

Buying Trends for Home Furnishing Among Consumers in Mumbai

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Abstract: *The home textile market is growing at a very fast pace. Sustainability is becoming a major concern in the industry as a whole, with consumers and companies alike working toward environmentally friendly practices and products. The market needs more options to be added for more functional, performance-enhancing and value-added items and for better health, more comfort and superior lifestyle.*

The present study aims to understand the requirements of the consumers, their preferences, their buying behaviour, their eco-concerns & consumer satisfaction. To know whether there is a need for a change in the existing home furnishings with particular reference to bed sheets used by consumers. A survey design was used and responses were gathered through structured questionnaire method. It was administered on 150 consumers in the age group of 20-50 years in the western suburbs of Mumbai City. Data analysis was done with the help of statistical software.

This study will benefit the consumers and home furnishing manufacturers. It was found that there was no significant difference in the percentage of women purchasing bed sheets online, at mall, retail store or from hawkers when classified according to income ($p > 0.05$). It was found that the newer brands need to advertise themselves well in order to make their presence felt among the consumers. Maximum respondents under study prefer to buy from Bombay dyeing which is more than 100yrs old brand. With the nuclear family structure and women gaining importance in the family the purchase decision making has also been modified as compared to earlier times. Price was found to be the most important factor amongst both the income groups. There is tremendous scope for further research.

Key Words: *Awareness, Comfort, Consumer preferences, eco-friendly finishes, home furnishings, Bed sheet.*

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I. Introduction

The Home Furnishing Industry in India falls under the purview of the textile industry. Indian home furnishings manufacturers offer a spectacular range of bed linen, table linen, kitchen & bath linen, furnishing fabrics, curtains, rugs, durries, carpets, made-ups and other home furnishings accessories. India is home for some of the world's biggest producers in the segment like Welspun (third largest towel producer), Trident (largest terry towel producer) and Dicitex (Fifth largest furnishing fabrics producer). Many Indian brands like Indian Drape, RR Décor, F & F, Maspar, Goldtex, ABN, Portico New York, Birla Century, Spread, Swayam, MYCK, Zyne and Super Net, etc are recognised nationally and are growing at a healthy pace⁶.

The home textile market is growing at a very fast pace. In India, there is a rapid shift from the low-middle class to the higher middle class, and an even faster increase in the sizes of the high and upper middle class, fuelling growth in the economy. Equally more pronounced is the growth of a niche 'super-rich' class. Also, increasing working female-population have not only increased the family income, but also changed the outlook of women towards their home and its interiors². Other factors affecting growth of this market besides the growth in the number of households and discretionary incomes, is the growth of end-use sectors like housing, office, hospitality and healthcare.

The consumers today not only demand comfort in the interiors of their homes, but comfort is becoming the most important criterion for selection hence comfort characteristics should be enhanced Indian consumers are becoming increasingly aware of eco friendly product^{1,3}. Sustainability is becoming a major concern in the industry as a whole, with consumers and Companies alike working toward environmentally friendly practices and products. Innovation is a key factor for operating successfully in any market³.

According to Techno-pak Advisors, (2011) The home textile Industry in India is estimated to be Rs 17,000 crore and is growing at over 9 per cent annually. The home textiles and furnishings market is expected to

reach Rs 26,600 crore by 2015⁴. Of the various segments within home textiles, bed linen and bath linen contribute to two-thirds of the total market size. Kitchen linen, curtains, upholstery and rugs/carpets contribute to the rest of the market. The present study aims to understand the requirements of the consumer & analyze the home furnishing products available in the market.

II. Objectives

- To understand the preferences of consumers for bed sheets.
- To understand the challenges faced by consumers in using bed sheets.
- To study the impact of various forces such as income on the buying behaviour.
- To determine the awareness quotient of consumers in relation to finishes.
- To study the use of existing and potential channels of product distribution.

III. Research Design & Methodology

To study the behaviour of various marketing components, identifying the consumer needs and expectation levels regarding bed sheets, problems with bed sheets brand awareness person influencing purchase of bed sheets, number of bed sheets purchased, price, minimum and maximum amount of money spent on double bed sheets by women, the frequency of changing bed sheets, fabric preferred for bed sheet and the awareness regarding finishes; a cross sectional study was conducted on 150 consumers. Purposive sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was pretested and improvisations made. Some questions were modified while some more were added. Personal interactions with the respondents helped generate additional data. It was observed that the respondents were reluctant sharing their family Income.

