

AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF PACKAGING TRENDS IN THE JALANDHAR SPORTS GOODS INDUSTRY

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Abstract

Packaging design is measured as a vehicle for branding is growing in competitive markets for sports products. A major issue however remains the lack of awareness level of international packaging standards amongst the exporters. The study has been conducted with an objective to explore perceptions and beliefs about packaging of sports goods amongst its manufacturers and to understand the problems faced by them in providing world class packaging quality products. The questionnaire was presented to 200 respondents belonging to Jalandhar and it was concluded that there was a need to provide testing facilities for packaging in the country and access to national and international packaging norms for the industry. Journals and related workshops also need to be organized.

IndexTerms: Packaging, purchase intent, international standards.

Introduction

Sports Goods Cluster of Jalandhar

The Sports Goods Industry cluster of Jalandhar is a distinctive example of transplanted cluster, where a major segment of an existing cluster (entrepreneurs, the workers and the raw material suppliers) shifted to a new location due to political division of the country in the year 1947.

The product range offered by the sports industry includes inflatable balls; which includes netballs, footballs, volleyballs, rugby balls speedballs, handballs and basketballs. Cricket equipment, which includes; cricket balls, cricket bats, soft leather protective equipment, Hockey equipment that includes field hockey sticks, hockey balls and protective equipment, Indoor games like carom boards, Chinese checkered and chessboards, Health and Exercise equipment, Athletic equipment, Boxing protective equipment, Sports wear, Playground equipment, Table tennis equipment, Badminton rackets and shuttlecocks, Lawn tennis equipment, Sports nets and Trophies and Medals (www.jalandhar.nic.in).

In Jalandhar, about 60 per cent of the sports goods that are manufactured comprise of different kinds of inflatable balls. Further, inflatable balls, the other sports goods that are largely manufactured are badminton racquets and shuttle cocks, cricket bats and balls, different kinds of gloves and protective equipment (www.jalandhar.nic.in).

Packaging trends in the sports industry

Although the terms packing and packaging are commonly used in a broad sense and as synonymous, they are separate in the marketing parlance. Packing (also known as transport packing) refers to the protective covering used for shipment of the good, while packaging (also known as product packaging or consumer packaging) refers to the package in which the product reaches the consumer (www.bizfluent.com). Packaging materials being used in the industry are:

Polythene

Products like balls or bats are usually packed in a polythene sheet. These acts as a primary package for almost all the products being packed. In case of some products like balls which cost very nominal this is also used as a final package.

Virgin Craft/ Semi Craft

The inside layer of package generally consists of two materials:

- a) Virgin Craft
- b) Semi Craft

These are made from the wood pulp and act as a sturdy protective layer for the product.

Coated Duplex

The outside part of the package is made of Coated Duplex. The name of the product, manufacturer, logo etc are displayed on this layer and it is this layer that can be used to make the packaging look attractive and thus market the product effectively in the market.

Master Carton

The final packages are finally put into big cartons known as master cartons. These cartons contain many small units of packages and it is these cartons which act as a major source of protection of the packages in the transportation.

Blister Packing

These days, blister packing is replacing the traditional packaging. This packing is used for balls which have a hard surface like Golf Balls, Tennis Balls etc. This packing is more attractive and it also gives the retailers the convenience of easy hanging of the products.

Polythene Bags

These polythene bags are usually made up of very thick polythene or rexin material.

Some products like Cricket Bats or Hockey are packed in these bags.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the modes of packaging used in the Sports Industry in Jalandhar.
2. To find out the practical problems being faced by the exporters in the packaging of the products.
3. To understand the perception of the manufacturers and exporters about the function of packaging that is whether they consider it only as a medium of providing safety to goods or also as an effective tool of marketing their product.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The survey was conducted in Jalandhar district of Punjab. Systematic sampling was employed for selection of sample. The sample consisted of two hundred sports goods manufacturers and exporters.

A non-disguised pre structured questionnaire was questionnaire was pilot tested on a sample of twenty respondents and then was administered to the 200 respondents. Question wise analysis of the data is given as under.

Need for packaging

The respondents were asked to mention if they felt that there was a need for packaging their product. The response is shown in Table-1.

Table-1

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	200	100
No	0	0

A look at the table reveals that all the manufacturers and exporters packed their product. 100% of the respondents agreed that their product needed packaging.

Factors considered while packing the product

The respondents were asked to rank the factors that instigated them to pack their products in order of their preference. The factors included Physical characteristics of the product being packed, Convenience of the exporter/transporter, Convenience of the importer, cost of the packing, Delivery time of goods to their destination and Easy disposability of packaging making it environment friendly

The response of most of the manufacturers was mixed in this case. Some rated the physical characteristics as the most important factor while some considered the convenience of the importer as their utmost priority. Most interestingly environment protection was also rated as an important factor. In order they rated physical characteristics as most important the convenience of the importer next most important followed by the environment protection, cost of packing, delivery time of goods to their destination and finally convenience of the importer. However, most manufactures emphasized that all the factors were interconnected and equally important.

Common packaging problems faced while packing the product

All manufacturers agreed that they faced a lot of problems regarding packaging.

