachers and the Chamber.

A review of all the above activities should be published in the Diwali issue of ‘Vanijya Vishwa’. The winning students and teachers should be felicitated in the function organised by the Chamber for felicitating the meritorious children of members, ‘ hamaals’ and female workers.

## **3. Inviting eminent teachers of commerce on the editorial board of ‘VanijyaVishwa’.**

When ‘VanijyaVishwa’ was started in 1972, eminent persons like Dr.Shezwalkar, CA V.K. Godbole and Prof. S.S. Kale, Prof. P.V. Patwardhan were invited to write articles and Prof. S.S.Kale was on the Editorial Committee of ‘VanijyaVishwa’. In the same way, eminent Commerce teachers should be invited on the editorial board of ‘ VanijyaVishwa’.

## **4. Publication of informational booklets**

The Chamber should take lead in the separate publication of informational booklet relating to special articles of ‘ VanijyaVishwa’ like ‘Annual Review of trends in the wholesale Grocery Market’ in the Diwali issue, article titled ‘Laws affecting business’. Similarly in the monthly issue also, there is a column called ‘Chamber Vrutt’. It can be compiled for review of Chamber history and Chamber’s activities.

## **c. Suggestions to the Poona Merchants Chamber in the function of providing common services**

### **i) Appointing a panel of tax consultants**

The Chamber must appoint a panel of tax consultants who would provide their services for the benefit of all the members. They could be paid remuneration, either by the Chamber or

by the traders who opt to take the benefit of it. The Chamber can make efforts to negotiate with the tax consultants so that they could provide their services at a reasonable cost.

#### **ii) Providing Wi-Fi facility in the Market Yard**

Nowadays, most of the communication is done through e-mail, whats-app and other applications. The traders in the Market Yard have to communicate with suppliers, commission agents and others all over India. Hence Wi-Fi facility in the Market Yard must be provided.

#### **ii) Solving the problems of infrastructure in the Market Yard**

Some innovative ideas could be implemented to resolve the frequent problems of garbage, transportation problems and traffic jams, shortage of warehousing facilities and others.

#### **iii) Informal Employment Exchange**

Many traders face problems related to the employees, and frequent attrition. The Chamber can run an informal employment exchange, and the benefit of it could be obtained by the members, at a nominal fee.

### **Suggestions related to the ‘Stree Kaamgaar Kalyan Yojana’ of the Poona Merchants Chamber**

As per the survey conducted by the researcher on the ‘Stree Kaamgaar Kalyan Yojana’, the following suggestions are offered to improve the program:-

#### **i) Provision of respiratory mask**

Since these female workers do the task of cleaning and sweeping, they suffer from respiratory problems on account of dust. The Chamber and the Hamaal Panchayat could provide them with a mask which could be worn on the nose and mouth, and also make them aware, regarding its usage.

#### **ii) Scheme for insurance**

The Chamber and the Hamaal Panchayat should jointly implement a scheme of insurance for the female workers. Since the family is also dependent on the income of the woman, in case of untimely death, the relatives of the deceased could get the insurance amount.

#### **d. Suggestions to the Poona Merchants Chamber in the function of Promotion**

##### **i) Arranging expert guidance on businesses related to grocery business**

Most of the members of the Chamber want to expand in businesses, related to the grocery business. Hence, the Chamber should arrange expert guidance on such related businesses, how to establish and manage them, government policies related to the same, how to have attractive packaging, branding, advertising and such aspects. Examples of such businesses are those in the food processing industry like making 'rava', 'maida', pickles, 'besan', 'papad' and related products.

Statistical information about the markets and marketability of these products can be provided. Also, feasibility and market study can be conducted by the Chamber. Such information should also be updated periodically. This information could be provided to interested members at a reasonable cost. Thus this could become a source of income for the Chamber.

##### **ii) Guidance about the new opportunities arising because of changes in the APMC Act and how to cash in on them**

The APMC laws are on the path of change. The government is now encouraging direct marketing, farmer-consumer markets, private markets and the like. Even online websites for selling grocery items are flourishing. The Chamber can thus provide guidance to the members in this context.

##### **iii) Organisation of Trade fairs and Exhibitions**

Trade fairs and exhibitions can be organised so that the members can know about the latest technology and innovations in the field of wholesale grocery business and also the food processing industry.

