Supply Chain Management and Its Role in Green Fashion

Ramanjit Kaur Bajwa* and Bismin Singh**

Abstract

Fashion in today's global market is a multi-faceted trade. It employs the greatly varied services and talents of lots of individuals, offers a countless mix of products, absorbs a considerable amount of consumers spending and plays a dynamic role in a country's economy. With the threat of global warming looming on our heads, consumers are demanding environmentally and socially responsible goods thereby forcing the transition of clothing industry towards eco-apparel and practices. Eco-friendly products are finding a favour by the youngsters, be it in eatables, beauty products or shopping bags. The green businesses strive to create a balance between healthy living today and for the coming generations to live good lives in the future. But time is an important component in retaining a successful apparel business. So, to compete in the present business set-up, the chief objective of the clothing companies should be to lay emphasis upon supply chain management systems. The focus of this paper is to study the fashion consciousness of the consumers of tricity (Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula). The paper also investigates the awareness and interest of customers regarding eco friendly apparel which are the newest entrants in the fashion industry. To conduct the study, the related literature was reviewed. Survey method was used for data collection. The relevant questionnaire was subjected to a sample of 200 consumers from the tricity, comprising of 120 females and 80 males in the age group of 22 – 40 years who had awareness and purchased ecofriendly garments. After collecting data from respondents, it was coded, tabulated and analysed. The results revealed that the respondents were having knowledge about green apparel and the value of eco-fashion for the planet as a whole. Majority of the respondents identified ecofriendly garments from the eco labels and brand names retailing such garments. Majority of the consumers were motivated to buy clothing with eco labels and willing to pay extra for such garments due to the comfort factor associated with them and their skin friendly nature besides the interest of consumers in environmental protection. Further, all the respondents were facing the problem of replenishment of the stock with new and fashionable eco garments. As ethical fashion is latest in the market, so understanding of the customers wants, characteristics and their motivation to make purchase decisions can help retailers and manufacturers in gaining an edge in the marketplace. So, apparel companies need to reduce product development cycles and supply the desired product to the customer at the best quality and lowest possible price which are the fundamental motives of Supply Chain Management, Product Lifecycle Management and Quick Response. Moreover, those who are in eco fashion trade, they need to create an environment and formulate marketing plans to get maximum positive response regarding sale of eco fashion, earning profits and thus contributing to economy.

Keywords: Fashion, Eco friendly Clothing, Sustainable fashion, Consumer Awareness.

----
*Assistant Professor, Deptt. of Clothing and Textiles, Government Home Science College, Chandigarh
**Bismin Singh, Merchandiser, Purple Haze, 773, Udyog Vihar, Phase V, Gurgaon

Introduction

Clothing is a significant force in the enhancement of the self and when used positively contributes to one's feeling of self acceptance, self respect and self esteem. It is an expression of personality and of the self (Horn, 1968). The field of fashion is very exciting and fashion and textiles are known to drive the economies globally. In today's world, awareness about ethical issues and concern towards environment is growing gradually. As global warming concerns intensify posing threat to living beings it has become mandatory for individuals and businesses to be sensitive towards environmental responsibility. The clothing and textiles industry is one of the largest polluter of the atmosphere. So, there is a dire need to shift towards ecofriendly fashion for the benefit of the environment (Ferrell, Hirt and Ferrell, 2011). Ethical fashion will help in maximizing the positive impact on the environment. Green businesses with more sustainable business practices than their competitors help in benefitting natural systems, making people live well today and tomorrow while earning profits and contributing to the economy (Croston, 2009). Worldwide Clothing and Textiles industries are also following the green trend like agriculture and other industries which are shifting towards manufacture of ecofriendly products and processes for sustainability. Environment friendly clothing is clothing where its production and the processes involved are considered to inflict minimal harm on environment (Mintel, 2009). Eco - fashion is also called sustainable fashion. The aim of sustainability in fashion is "to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations". Sustainable fashion does not concentrate on being reckless and inexpensive. Labelling, standards, and certification all comprise green fashion approach. Sustainable fashion involves any and all of the following: extending product life through classic design and durability, eliminating or reducing manmade fibre use, reducing waste, using recycled and biodegradable materials, employing new design and manufacturing processes, making less but smarter clothing, encouraging sustainable agriculture, and influencing the ethics of the fashion industry (Lin and Oxford, 2011). But, for the success in apparel trade and to evade the threats involved and markdowns linked with newly launched goods, the time gap between the developing of a styling concept and delivering it to selling shelves should be shortened. So, producers of eco-clothing need to reorganize all the efforts like fashion prediction, line development and completion of orders within a shorter span in supply chain management to deliver the product without interruptions. The quick response approach involves using and evolving technologies in data processing and communications, developing software applications and effective collaboration among business partners in the integrated textile complex supply chain. The features necessary for effective Quick Response are control, communication and collaboration. Apparel firms are using a collaborative method to supply chain management by establishing shared info and decision making webs for style forecasting and replenishment. Planning and control, line development, forecasting, materials management and sourcing all are combined in effective supply chain management systems (Rosenau and Wilson, 2006).