Data were analysed using SPSS software for Windows (version 16.0, 2007, SPSS Inc, Chicago, IL, USA). Data on 140 women with the mean age of 38.5±9 years are presented in the current paper. Women were classified in 2 groups: Group 1: Family Income < 10 lakhs and Group 2: Family Income > 10 lakhs for comparison purposes. The frequency distributions were tabulated for various parameters by income groups and were compared using cross tabulations and chi-square test. Data presented as Frequency or Percentage. P value <0.05 was considered to be statistically significant. The limitation of this study was that the sample was restricted to women respondents residing in the western suburbs of Mumbai.

IV. Results

Respondents response to the questionnaire administered on them based on their income level with regards to their buying preferences, brands, eco concerns, likes and dislikes:

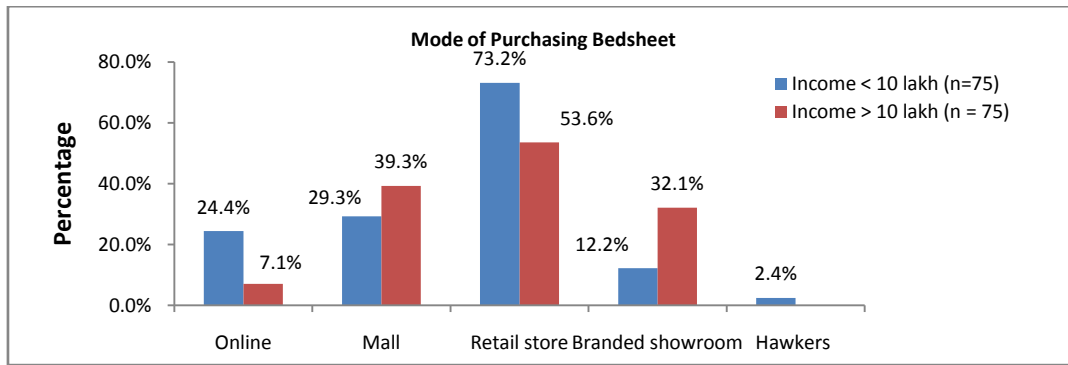
Table 1: Source of purchasing bed sheet.

It was noted that more than half the respondents, purchased at retail stores. Table 1, presents the mode of purchasing bed sheet by women as per different income levels. A significantly higher percentage of women with family income > 10 lakhs purchased bed sheets at branded showroom as compared to women with family income < 10 lakhs (p<0.05). There was no significant difference in the percentage of women purchasing bed sheets online, at mall, retail store or from hawkers when classified according to income (p>0.05). Maximum respondents from both income groups preferred to buy from retail stores also it was noted that none of the respondents from the higher income group purchased from hawkers .

Table 1: Mode of purchasing bed sheet by women.

	Income < 10 lakh (n=75)	Income > 10 lakh (n = 75)	χ ²	P value
Online	18 (24.4)	5 (7.1)	3.445	0.063
Mall	22 (29.3)	29 (39.3)	0.751	0.386
Retail store	55 (73.2)	40 (53.6)	2.817	0.093
Branded showroom	9 (12.2)	24 (32.1)	4.093	0.043
Hawkers	2 (2.4)	0 (0)	0.693	0.405

Note: Data presented as frequency (%)



As per the study 20% purchased unbranded bed sheets regularly, 58.6% purchased unbranded bed sheets sometimes whereas 20% never purchased unbranded bed sheets. There was no significant association of income with purchase of unbranded bed sheet (Income < 10 lakhs: always-17.1%, sometimes-63.4%), Income > 10 lakhs: always 25%, sometimes-53.6%) ($\chi^2=0.817$, $p=.665$).

Table 2 : Brand Awareness and Purchase:

As far as brand awareness of bed sheets is concerned almost every sample was aware about the brand Bombay Dyeing. Also Century, Welspun & D'décor and Fab India were found to be well known amongst half the respondents. Table 2 gives brand awareness regarding bed sheets of women when classified according to income .It was found that higher percentage of women with family income > 10 lakhs were aware about Welspun and Reliance as compared to women with family income <10 lakhs ($p<0.05$). Also Fab India was popular among the higher income group. There was no significant difference in awareness of other brands when women were classified according to brand name ($p>0.05$). In spite of the high percentage of awareness among consumers both young & old, Bombay dyeing is planning to revamp their old image to attract new customers with their new advertising campaign⁵.Maximum people from both income groups preferred to purchase from Bombay Dyeing. Table 2 gives percentage of women buying a particular brand of bed sheets when classified according to income. There was no significant difference in the percentage of women buying a particular brand of bed sheet when classified according to family income ($p>0.05$).