##### **iv) Providing information about exports**

India has a large untapped potential in exports of agricultural commodities. In case of grocery items, good progress has already been made in the area of branding and packaging. Hence now the traders need information about export potential of various such commodities and procedural aspects related to it.

The Poona Merchants Chamber can arrange conferences and seminars in which experts in this field can be invited and required information can be provided to the members. Regular updates about this information can also be provided through VanijyaVishwa.

#### **v) Providing help in arranging Finance**

Every businessman faces the issue of raising finance for establishment, expansion or diversification.

The Poona Merchants Chamber can provide a forum to bring together the members and co-operative banks or nationalised banks for the benefit of the members.

#### **vi) Creation of Virtual Trading Platform for Grocery Items**

In the current scenario, with the advancement of E-Commerce and E-business, the Chamber can create virtual platform, from where its members can sell their various grocery items to a wider customer base. The task of the chamber would be only order receiving and once it is received, it can be routed to any of the registered grocery traders, with the actual delivery and payment managed by them.

This would complement the traders' business which takes place from the Market Yard and other Market areas in Pune city.

This would actually help in the expansion of the grocery business. This would help to reduce cost and help the members to withstand competition from organised retailers like Big Bazaar, or from online retailing sites like localbanya.com, bigbasket.com and others.

#### **vii) Maintaining co-ordination and unity among the members**

Co-ordination amongst all the member traders must be maintained. The illegal wholesale and retail trade in the market yard should be removed. Price difference should be removed.

#### **viii) Providing individual attention to each category of items in the wholesale grocery business**

The Chamber should hold separate periodical meetings for each category of items in the wholesale grocery business, to have a better understanding of their individual problems.

**e. Suggestions regarding the performance of the Poona Merchants Chamber in the function of image building and the function of maintaining cordial relations with other trade associations and chambers of commerce**

**i) Continuing the existing programs of image building**

The Poona Merchants Chamber already enjoys tremendous goodwill in the state of Maharashtra. Hence the Chamber should continue the existing programs of image building.

**ii) Ensuring 'visibility' of the Poona Merchants Chamber**

The Poona Merchants Chamber can make more efforts to ensure that its office bearers are 'visible' at government meetings, public forums or city-wide functions.

It plays an important role in image building.

**iii) Publicity of goal attainment**

Any kind of goal attainment should also be publicised, on the website of the Poona Merchants Chamber, to local media, and also to the larger trade associations and Chambers of Commerce.

This plays an important role in image building.

**iv) Use of information technology to improve the relations and co-ordination with other trade associations and Chambers of Commerce**

Regarding maintaining cordial relations with other trade associations and chambers of commerce, the Poona Merchants Chamber should make use of information technology to improve the relations and co-ordination with other trade associations and Chambers of Commerce.

Whatsapp and other such mobile technology applications can be used to have better communication with other trade associations and chambers of commerce.

The Poona Merchants Chamber can take the lead in this regard.

**f. Suggestion regarding the performance of the Poona Merchants Chamber in the function of providing social service**

**i) Promotion of Commerce Education**

One of the objectives mentioned in the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Poona Merchants Chamber is the promotion of Commerce Education. In this context it is

found that the Chamber only performs the activity of felicitating the meritorious students of Commerce. Hence the researcher has the following suggestions for the Chamber to make a contribution in the field of Commerce Education:

- Organising competitions for the students of Commerce colleges.
- Institute a Chair in the University or college for promotion of Commerce Education.
- Institute a partnership with the leading Commerce colleges of Pune city for providing apprenticeship or traineeship opportunities for Commerce students. At the same time, the faculty members and teachers of Commerce Colleges in areas like law, taxation, management can be invited to provide information to the members of the Chamber.
- Short term research projects could also be undertaken like market survey and research, obtaining customer feedback, feedback on special initiatives of the Chamber and others, which would benefit the Chamber as well as the students of the Commerce colleges.
- Regular visits of faculty members and students to the Poona Merchants Chamber should be arranged.
- Students can arrange the sale of 'Ladoo-chivda' through various centres. This will also give publicity to the Chamber.

