FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

The Garment trade is undergoing metamorphosis. Dealers no more lead industry fashions. It is consumers who do. So, let the industry march forward into the laps of consumers who will dictate the shape of things to come. Consumer tastes are changing from the traditional to the modern. The traditional is now reserved especially for festive occasion or for family occasion.

In an increasingly politically correct world, men are finally changing. And the first whiffs are felt in their shirts and trousers. As man-style evolves and men increasingly shop around like women, the branded apparel market is sizzling and undergoing nothing short of a revolution, with marketers continuously pausing to lick their burnt fingers.

According to consultancy firm KSA Technopak; the branded readymade menswear market is worth over Rs. 5,000 crore a year. Shirts account for 35 per cent of this and trousers, 15 per cent. And growing at an annual average of seven percent and 13 per cent respectively, with the consumer driving changes. The NCAER predicts that over the next three years, 25 million more households will join the 55 million now earning over Rs. 90,000 a year. Most of these will queue up for luxury items like a stitched shirt or pants. KSA estimates a 5-15 per cent increase in the market size of apparel every year the next 10 years.
Nabankur Gupta of Raymond Apparel Ltd. (RAL) opines that the Indian male is thinking like a woman. Today he is reshuffling and expanding his wardrobe, looking beyond the light blue-gray-beige spectrum to peach, pink and mauve, bright checks and indigos. Old-fashioned yardage has given way to lycra and experiments with different fits. Vikram Rao of Madura Garments sees men gradually buying into lifestyles. All this may have led to fashion casualties like broad-toed shoes being worn with narrow-bottomed trousers, but overall it spells plumper bottomlines for apparel makers. But these bottomlines are also getting tougher to achieve. Quality and brand value now occupy centrestage. Apparel today competes with other accessories like mobile phones and travel packages.

FINDINGS

From the analysis of the data in the preceding chapter, following findings have been drawn. For the purpose of clarity findings have been grouped as under.

✦ Clothes Generally Preferred:

The Indian consumer today wants different and new merchandise at shorter intervals complimented by a great shopping experience through five star ambience and quality service. These desires are arising from 'learnt drives' such as striving for social approval through external attributes of status.
The buyers are therefore turning towards readymade garments. They prefer to choose from much wider variety of reputed brand names. The trends in society change quickly and buyer acts accordingly. The reinforcement factor spelt out in the 'Pavlovian model of consumer behavior plays its role here.

The window displays in the shops showing ready-mades of latest designs and fashions act as a 'stimuli' prompting a buyer towards a quicker buying decision.

In the Pavlovian Learning model 'Learning' is changes in behavior which occur by practice and is based on previous experience. This change in behavior is also influenced by some 'non-triggering cues'; specifically product cues like packing, price, styling and Informational cues like advertisements, sales promotion, peer group influence, suggestions of sales personnel etc.

The findings of this study confirm the role of informational and product cues in the buying behavior of a buyer of readymade garments. While advertisements and sales promotions are found to play a significant role as informational cues price and styling act as strong product cues in this case.
Buying Motives:

It has been noticed that the growing awareness regarding certain factors play a deciding role in purchase of garments. These factors are the inputs as per Howarth-Sheth Model and non-triggering cues of Pavlovian Learning Model.

The inputs are provided by three types of stimuli viz. the physical tangible characteristics of the product like price, shop ambience and varieties available in the shop act as significative stimuli whereas quality, brand name and distinctiveness act as symbolic stimuli of the Howarth-Sheth Model.

As one lives in society, buying habits are governed by factors like approval and appreciation of society and also following of fashion trends. This is the social stimuli provided by family, friends and social groups. But this has come true for the younger generation and executive class.

For the older generation, the non-triggering cues of Pavlovian Learning Model like personalized treatment given by shop keeper or any gift offered by him matters. These people prefer shops offering such privileges.
Preference Perception:

As seen, the trend of readymade garments is gripping the market and also the buyer. But when individual is considered each person has his own reasons for preference. These are same as significative and symbolic stimuli of Howarth- Sheth Model of consumer behavior.

The prime reasons for preference of readymade garments i.e. significative stimuli are easy availability of the product and styles, perfect fitting, choice of wide variety in colors where as quality and price combination act as symbolic stimuli.

Some other perceptions like assurance of good quality, status symbol and time saving are also important, influencing the repeat purchase of branded ready-mades. This can be illustrated as follows: satisfaction arising out of use reinforces purchase decisions leading to repeat buying.

The findings of "Measuring the value of quality for apparel manufacturing" by Karnes, Carol Lynn (1991) are also supportive to this in which potential customers were interviewed to assess their perceptions of product quality for men's shirts. Quality was found to have a significant impact on consumer's perceived value. As the quality rating increased, the price a customer was willing to pay also increased. The order of importance of quality features were as follows:
appearance, durability, quality, image, fit, comfort, reliability and garment care.