Table 2: Percentage of women aware and purchasing a particular brand of bed sheet

	Brand-awareness				Purchase brand			
	Income < 10 lakhs (n=75)	Income > 10 lakhs (n = 75)	χ^2	P value	Income < 10 lakhs (n=75)	Income > 10 lakhs (n = 75)	χ^2	P value
Bombay Dyeing	72 (95.7)	75 (100)	2.142	0.143	62 (82.9)	62 (82.1)	0.007	0.933
Welspun	29 (39)	48 (64.3)	7.853	0.005	21 (27.5)	29 (39.3)	1.045	0.307
D'décor	32 (42.5)	43 (57.1)	1.414	0.234	60 (80)	22 (29.6)	0.822	0.365
Dicitex	8 (10)	13 (17.9)	0.885	0.347	4 (4.9)	3 (3.6)	0.068	0.794
Portico	17 (22.5)	27 (35.7)	1.428	0.232	15 (19.5)	29 (39.3)	3.260	0.071
Fab India	26 (35)	46 (60.7)	4.390	0.036	13 (17.1)	19 (25)	0.646	0.421
Century	30 (40)	40 (53.6)	1.223	0.269	11 (14.6)	19 (25)	1.169	0.280
Home Stop	19 (25)	32 (42.9)	2.400	0.121	9 (12.2)	13 (17.9)	0.430	0.512
Reliance	29 (39)	48 (64.3)	4.248	0.039	11 (14.6)	11 (14.3)	0.002	0.968
Spaces	22 (29.3)	32 (42.9)	1.354	0.545	11 (15)	19 (25)	1.065	0.302

Note: Data presented as frequency (%)

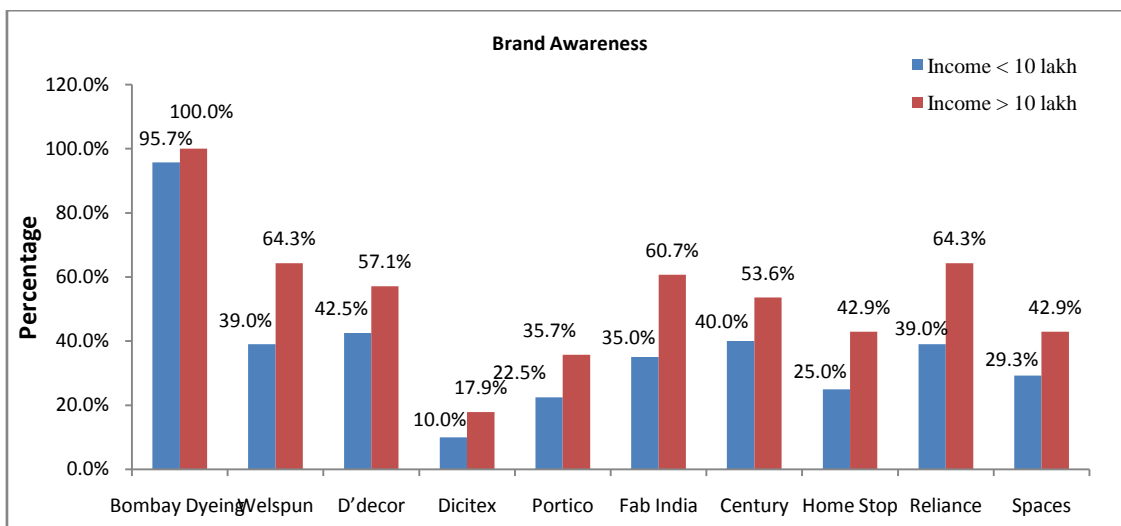


Table 3: Perspective of women on person influencing purchase of bed sheets:

From the sample population of 150 women, almost half the sample took buying decisions independently and were not influenced by any one. Table 3 presents person influencing purchase of bed sheet when the women were classified by family income. There was no significant difference in the percentage of women being influenced by different people for purchase of bed sheet when classified according to income ($p > 0.05$).

