RESEARCH ARTICLE

Impact of training on awareness of consumers regarding curtains and upholstery

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ABSTRACT

The present study was undertaken to create consumer awareness through appropriate educational package "Consumer guide for curtains and upholstery". To create awareness and improve knowledge level regarding curtains and upholstery and their purchase, workshop for consumers, manufacturers and shopkeepers was held. The knowledge was imparted to a total of 120 respondents *i.e.* 20 consumers from each city and 20 manufacturers / shopkeepers. Maximum number of consumers had low knowledge, whereas; almost equal number of manufacturers/ shopkeepers had low or medium or high knowledge level regarding curtains and upholstery. There was significant gain in knowledge of consumers regarding terms used on labels, symbols used on labels, method of judging weave quality, colour fastness, composition and size, assessing quality of curtains and upholstery, advantage of having cash memo, type of relief consumer court can give, whom to be contacted for complaint and how to file a complaint in consumer forum after the training of the respondents.

KEY WORDS : Awareess, Curtains and upholstey

INTRODUCTION

Besides making a wise selection, it is equally important for the consumers to know about the proper usage, care and maintenance of the curtains and upholstery. In today's competitive market, the consumers need to be aware of prevailing fraudulent practices, the right to information and redressal. Also consumers are not aware of the labels available on the curtains and upholstery material and also on ready made articles.

The consumers are further subjected to various selling tactics adopted by the manufacturer's and the sellers like free gift schemes, reduction sales, off season sales, installment credit sales, festive sales, lottery coupons and discount coupons, etc. large amount of money is spent on advertising and sale promotion techniques. Every attempt is made by the manufacturers, suppliers and traders to make their products look more appealing and attractive than the competitors. Sometimes they also resort to dishonest means to enhance their profit. At special occasions or festivals like Diwali every shop, from the large departmental stores to the neighbourhood dress shop, is advertising a reduction in prices. But consumers may not get as good a deal as promised.

In such situations and more in the absence of labels, information about care of fabrics, guarantee about colour, etc., is given by seller which may not be reliable. At such times, it helps a consumer to have knowledge about simple ways to judge the quality of weave, composition, colour fastness, etc, to test the genuineness of a particular fabric.

Consumers are also cheated when fabric are sold in yards instead of meters; fabric is stretched while measuring or measured with a rod which is cut or not having authorized seal of weights and measurements department and less of a fabric is given even though they have paid the full price (Pankaj, 1998).

With such a large varieties in hand, it becomes really difficult for a consumer to assess the quality of curtains and upholstery and to compare it with others. The manufacturers are cheating the consumers as there is no commonly recognizable standardization mark in the case of textiles as in case of food items, so a consumer can be easily cheated in the market.

The consumer therefore needs to be well informed about the different kinds of fabrics that are available and their care and maintenance. An educated and rational consumer can make a choice in such a way that the selected item gives maximum utility and satisfaction.

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Consumer education enables the consumer to make the wise selection through comparative judging of quality and price and averts from the tendency for impulsive buying. Since curtain and upholstery in varying prices are available in market, it leads confusion in the mind of consumers. In addition, the absence of any stamped markings and labels, retailers further try to confuse and misguide the consumers so as to sell their product.

Also consumers are not aware of the labels available on curtains and upholstery. They often face a lot of inconvenience due to labels because the information given on them is not appropriate. Considering all these facts the present study was conducted to create consumer awareness through appropriate means.

METHODOLOGY

The different cities representing the multicultural groups including Faridabad, Panchkula, Panipat, Hisar and Karnal were selected purposively. Efforts were made to take different colonies of different cities of Haryana so that the sample could be true representation of the population.

A knowledge inventory was prepared to study the existing knowledge level of consumers about curtains and upholstery and their purchase. For construction of knowledge inventory information available on labels and literature collected from Manak Bhawan (Bureau of Indian Standards), books and journals were utilized. Knowledge statements for all the domains were developed separately. The content of knowledge statements composed of questions called items which were compiled in consultation with specialists. Due care was taken to include all the pertinent informations about different domains. After pre-test, necessary additions and deletions were made. The respondents were asked to answer each item in dichotomized categories of Yes/No or Correct/Incorrect and the score was assigned 1 and 0, respectively. The inventory was administered by personal interview method.

Educational package "Consumer guide for curtains and upholstery" by electronic media was prepared using the literature collected from books, journals, websites and library of Manak Bhawan (BIS). Information received from interview was used as guideline in preparation of the educational material.

To create awareness and improve knowledge level regarding curtains and upholstery and their purchase, workshop for consumers, manufacturers and shopkeepers was held. The knowledge was imparted to a total of 120 respondents *i.e.* 20 consumers from each city and 20 manufacturers / shopkeepers.

Post – exposure knowledge level of the respondents was measured 30 days after training using the same knowledge inventory which was used to measure the existing knowledge level of consumers, manufacturers and shopkeepers regarding curtains and upholstery.

