CHAPTER II
TEXTILE INDUSTRY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

In an environment of competitive market, the success of every industry largely depends on how precisely it can understand the target consumers. Because, such an understanding is the sole means to translate the needs and wants of the prospective consumers into products or services. Regarding textiles, understanding consumer is the nucleus of its production and marketing, as clothing is the manifestation of the behavioural aspects of the wearer in its totality. To make it more clear, the decision regarding buying and using textiles is the reflection of the rational behaviour of consumers.

The amazing and amusing aspect of the rational behaviour is its 'dynamism' - which is conspicuous because of its magnitude. It is worth noting here the opinion of Michael De Montaigne 'There never were in the world two opinions alike, no more than two hairs or two grains: the most universal quality is diversity' (Montaigne, Michael De, 1915). The dynamism of rational behaviour postulates the formulation and the reformulation of approach, outlook or perception in respect of every sphere of human activity including consumption. A sagacious marketer, therefore, has to convince himself that his products / services and strategies are in line with the dynamic marketing environment.

'Marketing is the 'whole business' from the viewpoint of its final result, that is, from the consumer - point- of- view' (Drucker, P.F, 1973). Unless a deliberate attempt is made by the marketers to analyze and understand the behavioural
aspects of the target consumers, there will hardly be any parity between production and consumption. 'The study of consumer behaviour began when marketers realized that consumers did not always act or react as marketing theory suggested they would' (Schiffman, G.L and Kanuk, L.L, 2002).

Consumer

It is expedient to examine the concept of consumer before discerning the behaviour of the consumer. Who can be a consumer? Can children be considered consumers? Should it be an individual? These probing questions call for a more realistic as well as pragmatic interpretation of the term consumer. Children are generally regarded to be incapable of making independent decisions and in that sense they cannot be labelled as consumers or a consumer unit. However, from the perspective of 'user status', they are the end users of articles like toys, story books; hence they can be considered consumers at par. When an individual purchases food or clothing for his family, he may be more concerned about the welfare of his family than about his personal welfare or interest. As the available resources have been utilized for consuming goods/services for the family, it can be designated as a consumer unit. 'A consumer unit is one or more persons who collectively generate income and allocate it for consumption among the members of the unit' (Eastwood, D.B, 1985).

To make it more clear, the terminology consumer unit connotes households, which include individuals, families and those who are living together.

Peripherally, consumer behaviour denotes the response of individuals/household to different situations/conditions in respect of marketing of goods
and services. Nothing can be substantially evolved for strategic decision in marketing management, if the concept of consumer behaviour remains as a mere response in the corpus of knowledge. Recalling a handful of widely used definitions seem to be indispensable to get a bird's-eye view of the concept of consumer behaviour.

**Definitions of Consumer Behaviour**

'Consumer behaviour is the study of human response to products or services and the marketing of products and services' (Kardes, F.R, 2002).

'Consumer behaviour is the behaviour that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating products or services and ideas that they expect will satisfy their needs' (Schiffman, G.L and Kanuk, L.L, 2002).

'Consumer behaviour refers to the buying behaviour of final consumers – individuals and households' (Kotler, Philip and Armstrong, Garry, 1985).

'Consumer behaviour is the behaviour of the ultimate consumers, those who purchase products for personal or household use, not for business purpose' (Ferrell, O.C and Pride, W.M, 1989).

'The act of individuals/households in obtaining and using goods and services including the decision processes that pervade and determine those acts' (Rathor, B.S, 1998).

The cited definitions lay emphasis on the clause that the applicability of the term consumer behaviour is completely confined to the 'ultimate consumers'.
Overwhelmingly, it is associated with the decision-making process with regard to buying and using products or services.

**Consumer Decision-Making Process**

The words of 'Napoleon I' – 'nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide' (Schiffman, G.L and Kanuk, L.L 2002) tell us that the decision-making process stands as a colossus among the routine phenomena in everyday life of people. Consumers make decisions for deriving the expected level of satisfaction by purchasing products or consuming services. Manufactures as well as marketers are found to be inquisitive to understand and analyze the consumer decision-making process, as it portends the fate of a product or service in the prevailing market environment. 'Cost' and 'utility' of the target product or service are the 'dyadic conditions' which pervade every consumer decision-making process. Obviously, it varies from context to context and household to household. However, a typological approach may be made in the categorization of the consumer decision-making process.