	Income < 10 lakh (n=75)	Income > 10 lakh (n = 75)	χ^2	P value
Spouse	11 (15)	13 (17.9)	0.099	0.753
Kids	8 (10)	8 (10.7)	0.009	0.924
Elders	13 (17.5)	11 (14.3)	0.125	0.723
No one	36 (47.5)	43 (57.1)	0.613	0.434

Note: Data presented as frequency (%)

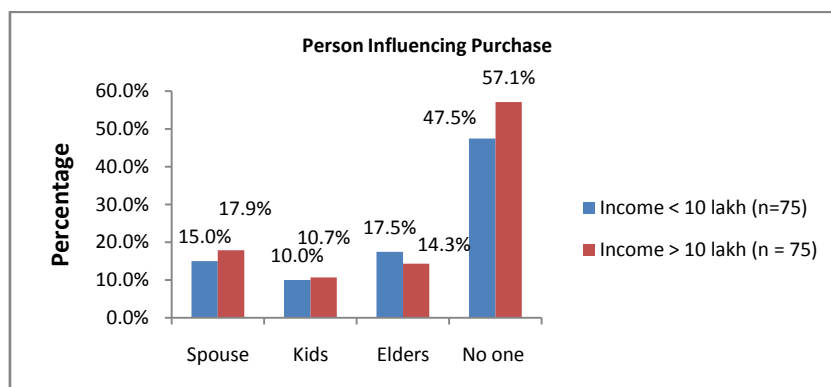
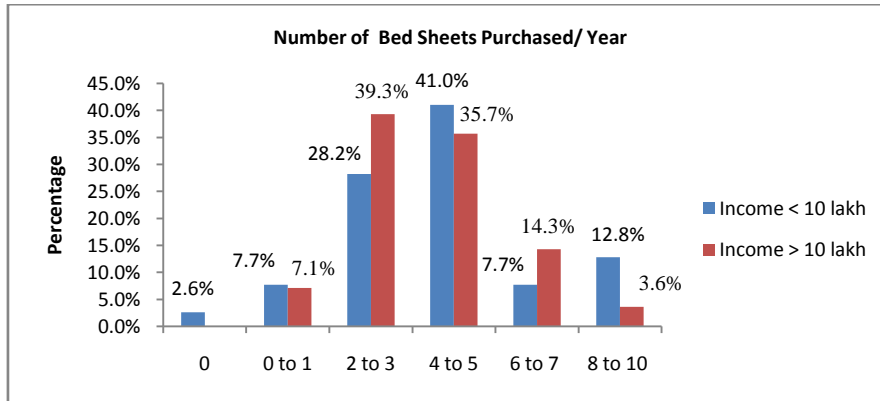


Table 4: Number of bed sheets purchased.

In studying the frequency of bed sheet consumption it was found that majority of the respondents, population purchased 4-5 bed sheets per year. Figure 1 gives the number of bed sheets purchased by women when classified according to income. Also it was observed that very few respondents purchased 8-10 bed sheets in a year. There was no significant association of number of bed sheets brought every year and income indicating that similar number of bed sheets were brought by women from both income groups ($\chi^2 = 3.688$, $p = 0.595$).

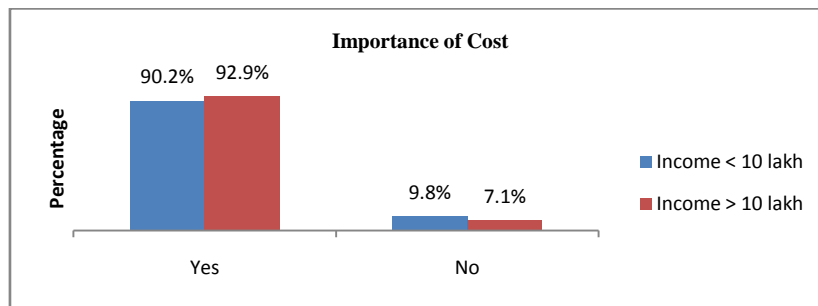


Note: Data presented as percentage

Number of bed sheets purchased per year by women

Table 5: Price and Purchase of Bed Sheets.

