

A Study on Customer Attitude towards Small Cars in Coimbatore City

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Abstract -This study with enable to find out the customer awareness of small car, various brands, factors, ideas, opinion, preference and attitude towards small car. This study deals with customer satisfaction and the media which influences them. The present scenario, where the competition is though, the customer is allowed to make the choice customer have given various suggestions and complaints. By taking this into account, companies can obtain the objectives and can complete with market. The finding and suggestions of this survey will provide necessary help for the companies in formulating marketing strategy modify to straight the customer needs in the best way.

Key words: Awareness, Behavior, Consumer, Commodities, Feasibility.

I.1. INTRODUCTION

One of the essential tasks of marketing management is to understand the buyer behavior of the target market. It is necessary to know who, how, when and why consumers buy a product and also to know who makes the purchases decisions and also influence such decisions. Generally, the consumers vary in their age, income, educational level, their taste and preference and hence they pose challenges to marketing manager in marketing of their products. The successes of marketing more depend on how the products are developed and tailored to suit to the needs of their consumers.

The multiplied growth of the same today, in many ways, reflects the psychographics and demographics of the car purchasing population in India. As such for many years, small cars have accounted for major part of the revenue of the fast expanding passenger-car market. But the best thing about the demand for small cars in that there are upgrade possible even in this segment attending to the nature levels that the Indian car industry has reached. Future, Indian consumer now wants the latest technological and functional feature in such cars and not ready to wait for long to get the latest models from foreign car manufacture as they did in the past. Now there are enough loc and multinational players in the Indian market.

India produced about six million two-wheeler and more than two million passenger cars. It is a global major in the two wheeler industry and primarily produce motorcycle, scooter and mopeds of engine capacities below 200CC, it ranks second in the production of two-wheelers and 13th in the production passenger cars. The car industry has grown rate of more than 10% during the last five years and has also witnessed a shift in the demand mix particularly with sales small cars showing an acceleration trend. The increased income levels of middle class family motivates and fulfilled their dreams of owning a car through purchasing a small car, which is much suitable for the India road condition.

I.2. CUSTOMER BEHAVIORS OF VARIOUS CAR SEGMENTS

- ✚ Micro Car Segment (Length < 3.2 Meter)
- ✚ Mini Car Segment (3.2 < L < 3.6 Meter)
- ✚ Compact Car Segment (3.6 < L < 4.0 Meter)
- ✚ Super Compact (4.0 < L < 4.25 Meter)
- ✚ Mid Size Segment (4.25 < L < 4.5 Meter)
- ✚ Executive (4.5 < L < 4.7 Meter)

- ✚ Premium Class Segment (4.7 < L < 5.0 Meter)
- ✚ Luxury and Coupe Sub-Segment
- ✚ SUV and MUV Segment

1.3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Marketing of any product whether durable or non-durable involves a systematic and established proceed through which the business is able to move their products to its consumers. However there may be significant change in the attitude of consumer while arrived a decision to buy between durable and non-durable commodities. Car being a non-durable product and that involves high cost involves series of actions by consumers before and for purchase. In the sense, just like that, purchase is not affected. There may be many number of factors that may influence the customer preference such as price, fuel economy, design, driving comfort appearance etc. small car being an innovation, drew the attention of consumers and large part of consumers started buying them initially. Maruti in came to market and later on many brands were introduced in small car models. Now there are at least half a dozen brands are competing each other to capture the market, there may be lot of marketing strategies adopted by the manufacture of small cars but the customer attitude towards the preference of small cars alone decide the fate of the above business. In this context, a study of this nature is felt relevant and an attempt is being made to analyses their preferences in detail.

1.4. PERFERENCE OF THE SMALL CAR

- ✓ Two wheeler user or second-hand car users generally opt for small cars as they are affordable.
- ✓ The big cars are bigger in size and in power but small car are smaller as well as power.
- ✓ The mileage of the big cars less than the mileage of the small cars.
- ✓ Big cars are used for social status where as small car used for convenience and necessity.
- ✓ The small cars make the driving comfort and safe. They are suitable for the Indian road condition. Now a day's most of the college students and young chaps prefer small cars.
- ✓ A lot of manufacturing companies have come into needs of the people. But, customer's preference for particular brand is depending not only on the internal factors of the company but also on the external factors such as appearance of the car, price, size, color, mileage etc.
- ✓ When car manufacturers are trying to attract more customers, the customer is looking for fuel efficient cars. Small cars being a solution to this crisis getting more attention. These cars much fuel efficient when compared to luxury car.
- ✓ Small cars are more compact and can be maintenance also very easy. When compared to the other cars. They are much reliable in terms of life and also resale values.