Although the consumer decision-making process varies considerably, they can be included in one of the three categories: 'routine response behaviour, limited decision-making' and 'extensive decision making' (Howard, J. A and Shethu, J. N, 1969). The routine response behaviour is associated with frequently purchased articles and the consumers make the decisions spontaneously. The limited decision making is applicable in the context of occasional buying. And the consumers are increasingly interested in gathering the needful information so as to make the appropriate decision. When unfamiliar and infrequently bought products have become the target, the consumers adopt the policy of "think-
"twice before you leap" and hence very keen in information – search and processing in order to avoid the post purchase dissonance.

‘Joint decisions’ and ‘individual decisions’ are the later additions to the classification of consumer decision-making process. The former represents group involvement while the latter denotes involvement of a single individual in the decision-making process. ‘Joint decision-making is different from individual decision-making not only in terms of the unit but also in terms of the process itself’ (Park, W.C, 1982).

‘Many major consumer decisions are arrived at by consultation or give-and-take among group members’ (Katonah, G, 1980). And there are several stages in the consumer decision-making process for deriving the expected level of satisfaction.

**Stages in Consumer Decision-Making Process**

Every consumer decision-making process is the meridian of several phasic stages. These stages are ‘problem or need-recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and post-purchase-evaluation’ (Ferrell, O.C and Pride, W.M, 1989). Both the personal and the non-personal aspects of consumers may influence each stage in the decision-making process.

Where there is a discrepancy between the desired condition and the actual condition, the consumers locate a problem to be solved or a need to be satisfied. Economic advancement, change in the stages of lifecycle, technological development and socio-cultural environment are the major contributory factors
that may arouse the urge for solving a problem or satisfying a need. Besides, factors like market environment and promotion campaigns of marketers are instrumental to accelerating the process of problem-solving or need-satisfaction.

Awareness of a problem induces the consumers to search for information. Product features, brand, seller and price are the major subjects, which are to be analysed with the help of the information obtained from the various sources. Now-a-days, consumers have been hugged by information explosion; particularly by the coverage given by the mass media. 'Consumers use decision rules to cope with exposure to too much information or information overload' (Owen, R.S and Hargtved, P.C, 1993). If consumers are provided with too much information at a given point of time, it exceeds their processing limits.

Exposure to information takes the consumers to the world of different product alternatives. Consumers are usually pre-conditioned by setting a plethora of characteristic features of the target product in their mind. In order to get a multi-dimensional picture of the target product, they may even consider the opinions and viewpoints of others. 'Consumers are especially like to note information and to avoid product or brand that receives negative evaluations' (Ami, A.S and Schiffman, G, L, 1986). 'When making a purchase—decision, consumers must judge the relative values of various alternatives' (Puto, C.P, 1987). If the known products or brands are not corresponding to the rating, the consumers may go in for further search.

After profiling the characteristic features of the target product/brand and
evaluating the alternatives, the consumer proceeds to the actual buying process, by which prospective consumers will become actual consumers. Perhaps consumers may go for a compromise, if the products/brands, which have secured the highest ratings are not available in the immediate vicinity. Purchase is characterized by factors like store loyalty, brand affinity, timing and even group-involvement. ‘Consumers may also use a preference formation strategy that is other-based-in which they allow another person to make the selection or purchase for them’ (Olskavsky, R.W, 1985).

Post-purchase evaluation is the last phasic stage in the decision-making process. If the product is an expensive one, the consumer will be keen in evaluating the product. If the evaluation evokes a dissonance, it causes mental fatigue to the consumers. The discontented consumers will give word-of-mouth that may discourage the other prospective buyers. Unless precautionary measures are taken by the marketers against the injurious word-of-mouth of the consumers, their existence will be at stake. ‘Perhaps the most important thing for marketers to understand about word-of-mouth is its huge potential economic impact’ (Walker, C, 1995). Understanding the factors that can exert an influence on the behaviour of prospective consumers is the short-cut to reach at this destination.