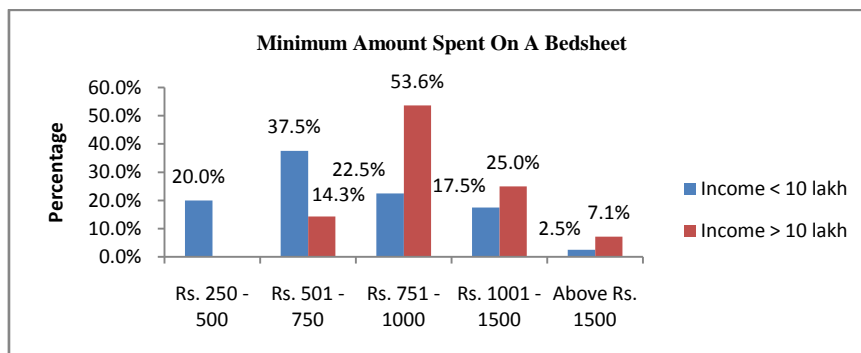
Almost all women reported that cost was an important factor affecting the purchase of bed-sheets. Figure 2 gives percentage of women reporting that cost is an important factor while purchasing bed sheet when classified according to income. There was no significant association of influence of cost and income indicating that similar percentage of women reported that cost is an important factor while purchasing bed sheets from both income groups ($\chi^2=0.143$, $p=0.705$).



Note: Data presented as percentage

Percentage of women reporting that cost is an important factor while purchasing bed sheet

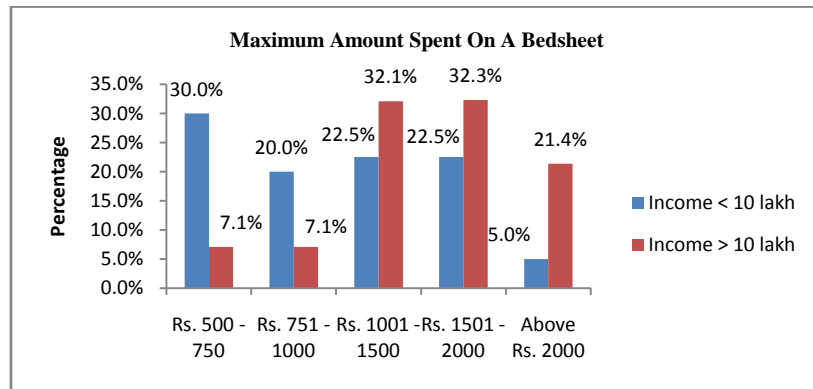
When a minimum amount spent on double bed sheet was inquired, it was found that money spent on bed sheet was directly proportional to the income. Figure 3 gives the minimum amount of money spent on double bed sheet by women when classified according to income. Around 1/3rd of the respondents under study spent anything between Rs.500-750 minimum as compared to the higher income group where more than 1/2 the respondents spent minimum Rs.750-1000. There was a significant association of minimum amount spent on double bed sheet and income indicating that women with >10 lakh income spent more money on bed sheet as compared to women with <10 lakh income ($\chi^2=14.537$, $p=0.006$).



Note: Data presented as percentage

Minimum amount of money spent on double bed sheet by women

There was a significant association of maximum amount spent on double bed sheet and income indicating that women with >10 lakhs income spent more money on bet sheet as compared to women with <10 lakhs income ($\chi^2=10.967$, $p=0.027$). Figure 4 gives the maximum amount of money spent on double bed sheet by women when classified according to income. It was noted that from the higher income group majority of the respondents maximum spending on a bed sheet was in the range of Rs.1500-2000/bed sheet .Where as there was a very scattered/mixed response from the lower income group respondents.

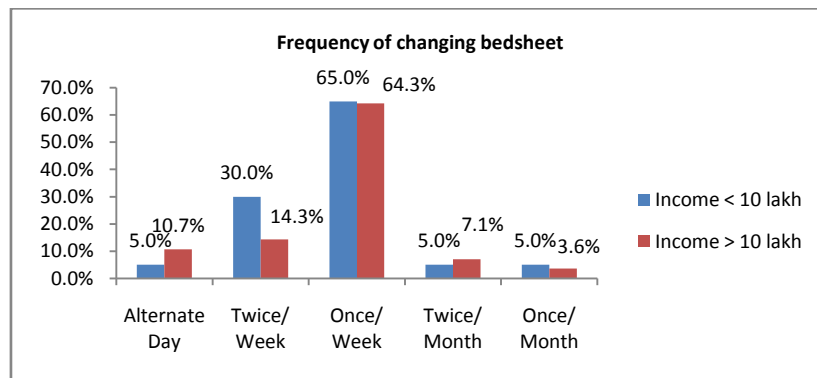


Note: Data presented as percentage

Maximum amount of money spent on double bed sheet by women

Table 6: Frequency of changing bed sheets.