#### **ii) Continuation of the existing programs of providing social service**

The Poona Merchants Chamber should continue the existing programs of social welfare like

- the Ladoo Chivda Program,
- Providing help at the time of natural calamities like earthquake, flood in various parts of India.
- Organisation of blood donation camps
- Providing help for education of the wards of the 'stree kaamgaar' (female workers), 'Hamaals' (porters) and other poor and needy people.
- Providing medical help at concessional rates through tie- up with the Poona Adventist Hospital, Salisbury Park, Pune.
- The members of the Poona Merchants Chamber also jointly providing lodging and food facility to 'warkaris' during their 'yatra'.
- Donation to other organisations like the 'Sakal India Foundation'.



### **Suggestions for the Ladoo Chivda program**

As per a separate study conducted by the researcher on the 'Ladoo-Chivda program' of the Poona Merchants Chamber, the following suggestions can be made:-

#### **i) The Poona Merchants Chamber should concentrate on corporate orders of 'laddos'**

Both 'ladoo' and 'chivda' are popular products, but the popularity of 'ladoo' is slightly more than that of 'chivda'.

The reason for this could be that 'ladoo' is generally purchased for gifting purpose, not only by individuals, but also by business organizations for their employees.

Thus the Chamber should also concentrate on such corporate orders for 'laddos' for the purpose of gifting to the employees. This will increase the popularity of the program, and also enhance the goodwill of the Chamber.

#### **ii) Increase the geographical scope of the 'Ladoo-Chivda Program'**

The consumers are willing to buy more such products produced by the Chamber. But the Chamber does not intend to make this a regular business activity.

Hence the Chamber should concentrate on increasing the geographical scope of the program, so that it can benefit a large section of the population, in different cities of Maharashtra.

### **g. Other suggestions**

#### **i) Efforts to stop hoarding amongst the traders**

The Poona Merchants Chamber should try to stop hoarding amongst the traders. It is an unethical practice which leads to unnecessarily high prices and causes loss to consumers. Since the very existence of a market or trade depends on satisfied consumers, the Chamber should make efforts in this regard.

#### **ii) Maintaining unity among the traders**

As per the provisions of the Maharashtra Agricultural Produce Marketing (Development and Regulation) act, 1963, 'Retail' sale is prohibited in the Market yard. Hence, in the year 2015, the officials of the Pune APMC cracked down on illegal retail shops in the Market Yard.

Some of these shop owners were members of the Chamber. So on their demand, Poona Merchants Chamber took the stand to support these retailers. But the court judgement was against the retailers. But this stand of Poona Merchants Chamber has not found favourable view amongst the other members. They believe that the Chamber's image may get tarnished on account of providing support to such unethical practices. While the other viewpoint is that, the sale in small quantities is made to retailers of small villages around Pune, who can get all the items at one place.

In this context, it is suggested that the Chamber must resolve these issues at the earliest, so as to maintain unity amongst its members. If these differences are allowed to grow, then the existence of the Chamber will be in danger.

### **iii) Liasion with social and educational institutions**

The Poona Merchants Chamber should also liasion with social and educational institutions to provide social service and also for member education.

### **iv) Adoption of Professional style of working**

The Poona Merchants Chamber needs to change its method of working in the new scenario. Just like the Maratha Chamber of Commerce, it needs to have professional style of working. The Poona Merchants Chamber should take the following steps in this regard:-

- **Constitution of Expert Committees**

Committees consisting of professional experts can be appointed. A Separate advisory committee should be constituted, which would be different from the Executive Committee.

Experts from the trade as well as other professionals like lawyers, tax consultants, and others could be appointed on the Committee.

If required, changes in the memorandum and articles of association may be made for this.

Questionnaire and survey of members' problems should be made and steps taken to resolve those problems.

- **Increase in the Membership fee**

The current membership fee of the Chamber is Rs. 2,500. This fee is too less and leads to shortage of resources for undertaking various activities and appointment of experts. Hence this membership fee should be increased.

- **Special efforts to increase the number of members**

In the current scenario, any organisation must grow in order to survive. Hence the Poona Merchants Chamber must undertake efforts to increase the number of members.

The number of members of the Chamber must grow by a predictable percentage each year. This growth must be sustainable.