Factors Affecting Consumer Behaviour

‘Consumer behaviour (B) is the result of the interaction of the consumer’s personal influence (P) and the pressure exerted upon him by the outside factors in the environment’ (E): B = # (P,E) - (Rathor, B.S, 1998).
This conveys that the behaviour of consumers is influenced by cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. It is not imperative that on all occasions, all the factors have to be at work to mould the behavioural pattern of consumers. It is interesting to note that the factors, which are responsible for the behaviour of consumers are complimentary in character.

**Cultural Factors**

'The cultural setting of consumers is conspicuously integrated with their behavioural aspects, because culture envisages distinctive modal patterns of behaviour, and the underlying regulatory beliefs, norms and premises' (Krech, D and Crutch Field, R.S, 1962). In general, the cultural background of consumers acts as the 'control surface' with regard to their consumption process. Choice of products/brand, mode of buying, type of vendor selected may be pointed out as the examples for the interplay between the culture and behaviour of consumers. In the textile market, culture is a vital factor that influences the fashion adoption. Now-a-days, cultural trends have tended to redefine the usage pattern of many a product, ranging from consumer products to status - symbol products. In a country like India, cultural norms exceedingly influenced by religious doctrines, have considerable implications on the behavioural aspects of consumers.

**Social Factors**

The social characteristics of consumers may be identified as a factor, which has an enduring impact on consumer behaviour. 'There are three types of social character; tradition - directed, inner - directed, and other - directed' (Riesman, D, 1950). Nevertheless, the interaction between social factors and
consumer behaviour varies from social class to social class. 'The basic distinction between the middle-class and the working class is that the latter advanced as a result of group activity whereas those above them moved forward by individual initiative' (Shanks and Michael, 1972). In the social set up, consumers get ample opportunities to interact with others, and to be influenced by them. The group that exercises influence on consumers is termed 'reference group' in consumer behaviour science. 'Reference group is any person or group of people that significantly influences an individual's behaviour' (Enger, J.F, Blackwell, R.D and Minard, P.W, 1999). Over the years, the social set up of every country, including India, has undergone many transformations. This has evoked changes in behaviour among consumers regarding volume or frequency of consumption, product pattern, information search and exposure.

**Personal Factors**

'There can be free interplay between the personal factors of consumers such as age or lifecycle stage, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle, personality and self concept' (Kotler, Philip and Armstrong, Garry, 1985) and their behaviour. The personal factors may influence many aspects of consumers like thinking, searching, and processing of information, decision-making and judgement of products or services. For instance, an educated consumer having a lucrative occupation will be more competent to take a wise decision with regard to consuming and using products or services.

**Life Cycle Stage**

The behaviour of consumers is subject to radical changes during the entire life span, because they require different types of products at different stages of the
life cycle. To quote an example, the requirements of the elderly are diametrically opposite to those of the youngsters. ‘Over the years, the elderly segment of consumers has been widened, as people are enjoying longer and healthier lives’ (Urban and Star, 1991). Similarly, age or life cycle-stage causes drastic changes in the formation of attitude and perception. ‘Now-a-days, psychological life cycle-stage have also been identified’ (Lepisto, S.L, 1985) by the marketers as an input while designing products as well as strategies for different market segments.

**Occupation**

The trenchant changes that have taken place in the market environment on the global level are due to the changes in the occupational scene of the consumers. A sizeable number of consumers have given up agriculture as their source of income, and have occupationally migrated to other avenues, particularly ‘white-collar jobs’. This has considerably improved the economic status of consumers; thereby spectacular changes have been witnessed in the consumption process and pattern. Exposure to information, preference for brand, store and media habit are some of the important facets of changes that have been brought about by the occupational mobility of consumers. Change in media habit due to the new horizons of occupation is apparent from the enhancement in the number of readers of dailies and magazines. ‘Readership is the strongest among college graduates and among those in executive-managerial professions’ (Rebacca, P, 1995).

**Economic Situation**

‘During the 1960’s, economists began to focus attention on the economic
decision-making within the household' (Becker, G.S, 1965). Evidently, they had become ready to acknowledge the degree of influence exerted by the economic situation of consumers on their behaviour. In the macro sense, it is apt to state that the economic situation affects the nature of products bought by the consumers. In the micro sense, it is more apt to spell out that brand choice, particularly of the 'premium brands', is the net result of the improvement in the economic conditions of the consumers. Hence, there are economic reasons for setting 'product standards' for consumer goods.