1.5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study throws light on the customer attitude towards small cars. The study is restricted to Coimbatore city. This study will be helpful to the awareness of the customer about various brands of small cars and the customer ideas, opinions and preference for small cars. The study area and act as a secondary data for further research.

1.6. POPULATION

The population defined for this study is limited to owners of small cars in Coimbatore city.

1.7. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ❖ To study on customer attitude towards small car.
- ❖ To study the factors that influences the customers in the purchases of small car
- ❖ To find out the problems faced by the customer with small cars.
- ❖ To offer suggestion on the basis of results of the study.

1.8. HYPOTHESIS

The hypotheses were formulated keeping the content and coverage of the framed objectives. The formulated hypotheses are tested by employing appropriate statistical tools. The hypotheses framed in the study are:

- ✚ There is no significant difference between demographic variables and level of satisfaction with free services.
- ✚ There is no significant difference between demographic variables and level of satisfaction with maintenance cost of the small car.

1.9. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

1.1.1 Study area

The study area refers to Coimbatore city.

1.1.2. Period of the study

The study was conducted from July 2013 to July 2016. During the period, the required data were collected for the study.

1.1.3. Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted by the researcher for ascertaining feasibility and importance of the title of the study. By using interview schedule as a model for collected of required data for analyzing and interpreting the data.

1.1.4. Sources of the data

The primary data have been collected from customers. The data were collected using interview schedule method. The interview schedule for customers is prepared in such a way that they were able to express their opinions freely and frankly. Secondary were collected from the websites, newspapers, magazines, journals, and text books etc.

1.1.5. Sampling design

For purpose of the study, the customers using small cars were considered and data were collected using interview schedule. For this purpose, 300 customers were selected and they selected using simple random sampling method.

1.1.6. Statistical tools used in the study

The statistical tools used in the study include descriptive analysis, Mean, Standard Deviation, t-test, ANOVA test, Chi-square test, Correlation matrix and Garrett Ranking Technique. The analysis also helps to standardize the respondent's opinion on various aspects and was applied for all the questions given in the questionnaire.

1.1.7 Limitations of the study

- For purpose of the study, the study areas are restricted to Coimbatore city only.
- The present study is limited to small cars only.
- The findings of the study depend purely on the response on the given by sample respondents.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Muthuraman (2007)¹ highlight the changes that brought about a flood of local and international competitors in car market. The researcher the strong points such as easy availability of raw materials high quality of iron and steels from Jamshedpur in India, similarly the obstacles faced by these industries are highlighted. They are lobbying for polices changes to reduce red tape, cut in taxes and relaxing labour laws by concentrating in this arena with a small car, the researcher says India take big step on to global stage moving beyond out sourcing it is believed that India is become competitive in exports.

K.Kaushi, et al (2008)² in their article, "Buying Behavior for Passenger cars-A study in South West Haryana", found that the respondents in Haryana city were aware of many popular brands of passenger cars. The customer gave more importance to fuel efficiency than other factors. They believe that the brand name represent them something about product quality, utility, passenger cars which offered high fuels efficiency, good quality, technology, durability and reasonable price.

Baumgartner, et al (2008)³ their study revealed that the car produced in West Germany received the highest rating on firm attitudes namely acceleration, safety, styling and workmanship among the Americans. At the same time, the Japanese car ranked highest on fuel economy and reliability.

Natarajan (2010)⁴ these studies observe that consumer preference of global brands vs. local brands in the Indian car industry. Consumer brand perceptions have substantial implications in Marketing. The customers' preference towards local and global brands is studied by administering structured interview schedule with 150 customers in Pondicherry city. The findings of the study advised that the consumers who possessed global car brands, preferred their car brands due to factors such as global presence, worldwide reputation and quality of being a foreign made. Consumers made favorable perceptions the country,

1 Muthuraman, "with A small car, India take big step on to global stage"- <http://www.tatamotors.com>.2007.

2 Dr.V.K.Kaushik and Neeraj Kaushik,-"Buying Behaviour for Passenger cars-A study in south west hararyana" Indian Journals of marketing, Vol. XXXVIII, No.5, pp.49-54, May-2008

3 Baumgartner. G and Jolibert. A "Consumer Attitudes towards Foreign Cars", International Business Studies II (Spring), pp 71-80, 2008.

4 Dr. P.Natarajan & Thiripurasundari U, Local brand vs. Global brand syndrome –A study with reference to Indian car industry, Advances in Management, Vol. 3, No:10, pp. 18-26, 2010.

wherein they tend to associate factors such as superior quality, technical advancements, modernization etc. to the country from which the brand had taken its origin. Consumers who owned a local brand evaluated the local brand in a favorable manner, wherein they tend to associate the brand to India's strong automobile sector that makes quality and technically efficient cars.