Zara is an example of fast fashion supply chain management. They have established a unique method to continuously replenish their stock with new and fashionable merchandise. They have incorporated technology that facilitates the flow of information, creates new styles and monitors their progress and they provide their customer with right product, at right place and right time. So, companies manufacturing eco-fashion need to organize the latest information technology tools to facilitate the constant exchange of information (Rosenau and Wilson, 2006).

Although the progress towards eco-friendly clothing and sustainable clothing practices has been slow, the fashion is moving in the right direction.

Methodology

Survey method was adopted to collect the required information as the present study could not be subjected to observation method.

Sample size consisted of 200 consumers in the age group of 22– 40 years, out of which 60% were females and 40% were males, comprising of 50% respondents having annual family income below the range of Rs. 4,00,000, followed by 40% in the range of Rs. 4,00,000-Rs. 8,00,000 and 10% respondents were having annual family income between Rs. 8,00,000-Rs. 12,00,000. List of all consumers, who had awareness and purchased eco friendly garments, were procured through convenient purposive sampling in which questionnaires were filled by the customers while shopping for eco friendly garments in exclusive branded stores. Before data collection pre-testing was done on 25 consumers to check how much fashion conscious the people are and their awareness towards eco friendly apparel. From their feedback, required modifications were made in questionnaire and a final questionnaire was formulated. The number of consumers taken for study was sufficient for the pre-testing of sample. The data was collected by administering the final questionnaire having clear and relevant questions to the consumers of eco-friendly garments in the Tricity (Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula). The data from the questionnaires was then collated, tabulated and analysed for the interpretation of the results.

Results and Discussion

More than forty seven percent (47.5%) stated that fashion was style, 47% considered fashion as being comfortable. 14.5% said fashion was a way to express inner self. Lastly 11.5% each quoted that decent and uniqueness were related to the concept of fashion. The results are shown with the help of a bar diagram given below:

Fig-I: Showing distribution of the respondents according to according to what fashion meant to them.
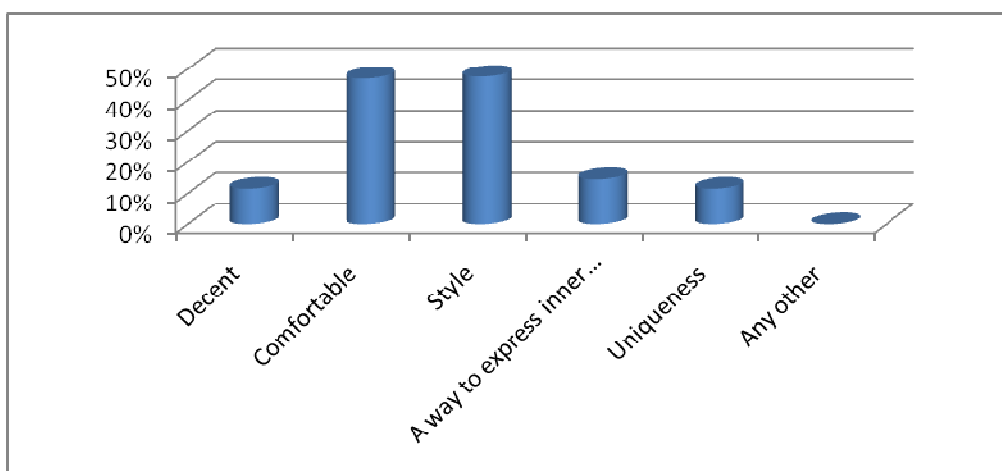
Majority of the respondents i.e. 78.5% preferred to buy casual wear followed by 54% purchased formal wear, 34% desired traditional wear. Only 13.5% of the respondents like to buy western wear. Lastly 3% preferred fusion wear while purchasing clothes. The results are shown with the help of a bar diagram given below:

Fig-II: Showing distribution of the respondents according to types of clothes they purchased.
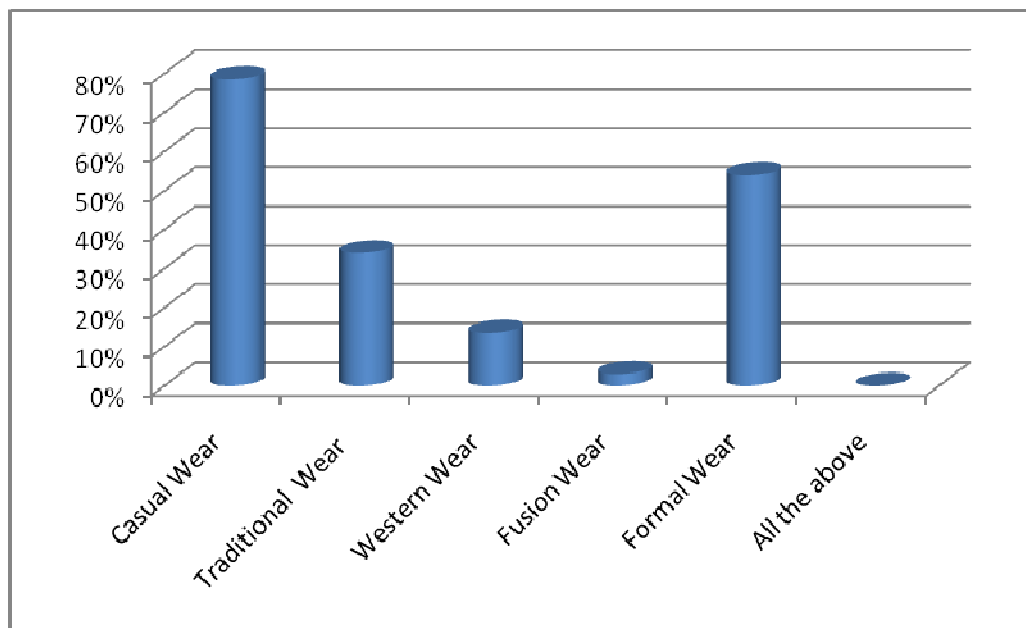

Majority of the respondents i.e. 98.5% changed their apparel according to fashion, out of which 44.5% of the respondents changed apparel after few people had adopted it, followed by 43% of respondents who changed apparel when fashion sets in. Lastly 11% of the respondents quoted that they changed apparel when fashion becomes common, and 1.5% of the respondents considered that they did not change their apparel according to fashion. Majority of the respondents i.e. 73% considered comfort as the factor while buying clothes, followed by 66% respondents who took into account the current fashion and 49% respondents gave importance to price while purchasing clothes. 46.5% of respondents quoted that they preferred colour and texture, followed by 31.5% of respondents who gave value to care of clothes, 31% preferred durability and 29.5% stated suitability as the factor, while making purchases for clothes, 22.5% of respondents took into account health aspects, followed by 21% of respondents who considered the suitability of clothes for jobs while buying clothes. Only 18.5% of respondents valued social responsibility towards environment, 9% favoured prestige and 7.5% of respondents took into account all the above factors while buying clothes for themselves. The results are shown with the help of a table and bar diagram given below:

Table- I: Distribution of the respondents according to factors while buying clothes

N=200
Multiple-choice Question

S. No.	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
1	Price	98	49%
2	Comfort	146	73%
3	Durability	62	31%
4	Fashion	132	66%
5	Suitability	59	29.5%
6	Colour & Texture	93	46.5%
7	Social responsibility towards environment	37	18.5%
8	Suitability for job	42	21%
9	Easy to care	63	31.5%
10	To show the prestige	18	9%
11	Health aspects	45	22.5%
12	All the above	15	7.5%
13	Any other	-	-

