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Analysis of Effectiveness of Products Information Provided With Child Care Products

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ABSTRACT

Toys and other children's products are an integral part of children's developmental processes. It may also inflict accidental injuries to children. Effective warning should result in safe behaviour, leading to reduction in number of accidents. In the present study efforts have been made to make warning symbol effective for use on baby products with the objective of evaluating parents awareness level, drawing up a list of requirements in terms of legibility, and understand ability, investigation of effectiveness of explicit warning and finally to suggest guidelines to make product information effective. The present study was purposively carried out at day care centres of Laxminagar (Delhi) on a sample size of 80 for the descriptive data collection through interview schedule method. The overall results of descriptive data reveal that the sample population preferred combination of descriptive and prescriptive information. Cent percent were of opinion that product information should be legible, informative, clear and appropriate. The use of symbols along with written text is must to enhance comprehensibility of warning signs. Lastly a guide was developed on "Effective Product Information Guide for Parents and Product Designers" to generate awareness amongst parents and to guide product designers to make product information effective.

Introduction

Effective warnings should result in safe behavior, leading to reduction in number of accidents. Unfortunately the response rate to the warnings is usually low. **Dorris and Pusewell (1998), Otsubo (1999)** showed that many either do not notice them, fail to read them, or do not comply with them. The question is how to raise the impact of warnings. **Edworthy and Adams (1996)** argued that a warning sign should be thought of as an artifact that represents the risk associated with the hazardous situation. In order to do so a warning usually serves as an alerting function and as an information function. The alerting aspects of warning serve as an indication of hazards and the severity of hazards. Signal words, colors, symbols and sounds are an example of alerting elements in a warning. When used effectively these elements require little conscious information processing; and are almost spontaneously understood. The information aspects of a warning give indication on how to handle a hazardous product or how to act in a hazardous situation.

Thus the need was felt to carry out a study on "Harmonization of product information for child care products", with the following:

1. To study the product information provided with child care products
2. To suggest guidelines to make product information more effective

Methodology

Descriptive research design was planned to carry out the study. Under descriptive research design interview schedule was used for the present study for data collection, related product information available on child care products and effectiveness of explicit warnings for child care products. For collection of descriptive data tables were developed to assess the availability of product information and effectiveness of product information for child care products. Four day care centres of Laxminagar (Delhi) were purposively selected for data collection i.e. Subhash Chauk, Bank Enclave, Ramesh Park and Lalita Park. For this multistage purposive sampling design was used to select the study area and parents. For descriptive data total sample size of 80, 20 from each group were randomly selected. Data was collected with the help of statements as per they should be on the products.

Result and discussion

The data pertaining to responses of parents on information available on child care products is shown in below table. It covers responses to various aspects such as, purchase information, information for safe use, after sale information, type of instruction to use products, different formats and media to present product information, different range of font sizes, information related to safe use of products etc.

Responses of Parents on Information Available on Child Care Products (N=80)

Product information	No. of Respondents Agreed Frequency (percentage)
1. The purchase information	
a. Conditions and limitations for use	76 (95)
b. User group	5 (6.25)
c. Identification of the product	63 (78.7)
d. Warranties	75 (93.7)
2. Information for safe use of product	
a. Where applicable	78 (97.5)
b. Special protective measures	62 (77.5)
c. Adult supervision	12 (15)

d. Warnings for avoidance	75 (93.7)
3. Instructions on operations	
a. Restrictions for use	72 (90)
b. Warnings about hazards	78 (97.5)
c. Maintenance/repair	30 (37.5)
d. Disposal	15 (16.5)
4. Other information about product	
a. Disposal of waste material	15 (16.5)
b. Recyclable	76 (95)
c. Services	68 (85)
d. Training required	25 (31.2)
5. After sales information	
a. Customer services	76 (95)
b. Replacement of defected parts	76 (95)
c. Warranty for a specific time period	78 (97.5)
d. All of the above	76 (95)
6. For recalling the product	
a. Failure and risk	10 (12.5)
b. Product serial number	42 (52.5)
c. Telephone number for information	75 (93.7)
d. Details on warranty	78 (97.5)
7. Formats and media to present product information	
a. Written and printed information	79 (98.7)
b. Audio information	5 (6.25)
c. Verbal information	3 (3.75)
d. Visual information	69 (86.2)
8. The information related to "instruction for use"	
a. On the product	72 (90)
b. On the packaging	69 (86.2)
c. In an accompanying material	78 (97.5)
d. All of the above	79 (98.7)
9. Information on available on child care products	
a. Manufacturing date and address	76 (95)
b. Expiry date	79 (98.7)
c. Brand name	52 (65)
d. Composition	76 (95)
10. Purchase of the product based on	
a. Composition	68 (85)
b. Construction	45 (56.2)
c. Performance	12 (15)
d. Utility	78 (97.5)

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate the percentages of total sample population in the category Guidelines to Reduce the Accidents or Injuries of the Children

After an exhaustive review of possible product information, a manual entitled **"Effective Product Information Guide For Designers"** was prepared which included an introduction of what product information and warning, what should be in effective product information, why effective product information is required, coping strategies of making product information effective.

Presentation of product information
General

Product information should:
- be consistent with other information (advertising, packaging)
- clearly distinguish between different product variants both on the product and in the product information (if the same information is provided with all variants)
- clearly relate to the product supplied
- distinguish between general instructions and optional modules or extras
- utilise consistent unit (SI unit).

Media
- written and printed information
- electronic information
- audio information
- verbal information
- visual information

Location
It should be decided whether the instructions for use – or parts of them, and if so which parts – are to be given in one or more of the following ways:

- on the product
- on the packaging
- in accompanying material

Comprehensibility
- information should be presented in a simple and understandable way
- product-specific terminology should be explained
- the purchaser should, at all times, be given information in a language (s) that is/are official language(s) in his/her country
- use of terminology and language should be unambiguous

Therefore one should use:
- clear illustrations, diagrams
- only positively tested pictograms
- symbols, text or both

Readability
- One sentence should normally contain only one command
- identify the target group and knowledge
- use standard phrases
- use short and simple sentences
- use action verbs rather than abstract nouns, e.g. use, keep, avoid, rather than utilisation, maintenance
- Avoidance
- Speak directly to consumers rather than saying what they might do, e.g. pull black lever towards you

Legibility
The following aspects are relevant for legibility
- Lay-out
- Letter size, type and font
- Colours and contrast
- Illustrations
- Physical elements

Language
- Use the official language(s) of the country of sale
- Different languages, if more than one is used, should be readily distinguished by flag and country abbreviation
- It is preferable to provide separate instructions for different languages
- Use explanatory symbols to avoid text in many languages
- Keep text adjacent to illustrations

Conclusion
In the literature as well as in standards, guides and laws, the concept of product information and related terms is not always clearly and consistently defined and used. **Anita Venema (2002)** suggested that one overall concept, product information, be used to depict all types of information, texts and images that may accompany or be associated with specific consumer products. Different types of product information may be distinguished by their function and their location. The effects of product information on product safety are difficult to assess and probably limited.

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