With the change in the market scenario, the dividing line between a wholesaler and retailer is diminishing. Ultimately the basic objective of the Poona Merchants Chamber is fair representation of the traders' interest. Thus it can grant membership to all grocery traders, whether wholesale or retail. For this, necessary changes must be made in the Memorandum & Articles of Association, if required.

- **Enhancing the participation of a large number of members in the working**

The Poona Merchants Chamber should enhance the participation of members in its working. Various committees, advisory groups and panels dealing with relevant issues could be established and the members could be regularly asked to participate. Thus more number of members could get an opportunity to be involved in the regular working of the Chamber. Feedback could also be taken from such committees.

- **Adoption of new infrastructure**

The Poona Merchants Chamber should adopt new infrastructure which will facilitate its expansion. Expansion of the 'VyaparBhavan' could also be done for this purpose.

**v) Adopting new technology (Establishment of private online community)**

The Poona Merchants Chamber can establish private online community free of cost for its members. Through such a community, the members can

- **Network-**

With the advancement in trade, commerce and technology, fewer members are able to attend events. Hence a forum in which they can connect with others (virtually) on their schedule is of great value.

- **Update their own information**

This can save administration's and members' time as business profiles can be updated by members on their schedule. Thus the changes can be made in real time, with more efficiency and effectiveness.

- **Promote their business**

An online community can allow member businesses to offer each other deals through a secure environment. It is possible to make editable web pages available to members for a certain payment.

Thus, the small businesses can also have a web presence through the website of the Chamber. These pages could be designed so that changes could be made by the member in their profile, even without expert knowledge.

The website could also offer banner advertisements and thus earn revenue.

Other companies like transporters, advertisers, packaging companies and others could give their advertisements or special discounts on the website.

This could also be a source of revenue for the Chamber.

- **Communicate**

The online community, can enable improved communication and information dissemination with the members through blogs, forums, wiki and collaboration pages and micro-blogging features. Quizzes and surveys can allow the Chamber to take survey of members on preferences easily.

- **Find an employee**

Generally, the process of hiring an employee is costly for an individual businesses. The Poona Merchants Chamber can facilitate the process by allowing the members to post job openings in the website.

- **Help the members to educate themselves**

Important information can be uploaded on the website. Also, various government laws, rules, regulations could also be uploaded on the website. Information about various other fields in which the members can expand their business can also be regularly posted, so that interested members can access it.

- **Showcase the Members**

Through the online community, the Poona Merchants Chamber can offer no-cost ways for members to publicize and promote the following important aspects of their businesses:

- a. new product introductions
- b. accolades & awards
- c. special offers
- d. Important events organised.

- **Reaching out to those cancelling memberships**

If possible, the Chamber could reach out to those cancelling their memberships and ask them what would've made them stay. This would help the Chamber to gain valuable information and feedback, which could help to improve its working.

- **Creating a Community Calendar**

A Community Calendar could be made which would showcase

- a. Upcoming Chamber events.
- b. Upcoming Members' events.
- c. Other community events.

- **Showcasing the successes and accomplishments of the Chamber**

The successes and accomplishments of the Poona Merchants Chamber could also be showcased on the website.

**(vi) Maintaining the personal touch**

However, the Chamber must not ignore the personal touch, in addition to the online presence.

## **8.12 Suggestions to the government/ Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee, Pune to enhance the level of performance of the wholesale grocery business**

### **a. Providing proper infrastructure in the Market Yard**

The APMC must provide the necessary infrastructure in the Market Yard like proper roads, proper lighting, compound wall, institution of security, cold storage, proper drainage facilities, general cleanliness and other facilities to smoothen the day-to-day working in the Market yard. Proper quality control food laboratory should also be constructed in the APMC premises.

### **b. Regularization of side sheds of shops of traders**

When the traders had negotiation with the government, it was found that it was possible to regularize the side sheds of the shops in the Market yard. But the Pune APMC has not done it yet. The APMC should regularize the side sheds of the traders as per the prevailing norms.

### **c. Abolishing illegal retailers and wholesalers in the Market Yard**

Illegal retailers and wholesalers in the Market yard who are operating without a license should be removed, so that the genuine traders can conduct their business smoothly.