The main problems were:

1. Unavailability of testing facilities for packaging in the country.
2. Lack of knowledge of packaging norms in the Industry
3. The Indian weather tends to have an effect on the quality of the package. In summers packages are brittle but in winters and in monsoons the material becomes very soft leading to poor quality and more exposure to breakage and pilferage
4. Mishandling at the end of the exporter
5. Quality variation in terms of stiffness, strength.
6. Climatic conditions of the country have an effect on the quality of the package.
7. Unavailability of good packing material at reasonable price
8. Unavailability of high quality material. The material of far-east is of very good quality which naturally appeals the customer better than the Indian package.
9. The Indian material is very expensive compared to other countries. Virgin craft which is employed in majority packages is very expensive in India.
10. In the market there is more demand of glued cartons but in our country only stitched cartons are available. There is unavailability of technology enabling gluing, automatic bending in India.
11. Lack of good printing machinery is another major problem.
12. Unavailability of packaging specifications.
13. Competition from the foreign manufacturers in terms of quality of the package.
14. Lack of knowledge about international packaging standards.
15. The containers in which material is exported is sometimes not properly sealed which, leads to danger of theft. It also exposes the product to more probabilities of damage.
16. Availability of low quality corrugated cartons in India.

17. The quality of one box varies with the other as the quality of material used is not up to mark moreover labour intensive techniques are employed to make packages
18. Overloading of cartons due to buyer's demand makes the package prone to breakage and pilferage.
19. In less than container load there is improper packing which leads to damage of products during handling.

Clarity of packaging specifications

The respondents were asked if there was clarity of packaging specifications from the side of the buyer.

The response is shown in Table-2

Table-2

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Always	160	80
In some cases	40	20
Never	200	100

Analysis reveals that in most of the cases the buyer gives the specifications for packaging the product. 80% of the respondents agreed that they packed their product according to the buyer's specification. In the current market scenario there is hardly any buyer especially importers who does not give their specifications while placing an order.

Buyer's response to a packaged product.

The respondents were asked about the response of the buyers towards their product. The response is shown in Table-3.

Table-3

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Excellent	10	5
Very good	30	15
Good	50	25
Fair	70	35
Poor	40	20
Total	200	100

Only 10% of the respondents claimed the response to be excellent. All agreed that there was a dire need to improve the quality of the packages. It was also added that the packages should not be overloaded as this leads to pilferage and reduction in the quality.

Ability to meet the international packaging standards

The respondents were asked their level of agreement on whether they were able to meet international packaging standards. Their response is shown in Table-4

Table-4

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Strongly agree	20	10
Disagree	80	40
Neither agree nor disagree	40	20
Agree	40	20
Strongly agree	20	10
	200	100

A glance at the table reveals that a majority of exporters admit that they are not able to meet the international standards of packaging in terms of the quality as well as the price. A respondent who is into the manufacturing of Inflatable Balls agreed that this was due to availability of low quality corrugated cartons in India. A manufacturer of high quality inflatable balls as well as cricket equipment also agreed that the material in the far east was much better than the one available in India. A manufacturer who is mainly into the production of cricket equipment however differed he was of view that although the industry lacked behind in terms of quality a little investment in the right technology and expertise could make us equally competent with the other countries. All the exporters agreed that there was lack of knowledge in the industry regarding the international packaging norms.

Willingness to add to the cost of packing for making the product look more attractive

The respondents were asked that whether they were comfortable on incurring the cost of packing their product. Their response is shown in Table-5.

Table-5

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	182	91
No	18	9
Total	200	100

A majority of manufacturers were willing to add to their product costs by spending more on packaging and utilizing it as an effective medium of advertisement for their product.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The perception of the manufacturers and the exporters is undergoing a complete change in the current scenario. This is probably due to the increased competition from the foreign manufacturers who are able to provide good looking, safer and high quality packages at lesser prices.

The industry in Jalandhar primarily needs complete knowledge of the international standards of packaging which can be imparted by holding seminars, workshops and personal interaction, availability of high quality material at competitive prices and technical expertise including testing facilities to improve packaging.

Seeing the positive outlook of people in the Industry there seems to be complete scope for development and usage of packaging as an effective tool for marketing. The Indian manufacturers are unable to meet the international standards of packaging. This is due to poor quality of the material. Furthermore, in Jalandhar Sports Industry, hardly any packaging specifications are received from the importers. This leads to the exporters not going for very high quality packages. Certain initiatives that can be undertaken are:

- There must be availability of testing facilities for packaging in the country.
- Sourcing of good packing material at reasonable prices
- Up gradation of packaging technology
- Availability of good printing machinery
- National and international packaging norms must be made available to the industry.
- Journals relating to packaging must be available.
- At least once in a year seminar or workshop related to packaging must be organized.
- There must be improvement in the technical know how related to packaging

- There must be availability of high quality packaging material at affordable prices in the country so that the exporters and manufacturers can face the competition from other countries.

References

1. Sports Goods Industry retrieved from *www.jalandhar.nic.in* on 18 March, 2016.
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