Fig-III: Showing distribution of the respondents according to factors considered while buying clothes
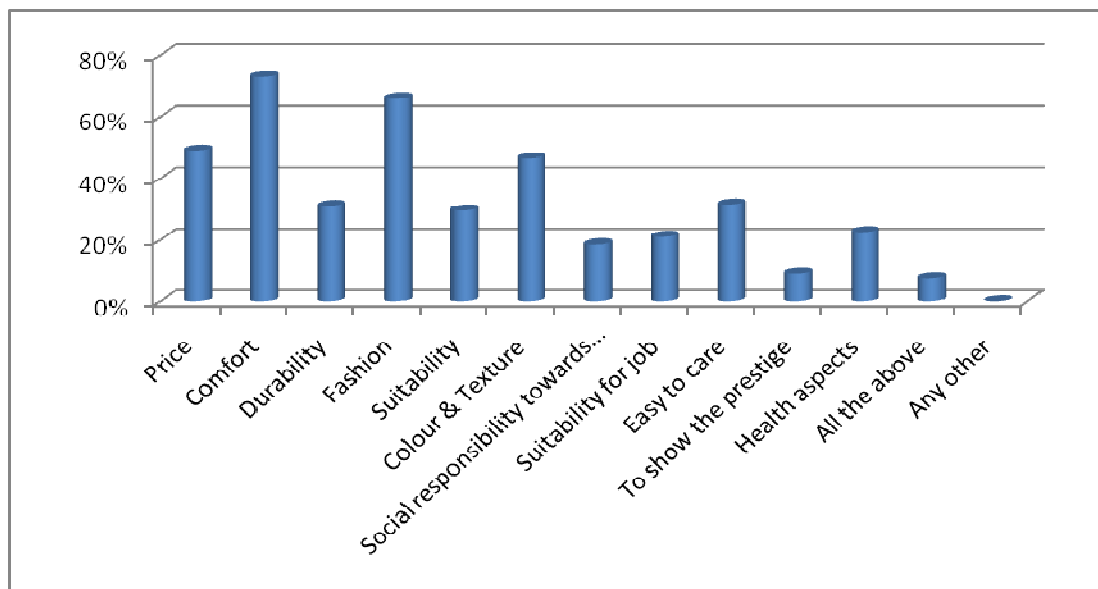
All the respondents were aware of eco friendly garments and the term eco friendly for them was related to any product causing no harm to environment and skin friendly. 72% purchased clothes from shopping malls, 52.5% buy from branded retail outlets, 23.5% preferred to go to super markets. 17% use to buy clothes from all above places and 12% went to factory outlets for

shopping due to the availability at discounted prices. The results are shown with the help of a bar diagram given below:

Fig-IV: Showing distribution of the respondents according to places for buying clothes
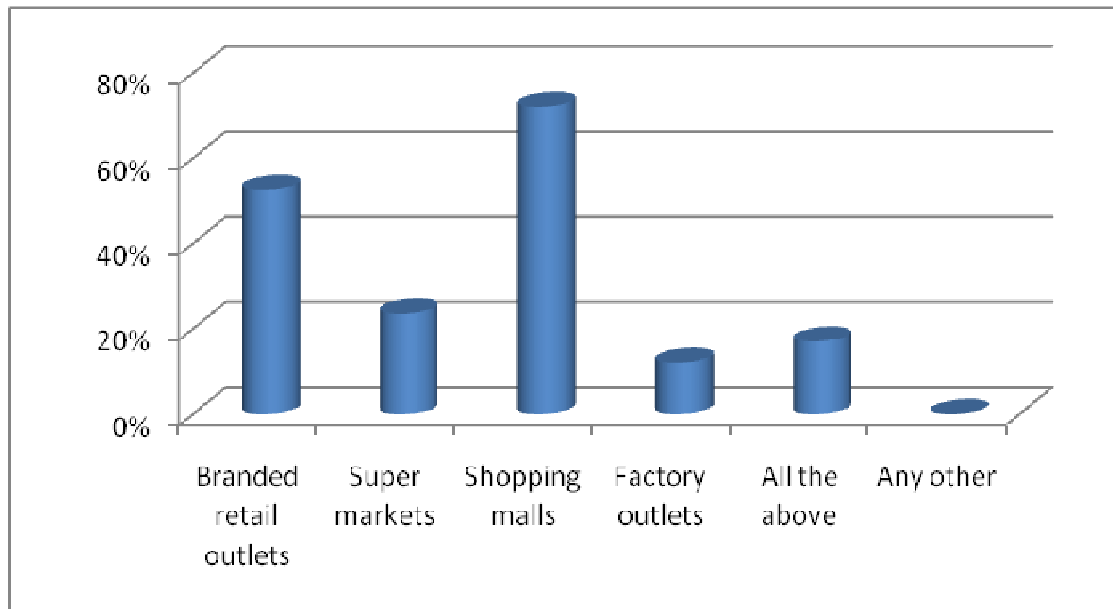
Fifty one (51) % of the respondents got information about eco friendly garments from print media, followed by 35% from television. 25% of respondents came to know about eco fashion from their relatives and lastly 10% learnt about eco friendly apparel from their friends. The results are shown with the help of a table given below:

Table-II: Distribution of the respondents according to their sources of information regarding eco friendly garments

N=200

Multiple choice Question

S. No.	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
1	Television	70	35%
2	Print media	102	51%
3	Relatives	50	25%
4	Friends	20	10%

Majority of the respondents i.e. 74% identified eco friendly garments from the eco labels, 72% who mentioned about brand names retailing especially eco friendly garments. 54% believed fabric quality and prints. 19% considered dyes used and 15.5% revealed environment friendly packaging. Only 9.5% stated all the above factors as criteria for identification of eco-friendly garments in a store. The results are shown with the help of a table and bar diagram given below:

Table- III: Distribution of the respondents according to identification of eco-friendly garments

N=200

Multiple choice Question

S. No.	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage %
1	Brand name	144	72%
2	Eco labels	148	74%
3	Dyes used	38	19%
4	Environment friendly packaging	31	15.5%
5	Fabric quality and prints	108	54%
6	All the above	19	9.5%

Fig-V: Showing distribution of the respondents according to the basis of identification of eco-friendly garments
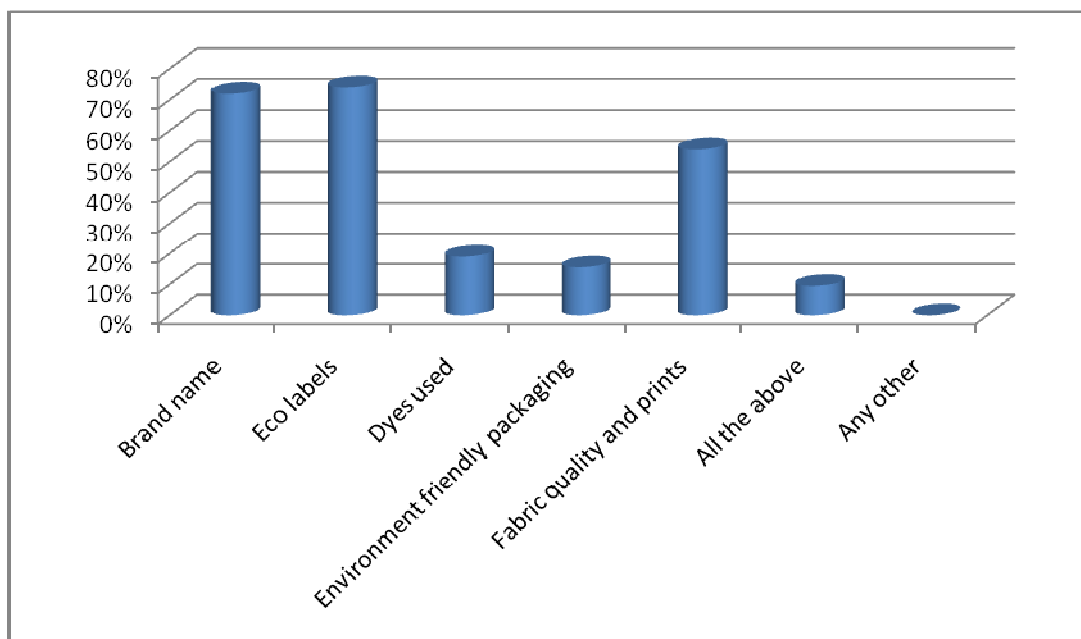