**Life Style**

The major elements of life style are identified by “Plummer”, as 'activities, interests, opinions and demographics' (Plummer, J.T, 1974). 'Life style embodies the pattern that develop from the dynamics of living in society' (Lazer and William, 1963). As it sketches one’s attitude or outlook and capability for adjustment and being adjusted, it affects consumption too. The pains taken for information search, interaction with others, especially with opinion leaders, extent of search for (product) alternatives, perception about brand, mode of consumption, and usage pattern often reflect the life-style maintained by the consumers. Acknowledging the role of life style on the behavioural aspects of consumers, marketers have begun using life style as a criterion or input for market segmentation of many consumer products.

**Personality**

According to Tholess, personality is 'covering all the ways in which one individual can differ from another' (Tholess, R.H, 1967). ‘Personality is usually described in terms of traits such as self-confidence, dominance,
sociability, autonomy, defensiveness, adaptability and aggressiveness' (Kassarjian, S.N and Scheffet M.J, 1984). Consumers especially those who belong to the upper stratum in the society, are exceedingly interested in creating a ‘perceived image’ in the environment in which they live. And it is always adherent to their personality. Accordingly, they may select and use only those products and services, which are compatible with their image and personality. The trend of consumers to analyses the ‘brand personality’ or ‘brand image’ may be spelt out as an example of the relationship between personality factors and the behavioural aspects of consumers.

Self - Concept

‘Self-concept’ has been defined as ‘the sum total of all that a man can call his body, traits, and abilities; his material possessions; his family, friends and enemies; his vocations and avocations and much else’ (Hall, Calvin, S and Lindzey, 1957). The contributions of an individual to the society and his social identity are the indicators of his/her self-concept. A rational individual always tries to safeguard his or her self-concept while he/she is engaged in any kind of activity, including consumption. This makes it explicit that the behavioural aspect of consumers is largely affected by their self-concept. A prudent marketer has to understand the self-concept of his prospective buyers and thereby their position in the society, before developing products and designing marketing strategies.

Psychological Factors

The four identifiable psychological factors that modulate the behaviour of consumers are ‘motivation’, ‘perception’, learning’ and ‘attitude’.
Motivation

Human needs and motives are 'siamese twins'. Hence, striking a precise difference between the two concepts seems to be a hair-splitting task. 'As Bayton has observed, some psychologists claim that words such as motives, needs, urges, wishes and drives should not be used as synonyms; others are content to use them' (Bayton, J.A, 1958). In the absence of a comprehensive conceptual framework, motivation can be regarded as a desire that springs from the "unsatisfied needs" of human beings, which leads to a goal-setting. Motivation activates the behaviour of an individual in a direction towards a typical activity. 'A motivated organism will engage in an activity more vigorously and more effectively than an unmotivated one' (Hugard, E.R, Atkinson, R.C and Atkinson, R.L, 1978). A forceful motivation may instigate individuals to avoid certain things and to accept certain other things. Regarding consumption of consumer goods, motivation of individuals increasingly influences decisions on product, brand, store, information search and size of expenditure. With this temperament, certain people are seen to be 'risk-averse' and hence marketers must so carefully design products and services as to tap the demand potential of such consumers.

Perception

Markin has defined perception as 'one of the elements of cognition- the process involved in knowing' (Markin, R.J,1969). It is a process by which an individual gathers, selects, organizes and interprets information or stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. As perception is more instrumental to developing 'viewpoints' than in gathering and processing information, it is characterized by a high degree of diversity. Hence,
different consumers who are exposed to the same market environment may behave differently. In practical marketing, studying consumer behaviour from the angle of the perceptual background of consumers generates valuable inputs for strategic decisions. It is worth mentioning that understanding and analyzing the perception of consumers has become the decisive factor in organizing promotion campaigns, since the present promotion imparts heavy information load to the consumers. It is not likely that consumers always perceive it positively. In order to overcome this handicap, information and products as well should be brought to the target consumers in such a way as to synchronize with their perception. 'In short, while perception has sensory data at its core, it in turn has a central role in the cognitive and thinking process' (Bliss, P, 1970).

