CHAPTER - IX
RECOMMENDATIONS

The various laws passed by the government and the active involvement of NGOs have hastened the consumer movement and has helped the consumers to raise their voice against the malpractices carried out blatantly by the manufactures, wholesalers and retailers. However, some lacunae continue to exist in the whole system, which is not favourable to the consumers. Therefore, there is a need to look for further actions, which can make a difference to the consumers. In this context, it is hoped that the following suggestions can help to protect the consumers and lead them to speedy redressal of their complaints.

After conducting the workshop, it was realised that consumer education should form a part of school syllabus from class VIII onwards. The curriculum for education should focus on topics related to consumer rights, especially in the field of textiles. This should include such areas like, fabric contents, care symbols, textile labelling, importance of basic finishes, knowledge about consumer protection laws etc. Seminars should also be organized regularly to educate the parents in parent – teacher meetings. They must be made aware about redressal mechanisms, consumer forum, and role of NGOs in offering their support in solving the various textiles related problems. Alongwith this, active consumer clubs should become part of other activities in all educational institutions. Membership in this club should be open to the students, parents and the teachers, who can share their experiences and can fight together in solving their common problems. In very recent times some consumer clubs have been formed in some educational institutions but these club have yet to become that active.

Street plays which have become very popular amongst younger generations these days should also be held in different sectors, educational institutions, shopping complexes, parks and localities to educate consumers about their rights as consumers and more so as textile consumers. Clothing being one of the basic necessities, it has been rightly called the second skin of a person, conveys more about the person to an onlooker, much before he opens his mouth to introduce himself. In every household budget, especially in India, a major chunk of one’s income is spent on meeting the
clothing requirements of the family after providing for food and shelter. Hence self-help group or voluntary consumer association can be formed in colonies to educate people as well as help them in speedy redressal in case of complaints.

Media is playing a positive role in bringing awareness among consumers. But more articles, news reports and advertisements on consumer rights should be given paramount importance. Separate columns on consumer complaints and resolved cases should be published regularly in all leading newspapers. This would help consumers to realise that all is not lost, if they want to get redressal for their complaints.

Government has passed many laws to penalise the defaulters but laws have many loopholes and defaulters get away easily. Strict legal action should be taken against them and they should be fined heavily in case of malpractices. The people who are expected to execute the provisions of the law should be more alert and take actions as and when necessary.

Consumer’s Day celebration i.e. 15th of March every year should be given wide publicity. Quiz and slogan competitions in educational institutions will also help in bringing awareness about consumer laws and their rights to masses. NGOs can provide help in this direction but they presumably lack funds. These organisations should be helped monetarily by the government to set up testing laboratories and also to establish library to provide information to the consumer with, ready reference, etc.

Giving and taking a cash memo in all purchases should be made compulsory. Strict provisions should be provided in the laws for this purpose. There should not be any conditions for getting a cash memo, since it is believed by the consumer that they have to pay more for taking a cash memo. Maximum Retail Price printed on labels should be inclusive of all taxes. Since government has implemented VAT (Value Added Tax) they should take steps to give knowledge to consumers and also retailers (who are also consumers) through proper advertisements on radio and television, prime slides in cinema halls and also by putting up hoardings at commercial and shopping complexes and malls. Retailers should have complete knowledge themselves to pass the correct information to their customers. They should also put up placards in their shops informing the customers about VAT and its addition to their purchase bills.
In case of defect or any complaint, consumers generally do not go in for redressal. They do not know that it is their right to know such information like the fabric composition. As per textile commissioner’s notification, it is mandatory for the retailers to let the consumer know the percentage of the blend or the mixture fibre, which is used. Thus a consumer has a right to know what they are buying. They should be sure of their purchase, before making payment whether it is a manmade or a natural fibre. It should be the prerogative of the consumer to choose the right fabric, most suitable to their skin/body, from the vast variety available in the markets, to avoid any kind of allergy or skin problem.