Mahapatra, Kumar and Chauhan (2010)⁵ mentioned a study on "customer satisfaction, dissatisfaction and post purchase evaluation: an empirical study on small size passenger cars in India" with the main objectives to examine the satisfaction and impact on future purchase decision and explore the performance of different attributes in automobile in giving satisfaction to customer with the sample size of 150 customers and they used the multiple regression techniques and they revealed from this study that customers are highly satisfied with the performance of attributes like pickup, wipers, etc. and other attributes like pollution, engine, quietness, battery performance, and pick up influence the consumer future purchase decisions and consumer give the more importance to these factors.

Jeft Fortson (2010)⁶ undertook a study to find out the best time to buy a car. The article discussed about the right month to buy a car. Industrial exports and media coverage tell customers that December is the best time of the year to purchase a new vehicle. However, based on data provided by the power information network, that is not always true. The author stated that September was usually the time when most cars were introduced. He also stated that an automaker is running below his targeted sales goal, incentives such as low interest financing, special lease, rate, free gas and deferred payment may be offered to stimulate sales. The study revealed that there is no one thing that determines the best time to purchase a vehicle. However, there are a number of tools which are available to maximize savings. The study revealed that customers should shop around for the best deal.

Seyed Fathollah Amiri Aghdaie, et al (2011)⁷ pointed out that nowadays the most important aspect in designing new products is to consider the needs and demands of the market. Understanding customer requirements and incorporating them into the conceptual vehicle design is the first step of automotive products development. The goal of this research is the Comparative Analysis of affecting Factors on Purchasing Domestic and Imported Cars by using AHP technique, in Iran market. The result indicates that the most important criteria for domestic car purchasers, includes the technical performance, economic aspect, and after sale services, and for imported cars includes, technical performance, beauty of the car as well as its safety.

Ernest Johnson Silas Sargunam (2011)⁸ in his study, an attempt has been made to understand the attitude of car buyers towards the import of used cars by using information system. Result reveals that one third of the respondents show interest in the imported used cars. Also, it is found that the demographic factors such as age, monthly household income and the number of earning members in the family have significant impact on the positive attitude towards the imported used cars.

Ashok Kumar Mishra (2014)⁹ observed that mostly, Tata customers purchased car on loan and using them for personal purpose. It is also seen that mostly people recommend to their friends and relatives who have car, to adopt preventive maintenance of car from authorized dealer only once it completes one year and up to five years. In terms of level of customer satisfaction, it was found that the customer are mostly satisfied with price, design, safety, mileage, interior space, status brand name, comfort level, spares part and after sale service. Finding also indicates that the most influencing factor for customer satisfaction in case of Tata Motors were price, mileage and interior space. Talking of competitiveness among cars is a concern it is seen that customer mostly prefers Maruti car as more loyal than Tata Motors.

⁵ Mahapatra, S., Kumar, J., and Chauhan, A. "Customer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Post-Purchase evaluation: An empirical study on small size passenger cars in India". *International Journal of Business and Society*, 2 (2), 97-108, 2010.

⁶ Jeft Fortson – "The best time to buy a car" *Black enterprise, Journal of Marketing*, vol.37 issue 4, pp.128-135, 2010,

⁷ Seyed Fathollah Amiri Aghdaie and Ehsan Yousefi "The Comparative Analysis of Affecting Factors on Purchasing Domestic and Imported Cars in Iran Market - Using AHP Technique", *International Journal of Marketing Studies* Vol. 3, No. 2; pp.142-150, May 2011

⁸ Ernest Johnson Silas Sargunam, "Attitude of Car Buyers towards Imported used Cars: An Indian Empirical Study". *IJCA Special Issue on Wireless Information Networks & Business Information System* (1):33–36, 2011.

⁹ Ashok Kumar Mishra, "A Study On Relation Between Effective After Sales Service And Customer Overall Satisfaction At Tata Motor's With Special Reference To Ramgarhia Automobiles Ramgarh Cantt, Jharkhand", *International Journal Of Research In Business Management*, Vol. 2, Issue 3, 79-88, Mar 2014,

III. PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

3.1. SEXWISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

S.No	Sex	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Male	255	85.00
2	Female	45	15.00
Total		300	100.00

Source: Primary data

It is observed from table 3.1 that out of 300 respondents, more than three-fourth of the respondents are male and nearly 15 per cent are female. The table reveals that due to availability of employment opportunities and prosperous agricultural activities in study area significant portion of male and female have purchased small cars in the study area.