- **Brand Awareness:**

  The brands of Madura Garments have extremely high level of awareness among the people. Brands of Arvind Mills and Raymond are also well recalled by the people. This high level of awareness was because of ad spends of these companies which resulted in high recall by the respondents. While Madura Garments spent Rs. 250 crores on advertising in the year 2002 the same for Raymond was Rs. 140 crores and for Arvind Mills was Rs. 80 crores (Pal Abir, Rajah of Retail, Business Today, Vol. 14, No. 5, Feb. 28- March 13, Varshnei, K-9, 2003, Connaught Cirrus, New Delhi).

- **Use and Purchase Pattern:**

  The Howarth-Sheth Model of consumer behavior opines that inputs are necessary for decision-making. These inputs are provided by significative stimuli i.e. price, quality, distinctiveness and services rendered; symbolic stimuli i.e. comparison and evaluation of the price and quality of different brands of product and social stimuli which are provided by family, friends, social groups and social classes. Thus one can see people using branded readymade garments for formal wear. On the other hand for special party wear people were reluctant
to buy branded ready-mades. They rather opted for stitched ones. This is the result of social stimuli provided by family, friends and social groups. Buying habits are governed by the approval and appreciation of the society in which one lives. Hence for daily wear as well as casual wear too considerable number of people preferred branded readymade garments.

The significative stimuli that are physical and tangible characteristics of the product like price, quality, distinctiveness, services rendered and availability of the product are essential for making buying decisions. Majority of buyers prefer purchasing garments from exclusive company shops. People also preferred specialized garment shops considering the variety available. Comparatively less number of buyers preferred exhibitions, departmental stores or any garment shop. Those who were regular buyers of readymade garments and not price conscious always visited their regular choice shop and bought garments which met their requirements without pre-deciding a budget. Symbolic stimuli which include perception of individual show that there are some price conscious buyers who have pre-decided budgets. Thus we see that it is price to some extent and privileges offered by shop that affect buying decision and not a particular brand. In short it can be said that shop loyalty and not brand loyalty is a significant trail of buyer of readymade garments.
Brand Loyalty:

While taking a buying decision a buyer processes and interprets the information received by him/her. As per Engel- Blackwell- Kollat Model of buyer behavior; central control unit does this by four psychological factors:

i) Storing information from past experience about the product, which serves as a standard for comparing other products and brands.

ii) Evaluative criteria that could be different for different individuals.

iii) Attitudes or the state of mind which changes from time to time, and helps in choosing the product and

iv) The personality of the consumer that guides him/her to make a choice suiting his/her personality.

In accordance to factor (i) majority of respondents of the study insisted on buying a specific branded garment. As per factor (ii), (iii) and (iv), if a preferred brand was not available at the time of purchase a buyer does not hesitate to choose any other brand which meets his/her requirements. A very minor percentage was highly brand loyal. The market is flooded with many brands offering more or less similar choice. Resultantly buyers using their own evaluating criteria tend towards brand switching.
Price Perception:

In the Howarth-Sheth Model, consumer behavior is described as a complex process. The model also says that the concepts of learning, perception and attitudes influence consumer behavior.

According to perceptual and learning constructs the consumer receives the stimuli and interprets it. To be particular: in spite of MRP quoted on the packing of readymade garments many people are of the opinion that readymade garments are available below printed MRP. They then bargain with the shop keeper as they feel that the MRP quoted is too high and that it has been artificially jacked up. This shows a negative price perception of buyers towards printed MRPs.

Two factors that influence this interpretation are stimulus-ambiguity and perceptual bias. These two terms can be explained more clearly as follows: stimulus ambiguity occurs when a consumer cannot interpret or fully understand the meaning of stimuli he/she has received and does not know how to respond. Likewise perceptual bias occurs when an individual distorts the information according to his/her needs and experiences.

One of the conclusion of this study is that majority of people prefer buying from the shop offering a discount. Though there is a general opinion that such shops do not reveal the correct price and that the
prices at discount offering shops are manipulated. In spite of all this, majority of people show a preference towards purchasing readymade garments during promotional schemes.

- **Preference Towards Wrinkle Free Garment:**

  Consumer behavior is explained in the Nicosia model on the basis of four fields.

  Field one consists of products and firm's attribute and also consumer attitude which is affected by exposure to various information and messages.

  In field two the consumer searches and evaluates the options and gets motivated to buy a product. Thus acting in these two fields job requirements and lifestyles have made people to use 'maintenance hassle free' clothes. Most of the respondents have shown inclination towards wrinkle free garments.

  Field three and four show purchase behavior and consumption of product respectively. Thus on getting satisfactory feedback many customers are now regular buyers of wrinkle free garments.