In a country like India, with hot and humid climate, man made fabrics can be worn comfortably only for a specific period of time in a year. Unfortunately markets are flooded with fabrics, which are most uncomfortable to wear in hot and humid climatic conditions. Consumers are left to choose between colour and print without much change in the quality or composition of the fabric. So close is the texture and feel of these fabrics with each other that it is difficult to differentiate between natural and manmade fabrics, even by an expert in the field of textiles. Cheaper fibres are substituted in place of expensive natural fibres simply to add to the profits of manufacturers without keeping in mind the comfort of end users. Consumers who are neither aware nor organized fear losing time and their patience by approaching consumer forums. They are also not sure of their grievance being attended to, so they prefer going to other shops in another market. Consumers should be motivated to confront the shopkeepers in case of complaints. This can be done only when they are assured of solutions to their problems. Here again strict legal action against the defaulters can go a long way in approaching the Consumer Forums or any other grievance settling machinery. Single window system will help solve their grievances quickly.

Visual media is the best means to convince both literate and illiterate consumers. Short documentary films before starting a film or during the interval in theatres will also go long way to increase the awareness among consumers.

Consumers can be assumed to be synonymous with the citizens of India who demand that in the largest democracy of the world they should be given their due rights as consumers of civil rights in their country. The importance to be given to a
consumer requires ample research and study, which has been the motive of this exercise. In a country, which is predicted to reach the world as a super power in future times, the consumer’s position is yet to be given its due. Each person should strive to bring about awareness about whichever field he or she works in.

In the end I would like to say that various organisations have been formed for consumers. Government has passed various laws for consumers’ benefit, but efforts made by these organisations are yet to solve the major problems of the consumers. They need to work in coordination and with dedication. They should be made accountable for their work and there should be complete transparency as far as their accounts are concerned, to gain the confidence of the people and their sponsors.

It is hoped that this research will help in improving and highlighting the buying practices of the consumer to their satisfaction.

It is strongly recommended that government should add a chapter in NCERT books on Consumerism and VAT at 10+2 level as one of the sections in books of environmental science. At middle school level a chapter on information regarding care symbols and informative labels should also be added.

The point that I wish to make is that consumer awareness ensures a higher quality of living and we as consumers must make an effort to be given what we pay for and not be indifferent toward our rights.

Usefulness of the study

- Present study has the potential of becoming an eye opener for all those who want to make every citizen of Chandigarh an intelligent buyer, who would not be satisfied with whatever he is talked in to buy, by the retailers.
- The study also throws light on the fact that only a smaller percentage of consumers in Chandigarh are becoming aware of their rights as consumers but the most literate and elite society still remains indifferent as ‘textile consumers’.
- Similarly retailers though still carrying out the age old tactics of measuring less and not divulging the correct information to buyers have begun to realise the
The study has also thrown light on retailers attitude towards consumers in handling their complaints and giving them refund or replacement. It also shows that in smaller retail outlets there was more of one to one and personal relationship with the customers. These shopkeepers were quick to settle the complaints by refunding the cost amount or replacing the goods. Reverse was seen in case of owners of big showrooms and retail outlets. They compensated their customers only if they got replacement or some instructions to do so from the manufacturers or whose franchise they were representing. On their own they gave replacement, refund or discount to only those who were old and regular customers or personal friends. To others they politely refused compensation of any kind. Therefore, there is a greater need for commitment on the part of the sellers towards their customers.

**Question to be explored for future studies**

Though light of awareness regarding redressal of textile products is kindled in the minds of the literate and elite citizen of Chandigarh the city beautiful, but it was disheartening to learn from the empirical data that very few have actually approached redressal agencies for compensation. Thus, keeping all above points in mind, the researcher recommends the following aspects on which further studies can be carried out in future.

- There is an urgent need to explore the reasons of such passive *attitude* and indifferent *behaviour* of these residents.
- A research may be planned to develop different ways to impart effective knowledge regarding redressal of textile products to consumers of different age group.
- Workshops may be planned to educate consumers and studies may be undertaken to compare awareness levels between rural and urban populations, regarding their purchases of textile products.
- Similar studies can be planned in other towns/cities, keeping age and sex as comparable parameters.
Retailers’ awareness and attitude towards consumers may be studied in smaller towns and rural areas. It is very important that retailers should realise and know it for sure, that redressal does not mean, punishment / harassment to them. On the contrary it builds a healthy relationship with their consumers.

A study can be planned to understand the manufacturers’ psyche, of large and small-scale units towards consumers and extent of their abiding by the textile commissioner’s regulations to produce quality fabrics and readymades of standard sizes.