Learning

From the marketing perspective, 'consumer learning' can be thought of as 'the process by which an individual acquires the purchase and consumption knowledge and experience that he/she is applying to future related behaviour' (Schiffman, G.L and Kanuk, L.L 2002).

It is worthwhile to note the opinion of Winston Churchill 'I am always ready to learn although I do not always like being taught'. Consumer learning is an ongoing process and every consumer happens to learn something in his everyday life. Learned consumers possess distinctiveness in many aspects and are found to be efficient at the market place, because, he/she has been gathering knowledge about product, brand, media message, price and economic aspects.
This gives the message that the marketers should equip themselves to deal with those consumers who are active in learning

**Attitude**

Attitude influences everyone's life and it affects the way in which everyone adjusts with, and reacts to, other people, objects or events. Allport gives the definition of attitude as 'a mental and neural state of readiness organized through experiences exercising a distinctive or dynamic influence upon the individuals' (Allport, G, 1935). An analysis of consumer behaviour from the perspective of consumers' attitude helps marketers to understand what consumers will do in a specified condition at a point of time. Attitudinal influence on usage pattern, frequency of consumption, preference for hyper market, multiple shopping and products/brand insistence has become conspicuous over the years. In advertising research, for instance, 'the changing of consumers' attitude towards specific products and services is considered to be a very useful method of assessing the effect of advertising' (Adler, Allan, G and Donald, L.B, 1965).

Viewing from this perspective, textile industry has to focus on four thrust areas of the behavioural aspects of the consumers; such as what the consumers like to buy (product), from where they like to buy (source of buying) how they keep themselves informed about products (media exposure) and how they adapt with their environment in the decision-making process (socio-economic factors).

The Indian textile industry has been producing cotton cloth of quality made from long staple cotton fibre, since the inception of the handloom sector.
order to cater with the requirements of the changing environment, the mill sector has started producing a number of blended and synthetic fabrics. A variety of ‘new generation textiles’ which are eco-friendly have been inducted in the market. And the research endeavours with institutional support spell out that the Indian mill sector is potential enough to develop improved varieties of fabric and clothing. However, the marketability of the textile product depends on how it is perceived by the consumers. This calls for the analysis of perception of consumers about specifications of their target product.

The consumers in the textile market have been exposed to different modes of selling outlets in different market segments. Textile retailers are competing with one another in occupying a legitimate space in the perceptual map of the prospective consumers. Often such competition seems to be a sheer waste. The consumers may take into account several parameters to perceive a source of buying as ideal. When a source of buying is mismatching with the perception of consumers, it is characterized with a weak sales potential. This has a special relevance in the case of those textile manufacturing units, which are active in marketing also.

Information exposure is the salient feature of the modern marketing environment. This enables the consumers to acquire deep magnitude of knowledge, which in turn makes them “smart consumers” at the market place. It is desirable to have a foolproof picture of the information search process of consumers, to understand their attitudinal aspects. The important outcome of such an approach is that both the textile manufactures and marketers can
communicate the meaningful facts and figures to their target consumers very effectively. Besides, the modern strategy of two-way communication through the mass media provides feedback to the producers and marketers; which can be used as precious inputs for product planning as well as marketing.

The consumers are subject to the influence of their environment. Social, economic and occupational facets of environment are seen to be highly dynamic. Its impact ranges from the change in the propensity to consume to the outlook and approach towards buying and using textiles. The evaluation of the influence of changes on the behavioural aspects of consumers would equip the manufacturers and marketers of textiles to design strategies corresponding to the prevailing socio-economic environment of the target consumers.

In a nutshell, the textile industry must be viewed from the angle of consumers so as to crop up production and sales. It is worth mentioning here a quote attributable to Mahatma Gandhi, in which he stresses 'a consumer is the sole reason for a business or an industry to exist' (The Hindu, July 2003). Since Mahatma was born in the trading community of Gujarat, he might have sensed what ought to be the right philosophical mooring for a business or an industry. Thus, a comprehensive analysis of the behavioural aspects of the consumers is the fulcrum, which enables the Indian textile industry to march ahead. In tune with this requirement, several vital factors with regard to textile consumption such as 'product specification', 'preference for source of buying', influence of advertisement and sales promotion and socio-economic factors of buyers have been analysed in the following chapters.