The collected data were analysed in the light of information collected from various sources. It was then complied and tabulated to draw meaningful inferences. Paired 't' test was applied to test the significance of gain in knowledge by respondents after exposure to training. The following formula was used:

$$t = \frac{\bar{d}\sqrt{n}}{S}$$

where,
$\bar{d}$ = The mean of the differences
n = Number of observations
S = Standard deviation of the differences which can be calculated by following formula

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{\sum d^2 - n(d)^2}{n-1}}$$

$\sum d^2$ = Summation of squares of differences

The association between dependent variable *i.e.* knowledge regarding curtains and upholstery purchase and independent variables *i.e.* age, education, occupation, monthly income of respondent, monthly family income, family type, family size, caste and mass media exposure of the respondents was measured using the following formula:

$$\lambda^2 = \sum \frac{(O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}}$$

where,
O_{ij} = observed frequency of the cell in i^{th} row and j^{th} column
E_{ij} = expected frequency of the cell in i^{th} row and j^{th} column

Yates correction was applied wherever it was required.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study have been discussed in the following sub heads :

Knowledge regarding curtains and upholstery :
Existing knowledge level of consumers regarding curtains and upholstery:

The data presented in Table 1 clearly reveal that 38.8 per cent consumers in Karnal had low knowledge regarding curtains and upholstery followed by 36.2 per cent consumers who had medium knowledge level. Only one

fourth of them had high knowledge level. Similar trend was observed in Faridabad also.

In Panipat, 37.5 per cent consumers had low knowledge regarding curtains and upholstery, whereas, equal number of consumers (31.3%) had medium or high knowledge level (Table 1).

Equal number of consumers (37.5%) had low or medium knowledge level regarding curtains and upholstery in Hisar, whereas, one fourth of them had high knowledge level (Table 1).

Table 1 indicates that equal number of consumers (35%) in Panchkula had low or high knowledge level, whereas, 30 per cent consumers had medium knowledge level.

Out of total respondents (400), 37 per cent consumers had low knowledge regarding curtains and upholstery followed by 33.5 per cent consumers who had medium knowledge level. Only 29.5 per cent of them had high knowledge level (Table 1).

It can be concluded from the data that maximum number of consumers had low knowledge regarding curtains and upholstery. Similar results were reported by Pankaj (1998).

Existing knowledge level of manufacturers and shopkeepers regarding curtains and upholstery purchase:

The data presented in Table 2 clearly indicate that almost equal number of respondents had low or medium or high knowledge level regarding curtains and upholstery.

Association between existing knowledge level and independent variable:

Table 3 clearly reveals that age of the respondents had significant association with their knowledge before training in Hisar, Faridabad and Panchkula. This might be due to the reason that with increase in age the consumers increased their knowledge with experience. Similar results were reported by Khippal (2007).

Education and mass media exposure of the respondents had significant association with their knowledge level before training in all the cities except Panchkula. This might be due to the reason that education and mass media exposure increased their knowledge and understanding regarding curtains and upholstery. Similar results were reported by Pankaj (1998) and Dhankhar (1999).

Occupation of respondents was significantly associated with knowledge level of consumers of Karnal and Panipat only. Monthly income of the respondents had significant association with knowledge level of consumers of Panipat, Hisar and Fariridabad, whereas, monthly family income of the respondents was significantly associated with knowledge level of consumers of Karnal, Panipat and Faridabad.

There was no association of family size of the respondents with their knowledge level before training, whereas, family type had significant association with knowledge level of consumers of all the cities except Hisar. This might be due to the fact that members of joint family discussed with each other about curtains and upholstery.

Caste was significantly associated with knowledge level of consumers in Panipat only.

Impact of training on knowledge level of consumers regarding curtains and upholstery:

It is evident from Table 4 that before training, out of 100 only 18 respondents (two from Karnal, four from Panipat, three from Hisar, four from Faridabad and five from Panchkula) had high level of knowledge. Twenty two respondents (six from Karnal, four from Panipat, five

Table 1: Existing knowledge level of consumers regarding curtains and upholstery

Knowledge level	Karnal (n=80)	Panipat (n=80)	Hisar (n=80)	Faridabad (n=80)	Panchkula (n=80)	Total (n=400)
Low (< 110)	31(38.8)	30(37.5)	30(37.5)	29(36.3)	28(35.0)	148(37.0)
Medium (110-145)	29(36.2)	25(31.3)	30(37.5)	26(32.5)	24(30)	134(33.5)
High (> 145)	20(25.0)	25(31.3)	20(25.0)	25(31.3)	28(35)	118(29.5)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

Table 2 : Existing knowledge level of manufacturers and shopkeepers regarding curtains and upholstery (n=75)

Knowledge level	Manufacturers/shopkeepers
Low (< 187)	26(34.7)
Medium (187-222)	25(33.3)
High (> 222)	24(32.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentages

from Hisar, four from Faridabad and three from Panchkula) had medium level of knowledge and 60 respondents (12 from each city) had low level of knowledge regarding curtains and upholstery, whereas, after training all the respondents had high level of knowledge. It can be concluded that training was very effective and beneficial for the respondents. Similar results were also reported by