The frequency of changing bed sheets was noted it was found that more than half the respondents from both income group changed the bed sheet every week where as very few respondents changed it once a month or on alternate days. Figure 6 gives frequency of changing bed sheets when women were classified according to income. There was no significant association of frequency of changing bed sheets and income indicating that frequency of changing bed sheets was similar in women from both income groups ($\chi^2=1.242$, $p=0.871$)(8)This study is quite contradictory to the study conducted in Britain which says 6% of the people change bed sheets even once a week(8).



Note: Data presented as percentage

Frequency of change of bed sheets by women

Table 7 Fabric preferred for bed sheet

All women reported that they preferred cotton bed sheets the most. In addition, some women reported that they also prefer polyester bed sheets, polyester/ cotton blended bed sheet and a negligible number of respondents preferred silk bed sheet. Hayda states, cotton is the obvious choice both for its comfort durability and luxury, also positive brain waves exhibit positive levels of brain activity (8).

Table 8: Selection criteria for bed sheet:

When importance of various factors for selecting bed sheet was inquired, fabric was reported to be the most important parameter in both income groups followed by washability, design, size, strength and colour. Brand was considered least importance while selection in both income groups, except for price which was not given importance over other factors. Table 8 gives importance of difference selection criteria for bed sheet when

women were classified according to income. There was a significant association of price and income with higher percentage of women with <10 lakhs income reporting that price is a very important criteria for selecting bed sheet as compared to women with >10 lakhs income (p<0.05). There was no such association of income with other variables indicating that they are equally important to women of both income groups (p>0.05).

Table 8: Importance of difference selection criteria for bed sheet

	Income < 10 lakhs (n=75)					Income > 10 lakhs (n = 75)					χ ² (p value)
	Un- important	Little Important	Moderate Important	Important	Very Important	Un- important	Little Important	Moderate Important	Important	Very Important	
Fabric	2 (2.5)	2 (2.5)	8(10)	21 (27.5)	43 (57.5)	0 (0)	5 (7.1)	0 (0)	21 (28.6)	48 (64.3)	4.437 (0.350)
Brand	8 (10.6)	11 (15)	24 (32.5)	24 (32.5)	8(10)	5 (7.1)	11 (14.3)	16 (21.4)	40 (53.6)	3 (3.6)	3.582 (0.465)
Design	2 (2.5)	0 (0)	13 (17.5)	28 (37.5)	32 (42.5)	0 (0)	5(7.1)	11 (14.3)	29 (39.3)	29 (39.3)	3.717 (0.446)
Size	2 (2.5)	0 (0)	8 (10)	30 (40)	36 (47.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (7.1)	43(57.1)	27 (35.7)	2.417 (0.490)
Colour	2 (2.5)	4 (5)	11 (15)	21 (27.5)	36 (50)	3 (3.6)	0 (0)	5 (7.1)	32 (42.9)	35 (46.4)	3.520 (0.475)
Wash ability	6 (7.5)	2(2.5)	9(12.5)	23(30)	36(47.5)	3(3.6)	0 (0)	5 (7.1)	35 (46.4)	32 (42.9)	2.878 (0.578)
Strength	4 (5)	4 (5)	11 (15)	23 (30)	34 (45)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (3.6)	40 (53.6)	32 (42.9)	7.212 (0.125)
Price	0 (0)	4 (5)	11 (15)	21 (27.5)	39 (52.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	14 (18.5)	44 (59.3)	17 (22.2)	9.173 (0.027)

Note: Data presented as frequency (%)

Table 9 : Problems with bed sheets.

Almost one fourth of the women respondents reported that there were problems faced with the current bed sheet being used. Some had problem regarding comfort, others had problem related to colorfastness, very few had problem regarding design and price. Table 5 presents problems reported by women in relation to current bed sheet being used when the women were classified according to income. There was no significant difference in the percentage of women reporting different problems with current bed sheet when classified according to income (p>0.05).