Over seventy four percent (74.5%) of the respondents were aware of UV&W as a brand manufacturing eco friendly clothing, 66.5% of respondents mentioned about Woodland, followed by 59% of respondents who quoted *Khadi* as an eco friendly brand. 53% of respondents were aware of Van Heusen, followed by 30% of respondents who indicated Fabindia and 29.5% mentioned about Madame store. 24.5% of respondents stated that they were aware of Arrow as a brand manufacturing eco friendly garments. Lastly 9.5% of respondents revealed that they were having knowledge of Allen Solly as a brand manufacturing eco friendly clothing. The results are shown with the help of a pie diagram given below:

Fig-VI: Showing distribution of the respondents according to awareness of brand manufacturing eco-friendly clothing
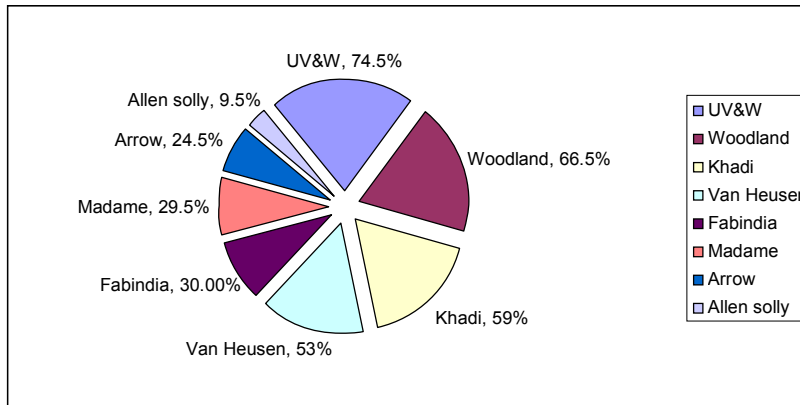

Majority of consumers i.e. 91% quoted that organic cotton was the fabric available in eco friendly clothing, 77% stated organic linen, 47% mentioned bamboo, besides 44% quoted jute, whereas 15.5% revealed recycled polyester. 3% each quoted recycled wool and all above mentioned fabrics. Only 2% stated they had awareness about recycled silk. The results are shown with the help of a bar diagram give below:

Fig-VII: Showing distribution of the respondents according to the type of fabrics available in eco-friendly clothing
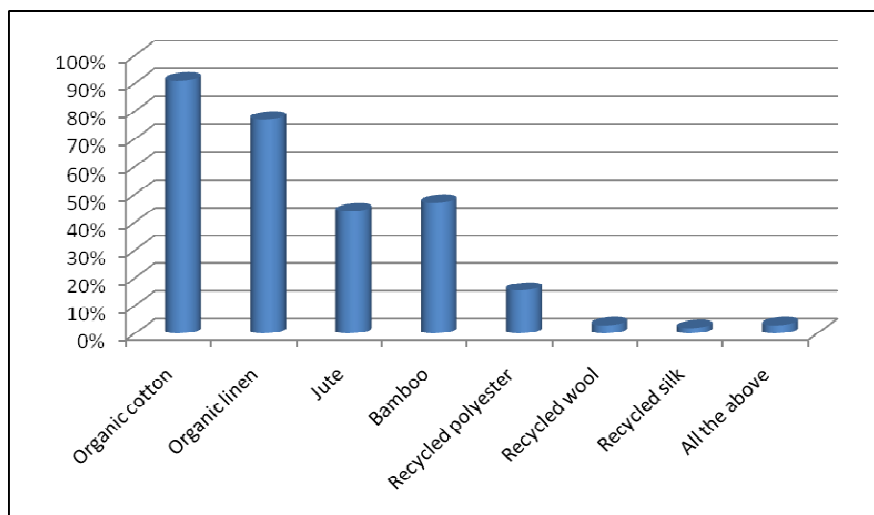
All the respondents stated that they were willing to pay more for green apparel due to their interest in environmental protection and it was worth spending money on such garments as 38% respondents revealed that eco friendly garments being comfortable were cost effective, followed by 30% mentioned their skin friendly nature. 22% considered all the three factors i.e. comfort, durability and skin friendly nature. Lastly 10% mentioned eco friendly garments were durable. The results are shown with the help of a pie diagram given below:

Fig-VIII: Showing distribution of the respondents according to eco-friendly garments being cost effective
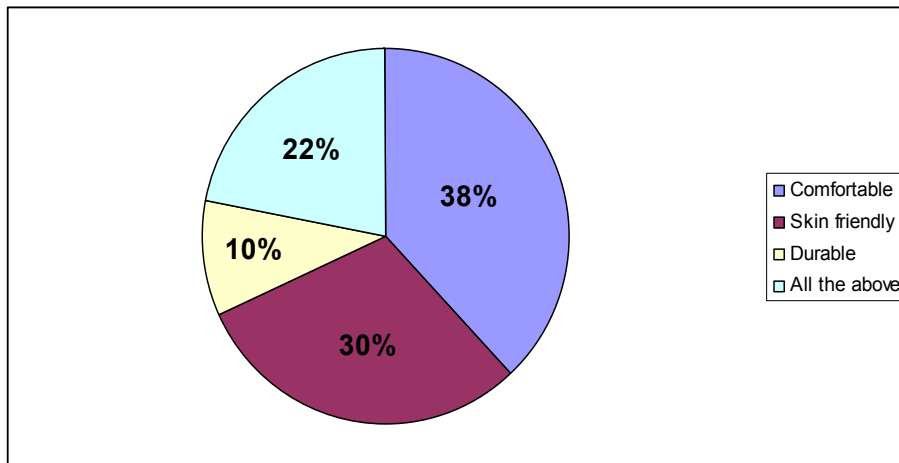
But, all the respondents were facing the problem of lack of replenishment of new stock of ecofriendly garments within a particular season in the stores selling such garments and the nonavailability of green apparel in all the brands.

Conclusion

It can thus be concluded from the present study that majority of people of tricity are fashion conscious and have awareness of what is new in the market. No doubt, the concept of eco fashion is catching up in India but only few people in tricity are aware of it and its importance for the benefit of the planet. As the concept of eco friendly garments is new in India as compared to foreign countries, therefore it is necessary to create more awareness regarding eco fashion among people through advertisements besides efforts at government level through standardisation of eco labels and certifications related to adoption of standardisation techniques from production to dispatch stage and help the manufacturers by providing raw material at cheaper rates to lower down the production costs of green apparel. The marketing efforts by manufacturers and retailers of green clothing should be aimed at making tactics for conversion of non – users to users of eco products. Moreover, business strategies should hover around shortening cycle times and responding quickly to changing consumer wants to reduce the risk factor associated with new fashions besides quick stock replenishments and having perfect electronic communications within the organization and with partners for exchange of information. Thus, improving supply chain management has become a crucial objective of eco clothing companies for maintaining a profitable position while competing in the expanding global markets as speed and accuracy are the determiners of success in the present times.

References

Croston, G., 2009. *Starting Green: An Ecopreneur's Toolkit For Starting A Green Business from Business Plan To Profits*. Irvine, CA: Entrepreneur Press. p. 6.

Ferrell, O. C., Hirt, G. A., and Ferrell, L., 2011. *Business – A Changing World* (7th Edition). New Delhi: Tata McGraw Hill. p. 68.

Horn, M. J., 1968. *The second skin- An Interdisciplinary Study of Clothing.* Boston: Houghton Miffin. Co, pp. 1-5

Lin, J. and Oxford, R. 2011. *Transformative Eco – Education For Human And Planetary Survival*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing. pp. 309, 313.

Mintel, 2009. Ethical Clothing, UK, Mintel International Group Limited.

Rosenau, J. A., Wilson, D. L., 2006. *Apparel Merchandising – The Line Starts Here* (2nd Edition). Fairchild Publications Inc. pp. 326,327, 356 & 357.