



A STUDY OF AWARENESS REGARDING SUSTAINABLE CLOTHING AMONG EMPLOYED WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

Awareness about sustainable clothing among employed women is investigated in this study. The main focus of the study was to test the knowledge level and opinion about sustainable clothing and methods of disposal used. Survey data from respondents drawn from senior college teachers participated in refresher courses conducted by Academic Staff College, Nagpur. The findings based on the three aspects. 1. Knowledge regarding criteria of sustainable clothing 2. Opinion about attribute of sustainable clothing. 3. Methods of disposal for used clothes.

Keywords: Awareness, Sustainable clothing, Disposal

INTRODUCTION

Ecological concerns relating to clothes arise at various points in the processes used to manufacture textiles and apparel and also as a result of the use of those products. We spend a lot of money on clothes, often driven by the desire for something fresh, new and trendy. We want to look young, attractive, and successful. Clothes are now becoming increasingly disposable. A million tons of clothing and other textile waste are thrown away (6).

In the last two decades consumers have become more

health conscious. Wearing something Green is a new fashion statement. The concept of sustainability was first promoted by United Nations Conference in 1972. Sustainable clothing is defined as a clothing that incorporate fair trade principles with sweatshop-free labour conditions; that does not harm the environment or workers by using biodegradable and organic fibres, and designed for a longer lifetime use; that is produced in an ethical production systems, perhaps even locally; that which causes little or no environmental impact and



makes use of eco-labelled or recycled material (Fletcher 2008; Joergens, 2006) (5). Domina and Koch (1999) indicate that there are mainly three methods to recycle used clothes, including disposal, resale and re-use. For sustainable development, re-sold and re-used clothes which for sustainable development can benefit environment in short-term (Fletcher, 2008)

(1). Sustainable purchase behaviour means selecting recyclable products, being socially responsible and taking other actions to protect the environment (Fraj and Martines, 2006) Study on Sustainability as a central theme in consumers fashion choice focused that more than two-third consumers lack awareness about green clothing but ready availability of green clothes and low cost may make them popular (2). Joergens (2006) claims that one plausible reason is consumer is confused by large quantities of garments available in the market are produced in developing countries. Consumers biased

decisions is a reflection of their paucity of knowledge or lack of adequate awareness.

Considering all these factors, the aim of the present study is to study the awareness regarding sustainable clothing among employed women. The **objectives** of the present study are-

- 1) To study the employed women's knowledge regarding sustainability criteria for clothing
- 2) To know their opinion regarding attributes of sustainable clothing.
- 3) To study the action taken by employed women regarding disposal of clothing.

METHODOLOGY

The self structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The sample was drawn from the women participants of training courses conducted by Academic staff college Nagpur for college teachers from various discipline. Total number of sample selected is sixty. The sample is divided into two categories, the faculty from Home-Science/Home Economics (Group I) and from other discipline (Group II). In The



Questionnaire the questions are based on the criteria of sustainable clothing (AVEDA, 2011; Eco-Fashion World, 2011), methods of disposal of clothing, attributes related to purchasing of sustainable clothing and demographic questions related to age, income, faculty were included.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected was analysed. Response analysis showed that 21% of the respondent's belonged to age group between 25-40 years and 39% were above 40 years. All are Female respondents from teaching profession at senior college having a monthly income above 50,000 per month. Fifty percent of them belonged to Home-science/ Home-economics faculty and rest of them belonged to other faculties i.e. social sciences, commerce and science. Majority of the respondents (81.66%) life-style was partially eco-friendly, 10% were totally eco-friendly and 8% did not bother. 66.67% respondents were familiar with the term sustainable

clothing while 33.33% were not. Out of the total respondent 20% were regular customer, 75% were sometimes purchaser and only 5% never purchase the sustainable clothes.

The knowledge of the respondents regarding the criteria of sustainable clothing was analysed. The results found were presented in Table I.

It was observed that majority of the respondents from both the groups thought, use of Natural fibres, Biodegradable nature, Eco-certified and re-cycled contents are the main criteria for sustainable clothing. Some of the respondents know about the concept of Animal friendly and use of organic material. Few of them know about Fair labours practices and Role of Locally made clothing in sustainability of clothing. Knowledge level of both the groups regarding criterion for sustainable clothing was found nearly same.

When the knowledge level of the consumers from the respondents was tested it was observed that those who purchase



the sustainable clothes have knowledge regarding the criterion of sustainable clothing. The figures are represented in table IB. Few of the respondents never purchase the sustainable cloths; their knowledge level was found less. According to them use of organic material, Animal friendly nature and Eco-certified are only the criterion for sustainable clothing.

Favourable Opinion of the respondent women customers related to attributes of sustainable clothing is indicated in the Table II.

Table II:-It was observed that respondents from the Home Science group have favourable opinion regarding attribute of sustainable clothing than the other group (II). Majority of the respondents from the group I have favourable opinion regarding comfort (93.33%) and Eco-friendly Nature (76.66%) of the sustainable clothing while 73.33% respondents from the second group thought that the cloths are comfortable and 90% opined they are Eco-friendly.

Respondents from both the groups were not satisfied with the Quality of the fabric especially from group II. They also opined that the cloths are not easily available at all cloth stores, selection is limited and are less trendy.

The regular consumer respondents of the sustainable clothes have favourable opinion regarding comfort (100%), Quality (83.33%) and Eco-friendly nature of the clothes. Those who purchase the clothes sometimes also showed favourable opinion regarding comfort (84.44%) and Eco-friendly Nature but they are not satisfied with the cost, quality, selection and availability of the clothes. Those who never purchased the clothes did not have a positive attitude towards sustainable clothes.