Table 9: Problems reported by women in relation to current bed sheet being used

	Income < 10 lakh (n=41)	Income > 10 lakh (n = 75)	χ ²	P value
Problem	18 (24.4)	14 (18.5)	0.326	0.568
Comfort	15 (19.5)	3 (3.6)	3.727	0.054
Color	11 (14.6)	13 (17.9)	0.129	0.720
Design	9 (12.2)	0 (0)	3.681	0.055
Price	9 (12.2)	3 (3.6)	1.558	0.212

Note: Data presented as frequency (%)

Table 10: Awareness regarding finishes.

Awareness, availability and need for different finishes as perceived by women respondents was studied Table 6 gives percentage of women regarding awareness, availability and need for different finishes on bed sheets when classified according to income groups. There was no significant association of income group with awareness, availability and need of different finishes in bed sheets indicating similarity in knowledge among women respondents from both income groups (p>0.5). Awareness about finishes was better in women respondents with income <10 lakhs as compared to women >10 lakhs (p<0.05) comfort and convenience being the important criteria it was observed that all respondents were open to application of finishes on bed sheets. They were open to these finishes being available in the market but at a reasonable price.

Table 10: Percentage of women reporting awareness, availability and need of different finishes on bed sheets

	Awareness about finishes			Availability of finishes			Need for finishes		
	Income < 10 lakh (n=75)	Income > 10 lakh (n= 75)	χ ² (p value)	Income < 10 lakh (n=75)	Income > 10 lakh (n=75)	χ ² (p value)	Income < 10 lakh (n=75)	Income > 10 lakh (n = 75)	χ ² (p value)
Softness	57 (75.6)	43 (57.1)	2.613 (0.106)	13 (17.1)	27 (35.7)	3.114 (0.078)	51(68.3)	54 (71.4)	0.077 (0.781)

Stain resistance	47 (62.5)	40 (53.6)	0.542 (0.462)	11 (15)	13 (17.9)	0.099 (0.753)	45 (60)	43 (57.1)	0.056 (0.814)
Wrinkle resistant	47 (62.5)	43 (57.1)	0.197 (0.657)	13 (17.5)	19 (25)	0.567 (0.452)	39 (52.5)	40 (53.6)	0.008 (0.931)
Fragrance	38 (50)	35 (46.4)	0.084 (0.772)	8 (10)	24 (32.1)	5.223 (0.022)	28 (37.5)	27 (35.7)	0.023 (0.881)
Anti bacterial	21 (27.5)	11 (14.3)	1.673 (0.196)	6 (7.5)	11 (14.3)	0.821 (0.365)	19 (25)	27 (35.7)	0.911 (0.340)
Eco friendly finishes	19 (25)	11 (14.8)	1.012 (0.315)	4 (5)	6 (7.4)	0.166 (0.683)	22 (29.7)	30 (40)	0.703 (0.402)

Note: Data presented as frequency (%)

V. Conclusion

The study of women consumers of bed sheets of two different income group was conducted from Suburban Mumbai. The survey revealed that one fourth of the respondents faced a problem with one or more attributes such as colour, comfort, design or price. Most of the respondents faced a problem of colour fading. In spite of so many online sites, majority of the respondents prefer to get the feel of the fabric before buying. So they purchase from retail stores. During personal interaction, it was also found that many of them who were not brand conscious preferred to buy Jaipuri block printed bed sheets. Some respondents opined that there was a remarkable bent towards the brand Bombay dyeing, both in terms of awareness and purchase. This, they attributed to the quality provided over the years which has developed brand loyalty and legacy which is passing on from generation to generation. Almost half of the women respondents under study could take their decisions independently regarding purchase. This proves the fact that women have a good hold over the finances and home decor. Price plays an important role in the purchase of bed sheets irrelevant to the family income of the consumer. Also it was revealed that higher the income greater the affordability. Majority of the respondents changed the bed sheet every week this shows they were hygiene conscious. So there were not many takers for the anti bacterial finish. Almost three fourth of the women respondents felt the need for additional softness as a finish. Less than half the population was keen on eco friendly finishes. The personal interaction with respondents during the data collection helped in sensitizing to eco finishes. The consumers today, seek more variety, functionality, luxurious feel and innovative features. There is a market demand for performance enhancing and value added products. Hence there is scope for further research in additional features in bed sheets.

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