### **d. Solve the problem of traffic jams**

Proper planning should be made in co-ordination with the Municipal Corporation and the traffic police department to solve the problems of traffic jams in the Market yard. New roads or flyovers or proper traffic management can be done for this purpose.

### **e. Providing internet facility to the licensed traders in the Market Yard**

The wholesale grocery traders deal with suppliers who are spread all over India. In order to communicate with them, internet facility is absolutely necessary. In addition, financial transactions can also be conducted easily and conveniently using internet. Thus the APMC should provide this facility to all the licensed traders and operators in the Market yard.

**f. Shedding the unwarranted obsession for the removal of middlemen in the supply chain of agricultural items**

In recent years, the government has adopted the stand of removing all the middlemen in the distribution channel of agricultural commodities, as it is believed that they are responsible for the price rise in agricultural commodities, particularly grocery items. But the government should realize that these middlemen provide place and time utility to the grocery items and thus they play an important role in routing the grocery items from the farmer to the ultimate consumer. Also the trading activity provides employment to a large section of the population. Hence the government should take these traders into confidence and consider their opinions while framing policies relating to the trade in agricultural items particular grocery items. The government must shed the unwarranted obsession for the removal of middlemen in the supply chain of agricultural items.

In addition, the government should not always hold the traders responsible for increase in the prices of agricultural commodities. For example, in the recent case of increase in the prices of 'tur'dal, its prices increased on account of low production, ( as the farmers opt for the farming of cash crops like sugarcane, cotton and soyabean instead of pulses). The traders were held responsible for increase in prices.

**g. The government must consider the opinions of traders and stakeholders before framing laws and ground realities of the wholesale grocery trade must be considered.**

Many times, the Poona Merchants Chamber has undertaken representation before the government regarding the actual ground realities of agricultural products in the context of laws. For example, change in definition of jaggery used for producing alcohol, and that used for edible purpose ( black jaggery) before the government in the year 2000. Here the traders had to make representation to change the definition of extent of a chemical 'hydros' allowed in the production of jaggery (Ref. Table no. 7.32 for Initiatives undertaken by the Poona Merchants Chamber for improving the 'structure' and 'systems' of wholesale grocery business in Pune city) . Such issues would not arise if the concerned stakeholders or traders are taken into confidence before framing laws.

Also, many stock limits of wholesale grocery items have also been imposed, which are not realistic. In addition, the government must introduce decentralization in certain rules of the Maharashtra APMC Act. The Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee of a particular

region should be given the power to frame certain rules, which would be applicable to that region only. This would enable certain changes to be introduced at the local level to fulfil the needs and solve problems of traders and other players at that level only.

#### **h. Simplification of documentation involved as per the provisions of various laws**

In the year 2011-12, there were some changes in the provisions of the Shop & Establishments Act, a form of 157 questions was introduced for taking new licence and renewal of licence. In this context, the Poona Merchants Chamber had to make representation before the government, due to which this form today consists only of 13 questions. Thus the government must simplify the documentation involved as per the provisions of various laws. This would enable the trader to actually concentrate on his business activity.

#### **i. Proactive steps to smoothen internal trade along with international trade**

The government should take proactive steps to smoothen internal trade along with international trade. Undue interference, outdated laws or laws which are out of touch with the ground realities of a particular trade should be removed.

**The table given on the next page gives a gist of the suggestions for the Poona Merchants Chamber**



**Table no. 8.6 Table showing the Suggestions for Poona Merchants Chamber**

<b>1. Representation function</b>	<b>2. Information function</b>	<b>3. Common Service function</b>
<p><b>Representation for</b></p> <p>(i) Simplification of procedure for obtaining and renewal of license for operating in the Market Yard and also for transfer of license to successor</p> <p>(ii) Removal of cess on sale</p> <p>(iii) Making the Market area Wi-Fi enabled</p> <p>(iv) Improving the infrastructure in the Market Yard</p> <p>(v) Abolishing illegal retail sales in the Market Yard</p> <p>(vi) Expansion and growth of the Wholesale Grocery Business</p>	<p><b>Information about</b></p> <p>(i) Provisions of the current APMC Act and changes therein</p> <p>(ii) Businesses related to the wholesale grocery business</p> <p>(iii) Taxation aspects of the wholesale grocery business</p> <p>(iv) Documentation involved under the provisions of various laws</p> <p>(v) Creditworthiness of the members</p>	<p>(i) Providing Wi-Fi facility in the Market Yard</p> <p>(ii) Solving the problems of infrastructure in the Market Yard</p> <p>(iii) Starting Informal Employment Exchange</p>