Methods adopted for disposal of clothes play an important role to save environment. Action taken by the women respondent for disposal of used clothes is represented in Table III.



It was observed that 83.33% respondents from group I passed on the used cloths to the family members or in some cases to the close friends .Mostly the children clothes were passed on.80% respondents from group I and 76.66% from group II send their used cloths to the charity. Respondents from Home Science group also recycle (70%) their cloths but percentage is less in group II (50%).Redesigning of cloths required time and energy so only 50% of women from group I and 56.66% from group II redesign their cloths .Very few respondents from both groups recycle or put their cloths in garbage.

Charity and passed on methods of disposal were preferred by regular consumers followed by redesign and recycling. Few of them also resale their used clothes. Those who never purchase the sustainable clothes preferred to recycle, redesign and resale their used clothes.

CONCLUSIONS

- There is a significant difference between the life style of Home-

science and other faculty members concern with the environment.

- As per knowledge regarding criterion for sustainable clothing is considered it was observed that Natural fibers, biodegradable, Eco-certified, Recycled content are the most preferred criterion by both the groups but have less knowledge about locally made and fair labor practices.
- Customers from both the groups are satisfied regarding the comfort factor but were found less happy with the cost, trend, and availability of the eco-friendly clothes. They were not that much satisfied with the quality and range of the green clothes. There is a level of difference between the opinions of both the groups.
- A method used for disposal of used clothes also plays an important role in environment protection. The most common methods of disposal used by both the groups were sending off clothes to charity and



passed to the family members or close friends followed by recycling. Few of them are interested in redesigning their clothes because it required lots of efforts and creativity. Less number of respondent resale or throw their clothes.

- Most of the respondents were sometimes customers of sustainable clothes. The reason

behind it was lack of awareness and confusion due to wide range of clothes available in the market.

Recommendations

There is a need to create an awareness regarding judicious use of clothes and awareness regarding the new concept of Green Fashion clothing.

Table IA-Knowledge level of college teachers regarding Criteria of sustainable clothing

Group	Criteria of sustainable clothing							
	Organic material	Natural fibres	Animal friendly	Bio-degradable	Recycled content	Locally made	Fair labour	Eco-certified
Group I	18 (60)	28 (93)	19 (63.33)	22 (73.33)	21 (70)	14 (46.66)	11 (36.66)	23 (76.66)
Group II	19 (63.33)	23 (76.66)	17 (56.66)	19 (63.33)	23 (76.66)	11 (36.66)	7 (23.33)	24 (80)

(Figures from parentheses show percentages)

Table IB:-Knowledge level of consumers regarding Criteria of sustainable clothing

Purchasing frequency	Criteria of sustainable clothing							
	Organic material	Natural fibres	Animal friendly	Bio-degradable	Recycled content	Locally made	Fair labour	Eco-certified
Always N=12	7 (58.33)	10 (83.33)	5 (41.66)	10 (83.33)	9 (75)	7 (58.33)	4 (33.33)	11 (91.66)
Sometimes N=45	29 (64.44)	41 (91.11)	29 (64.44)	31 (68.88)	35 (77.77)	18 (40)	14 (31.11)	34 (75.55)
Never N=3	1 (33.33)	— (00)	2 (66.66)	— (00)	— (00)	— (00)	— (00)	2 (66.66)

(Figures from parentheses show percentages)

**Table IIA: - Favourable Opinion of college teachers regarding attributes of sustainable clothing**

Group	Favourable Opinion regarding sustainable clothing						
	Comfort	Cost	Quality	Availability	Selection	Trend	Eco-friendly
Group I	28 (93.33)	12 (40)	20 (66.66)	9 (30)	17 (56.66)	8 (26.66)	23 (76.66)
Group II	22 (73.33)	8 (26.66)	12 (40)	10 (33.33)	8 (26.66)	9 (30)	27 (90)

(Figures from parentheses show percentages)

Table IIB: - Favourable Opinion of consumers regarding attributes of sustainable clothing

Purchasing frequency	Favourable Opinion regarding sustainable clothing						
	Comfort	Reasonable cost	Quality	Availability	Selection	Trend	Eco-friendly
Always N=12	12 (100)	7 (58.33)	10 (83.33)	9 (75)	8 (66.66)	5 (41.66)	12 (100)
Sometimes N=45	38 (84.44)	13 (28.88)	21 (46.66)	10 (22.22)	17 (37.77)	11 (24.44)	38 (84.44)
Never N=3	— (00)	— (00)	1 (33.33)	— (00)	— (00)	1 (33.33)	— (00)

(Figures from parentheses show percentages)

Table IIIA: - Action taken by the college teachers regarding Methods of Disposal of used clothes

Group	Methods of Disposal of used clothes					
	Re-sale	Redesign	Passed on	charity	Recycling	Garbage
Group I	9 (30)	15 (50)	25 (83.33)	24 (80)	21 (70)	4 (13.33)
Group II	10 (33.33)	17 (56.66)	13 (43.33)	23 (76.66)	15 (50)	7 (23.33)

(Figures from parentheses show percentages)



Table IIB:-Action taken by the consumers regarding Methods of Disposal of used clothes

Purchasing frequency	Methods of Disposal of used clothes					
	Re-sale	Redesign	Passed on	charity	Recycling	Garbage
Always N=12	4 (33.33)	7 (58.33)	8 (66.66)	10 (83.33)	2 (16.66)	-- (00)
Sometimes N=45	13 (28.88)	22 (48.88)	30 (66.66)	37 (82.22)	31 (68.88)	11 (24.44)
Never N=3	2 (66.66)	3 (100)	— (00)	— (00-	3 (100)	— (00)

(Figures from parentheses show percentages)

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