Table 3: Association between existing knowledge level and independent   variable

Independent variable	Karnal (n=80)	Panipat (n=80)	Hisar (n=80)	Faridabad (n=80)	Panchkula (n=80)
			Calculated values		
Age	7.479	7.256	33.933*	20.007*	20.414*
Education of respondent	20.920*	7.706*	25.196*	26.888*	2.178
Occupation of respondent	6.130*	7.821*	.261	2.228	1.881
Monthly income of the respondent	.762	8.987*	12.199*	10.950*	.381
Monthly family income	9.779*	9.911*	4.684	52.923*	7.982
Family size	12.346	12.409	8.685	5.173	9.098
Family type	15.485*	18.379*	5.367	10.026*	36.857*
Caste	3.603	32.317*	1.768	8.123	7.491
Mass media exposure	9.893*	25.593*	28.929*	17.343*	4.074

* indicates significance of value at P=0.05

Table 4: Impact of training on knowledge level of consumers regarding curtains and   upholstery

Knowledge level	Karnal (n=20)		Panipat (n=20)		Hisar (n=20)		Faridabad (n=20)		Panchkula (n=20)		Total (n=100)	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Low (< 110)	12	-	12	-	12	-	12	-	12	-	60	-
Medium (110-145)	6	-	4	-	5	-	4	-	3	-	22	-
High (> 145)	2	20	4	20	3	20	4	20	5	20	18	100

Pankaj (1998), Parashar (1999), Dhankhar (1999) and Khippal (2007)

Impact of training on knowledge level of manufacturers and shopkeepers regarding curtains and upholstery:

Table 5 clearly shows that before training, out of 20 only three respondents had high level of knowledge. Five respondents had medium level of knowledge and 12 respondents had low level of knowledge regarding curtains and upholstery, whereas, after training all the respondents had high level of knowledge.

Table 5 : Impact of training on knowledge level of manufacturers and shopkeepers regarding curtains and upholstery

Knowledge level	Manufacturers/shopkeepers n=20	
	Pre	Post
Low (< 187)	12	-
Medium (187-222)	5	-
High (> 222)	3	20

Measurement of awareness:
Knowledge gain regarding labels:
There was significant gain in knowledge of consumers, manufacturers and shopkeepers in all the cities regarding terms used on labels, information used on labels

and symbols used on labels after the training of the respondents (Table 6).

Knowledge gain regarding quality assessment:
Gain in knowledge of respondents in all the cities regarding method of judging weave quality, colour fastness, composition, size and defects in curtains and upholstery was significant after the training because earlier they did not know these methods (Table6). Similar results were reported by Pankaj (1998).

Knowledge gain regarding quality of fabric for curtains and upholstery:
Gain in knowledge of respondents regarding quality of fabric for curtains and upholstery was significant after the training to the respondents (Table 6). Similar results were also reported by Khippal (2007).

Knowledge gain regarding types of curtains, valances and blinds:
There was significant gain in knowledge of consumers, manufacturers and shopkeepers in all the cities regarding types of curtains, valances and blinds (Table 6).

Knowledge gain regarding fabric care:
Improvement in knowledge of respondents regarding fabric care of curtains and upholstery was significant after the training to the respondents (Table 6).

Knowledge gain regarding standard sizes of curtains and upholstery:

Training was found very effective in significantly improving the knowledge of respondents regarding standard sizes of readymade curtains, bed sheets, *dohar sets*, quilt, duvet sets, *diwan sets*, blankets, table covers, pillow covers, cushion covers, table napkins, table mats and sofa covers/throws (Table 6). Similar results were also reported by Pankaj (1998), Parashar (1999).

Knowledge gain regarding measurement and calculation of material for curtains and upholstery:

There was significant gain in knowledge of consumers, manufacturers and shopkeepers in all the cities regarding measurement and calculation of material for curtains and upholstery (Table 6). Similar results were also reported by Pankaj (1998).

Knowledge gain regarding buying from a particular shop:

Gain in knowledge of consumers regarding pros and cons of buying from different places *i.e.* departmental store, retail showroom, fixed price shop and cooperative stores was significant after the training to the respondents (Table 6). Similar results were also reported by Khippal (2007).

Knowledge gain regarding advantage of having cash memo:

Gain in knowledge of consumers regarding advantages of having cash memo was significant after the training to the respondents (Table 6). Similar results were also reported by Khippal (2007).

Knowledge gain regarding complaint:

Gain in knowledge of consumers to know the type of relief consumer court can give whom to be contacted for complaint and fee for filing a complaint in consumer forum was significant after the training to the respondents (Table 6).

From the above results it can be concluded that the training was very effective in improving the knowledge of consumers, manufacturers and shopkeepers regarding curtains and upholstery. Similar results were also reported by Jacob (1992), Pankaj (1998), Parashar (1999), Dhankhar (1999), Singh (2002) and Khippal (2007).

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