- **Information Searching and Media Influence:**

  Word-of-mouth and salesmen advice have been listed by majority of respondents as the main source of information search and decision making. However, advertisements are also an important source of the
same. 'Recall and awareness' of ads was high among respondents. Non
triggering cues of the Pavlovian Learning Model play their role here.

It was also found that people were not particular about knowing the
exact slogans or bottom lines of particular brands. The effect of
advertising clutter on recall of slogans and bottom lines was clear.
Although buyers revealed an attraction towards advertisements they
don't seem to pay much attention to space advertising (outdoor banners
and hoardings) for readymade garments. However, the respondents
were aware of the existence of the exclusive showrooms of few brands
in the city.

The findings of this study confirm the role of informational cues in
the buying behavior of a buyer. Advertisements, sales promotion,
talking to other people and suggestions of sales personnel are found
to play a significant role as informational cues.

- **Deciding Factors and Influencers:**

  Maximum respondents showed preference for taking a companion with
them while buying a readymade garment. This companion mostly
happened to be his/her spouse or friend. The buyer always preferred
a second opinion before making a purchase decision.

  It was also seen that though the final purchase decision rested with
the buyer he/she sought for someone's advice.
The exogenous or external variables play their role. Though these do not play a very significant role neither do they directly influence the decision process. This can be explained by the decision of those buyers who considered fixed price policy as a hurdle in their buying decision. This group of buyers included those who were either financially weak or were dependant on someone else. Thus one sees that exogenous variables like importance of purchase and financial status influence the consumer indirectly and vary from one consumer to another.

Perception Towards International Brands:  
The superiority of international brands over national brands was perceived by some respondents because of following reasons: their luxurious texture, superior quality and because these brands are looked upon as a status symbol. This is the result of evaluation criteria of Input, Process and Output model. The consumer tries to get more information about the product (international brand of readymade garment), compares and contrasts it with the national brands and if the buyer develops the intention to buy a foreign brand because of reasons mentioned above the same then play a vital role during the purchasing process.

Perception Towards Self-Grooming:  
People have become very conscious towards self image. This occurs because of drives which stem from physiological needs and
psychological needs. Because of learned drives such as striving for status or social approval the buyers use different accessories to maintain their 'look better' image.

The findings of this study also confirm the role of Product awareness as spelt in Input, Process and Output model. Product awareness can be had from advertisements or exposure to different types of media. This study clearly demonstrates the overriding influence of advertising on buying decisions in product category under study as well as on brand building. Advertising greatly influences buyers buying decision in favor of a particular brand.

The study also confirmed the sway the media has over buying decisions of people and the price and shop where the particular garment is available.

The findings of the study "A methodology for consumer style preference testing of apparel at the product development level." (appearing in review of literature) are also quite similar to the findings that there is a significant difference between opinion of respondents groups regarding the variables such as age, education, employment status, occupations, styles preferred, fashion feelings, criteria for purchase decision, opinions of store salesmen, availability of desired styles and price considerations.
SUGGESTIONS

- As customers are shifting from tailor-made shirts to readymade shirts and the main reasons for it are brand name, advertisement and price, marketers should emphasise on remarkable advertisements. In a market flooded with products and advertisements of the same, a buyer gets confused while taking a decision. A distinct ad will help in making a place in the mind of the buyer.

- Use of POP will play a strategic role. However, as POP will capture the transaction at the store level only, in order to capture the total purchase behaviour, marketers should establish consumer panels.

- Shoppers in the age group 25 to 45 years are the most demanding ones and like to choose stores which deliver all the dimensions. Hence proximity of the store ambience, merchandise and service provided should be given special attention.

- The neglect of men in consumer decision making process as far as garments is considered is lamentable because they are an important shopping group and are likely to make shopping decisions differently from women. They are store loyal, low price seeking & time energy conserving. It is suggested that retailers should appeal to their buyers by improving the efficiency of the shopping process and value perceptions when dealing with male shoppers.
Those customers who buy on impulse rather than on need were more socially involved, more involved with fashion and likely to buy prestigious clothing item. This group should be specially taken care of.

Gender of celebrity influences consumer perceptions irrespective of consumers gender. It is celebrities influence in terms of achievements and image which accounts for greater influence. Hence use of celebrity should be done carefully.

As personal experience and word of mouth play a significant role in purchase decision marketers should utilize these tools by establishing an effective mechanism of feedback about the garment on various factors so as to improve the overall performance.

Attention should be paid to the factors which are on top of the list of differentiating criteria so that marketers can utilize these factors to differentiate their brands from others.

Many people seek salesmen advice before purchasing a garment. Hence marketer should use salesmen as medium of publicity of brand. For this trainings should be organized to high height god and distinct features of the readymade branded garment.
The findings should also be kept in mind while deciding promotional strategies as media plays a vital role in the purchase decision process of garments.

As women's western wear is another segment that is likely to see action the prominent male brands should pay attention to this sector too.