**Table no. 8.6 Table showing the Suggestions for Poona Merchants Chamber (continued)**

<b>4. Promotion of wholesale Grocery Business</b>	<b>5.Social Service</b>	<b>6. Image Building and maintaining cordial relations with other trade associations and chambers of Commerce</b>	<b>7. Other suggestions</b>
<p>(i) Guidance about the new opportunities arising because of changes in the APMC Act and how to cash on them.</p> <p>(ii) Organization of Trade fairs and Exhibitions.</p> <p>(iii) Providing information about exports.</p> <p>(iv) Providing help in arranging Finance.</p> <p>(v) Creation of Virtual Trading Platform for Grocery items.</p> <p>(vi) Maintaining co-ordination and unity among the members.</p> <p>(vii) Providing individual attention to each category of items in the wholesale grocery business.</p>	<p>(i) Promotion of Commerce Education.</p> <p>(ii) Continuation of existing programs of providing social service.</p> <p>(iii) Concentrate on corporate orders of ‘Ladoos’ for the ‘Ladoo-Chivda Program’.</p> <p>(iv) Increase the geographical scope of the ‘Ladoo-Chivda Program.’</p>	<p>(i) Continuing the existing programs of image building.</p> <p>(ii) Ensuring ‘visibility’ of the Poona Merchants Chamber.</p> <p>(iii) Publicity of goal attainment.</p> <p>(iv) Use of information technology to improve the relations and co-ordination with other trade associations and Chambers of Commerce.</p>	<p>(i) Efforts to stop hoarding amongst the traders.</p> <p>(ii) Liasion with social and educational institutions.</p> <p>(iii) Adoption of Professional style of working.</p> <p>(iv) Increase in the Membership fee.</p> <p>(v) Special efforts to increase the number of members.</p> <p>(vi) Enhancing the participation of a large number of members in the working.</p> <p>(vii) Adoption of new infrastructure.</p> <p>(viii) Adoption of new technology (Establishment of private online community).</p> <p>(ix) Creating a Community Calendar.</p> <p>(x) Showcasing the successes and accomplishments of the Chamber.</p> <p>(xi) Maintaining the personal touch.</p>

### **8.13 Suggestions regarding certain business terms used in the wholesale grocery business in Pune city**

In course of the research, the researcher made several visits to the wholesale grocery market at Market yard. During the interaction with the wholesale grocery traders, the researcher found certain words and phrases belonging to some regional languages, which were commonly used by the traders. Such terms had a specific meaning associated with the wholesale grocery business. The researcher then compiled a list of 50 such terms and their meanings, which have been given in the appendix. These terms were then given to the Dean of the Commerce Faculty, Savitribai Phule Pune University as well as the Principals of other Commerce colleges like Symbiosis Commerce College and B.M. College of Commerce, Pune.

The objective behind this was that the terms could be taught to students of commerce as a part of local business terms used in the wholesale grocery business. The knowledge of these terms would also help the students to understand the nuances of this business in a better way. In this way, the researcher has made an attempt to enhance the social contribution and relevance of the research.

### **8.14 Future of the Research Work**

There are a number of Chambers of Commerce and Trade associations all over the nation and in the state of Maharashtra. The contribution of such Chambers and associations is very important in the economic development of the nation. Hence, based on this study, similar research work can be conducted about the role and contribution of other Chambers of Commerce, Trade associations or Merchant Chambers in the nation.

**Table no.8.7 Table showing fulfillment of Objectives of Research**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Chapter no.</b>
To study the organization and working of Poona Merchants Chamber	4, 5
To evaluate the role and contribution of Poona Merchants Chamber in terms of (i) Protecting the interest of members. (ii) Representing before the government in policy making. (iii) Undertaking activities for member education and providing a common platform for members. (iv) Social contribution.	7, 8
3. To enlist the various problems faced by the Poona Merchants Chamber.	7, 8
4. To suggest measures to address these problems and enhance the level of performance of the wholesale grocery business.	8