3.2. OCCUPATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

S.No	Occupation	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	Employees	152	50.67
2	Professionals	45	15.00
3	Businessmen	22	07.33
4	Agriculturist	81	27.00
Total		300	100.00

Source: Primary data

Table 3.2 shows that the majority of the respondents are working in the private and government services, about 27 per cent of the respondents are Agriculturist, 15 per cent of the respondents are professionals and about 07 per cent of the respondents are businessmen. It can be inferred from the table that in the customer base small cars manufacturers mainly consists of employees in the study area.

3.3. PLACE OF RESIDENCE

S.No	Sex	No. of Respondents	Percentage
01	Rural	66	22.00
02	Urban	234	78.00
Total		300	100.00

Source: Primary data

Table 3.3 shows that the more than three-fourth of the respondents are residing in the urban areas and 22 per cent of the respondents are living in the rural areas. Therefore, it can be inferred from the table that the respondents residing in the urban areas most prefers small cars in the study area.

3.4. SOURCE OF AWARENESS OF THE RESPONDENTS

S.No	Source	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Advertisements	168	56.00
2	Friends & relatives	102	34.00
3	Dealers & representatives	30	10.00

Total	300	100.00
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Source: Primary Data.

Table 3.4 shows that out of 300 respondents, the majority of respondents sources of awareness is advertisements given in the media, about 34 per cent of got awareness from the friends and relatives and 10 per cent of the respondents got awareness about the product features of small cars from dealers and representatives. Therefore, it can be inferred from the table words of mouth and advertisements given in the media are the effective medium to disseminate information about product features of the small cars of the company in the study area.

3.5. LEVEL OF SATISFACTION PRODUCT FEATURES

S.No	LEVEL OF SATISFACTION	No. of Respondents	Percentage
01	Highly satisfied	54	18.00
02	Satisfied	168	56.00
03	Neutral	26	8.67
04	Dissatisfied	35	11.67
05	Highly dissatisfied	17	5.66
	Total	300	100.00

Source: Primary data

Table 3.5 indicates that out of 300 respondents 56 per cent and 18 per cent of the respondents have satisfied and highly satisfied about the product features of the small car. Only 17 per cent of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction about product features. Therefore, it can be inferred from the table that customer perceive higher satisfaction with product features of the small cars of the company in the study area.

3.6. DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH FREE SERVICE

The relationship between demographic variables of the respondents and their level of satisfaction with free services is shown in table

Null hypothesis

There is no significant difference between demographic variables and level of satisfaction with free services.

CHI-SQUARE TEST RESULT

Variable	Chi- square test – value	Table value 5% level	Table value 1% level	Result
Sex and Level of satisfaction with free services	50.50	9.49	13.23	**Significant
Age and Level of satisfaction with free services	17.10	15.51	20.09	*Significant
Educational Qualifications and Level of satisfaction with free services	36.80	21.03	26.22	**Significant
Occupation and Level of satisfaction with free services	38.70	21.03	26.22	**Significant
Income and Level of satisfaction with free services	27.20	15.51	20.09	**Significant
Marital status and Level of satisfaction with free services	35.10	9.49	13.23	**Significant
No. of family members and Level of satisfaction with free services	38.60	15.51	20.09	**Significant
Place of residence and Level of satisfaction with free services	44.80	9.49	13.23	**Significant

** Significant at 5% level and 1% level, *Significant at 5 % level

It is understood from the table 3.6 that there is a significant difference between Sex and Level of satisfaction with free services, Age and Level of satisfaction with free services, Educational Qualifications and Level of satisfaction with free services, Occupation and Level of satisfaction with free services, Income and Level of satisfaction with free services, Marital status and Level of satisfaction with free services, Number of family members and Level of satisfaction with free services and Place of residence and Level of satisfaction with free services.

3.7. CONSIDERATION OF OTHER BRANDS

S.No	Consideration of other Brands	No. of respondents	Percentage
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01	Considered	246	82.00
02	Not considered	54	18.00
	Total	300	100

Source: Primary data

It is observed from the table 3.7 that out of 300 respondents 82 per cent of the respondents have compared product features of the brand of small car of other manufacturers and 18 per cent of respondents have not considered brand of small car of the other manufactures. Therefore, the customers take purchase decision to buy a small car of the company after comparison of product features of the small cars of other manufactures in the study area.

3.8. DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH MAINTENANCE

The relationship between demographic variables of the respondents and their level of satisfaction with maintenance is shown in table

Null hypothesis

There is no significant difference between demographic variables and level of satisfaction with maintenance cost of the small car.

CHI-SQUARE TEST RESULT

Variable	Chi- square test – value	Table value 5% level	Table value 1% level	Result
Sex and Level of satisfaction with maintenance	16.60	9.49	13.23	**Significant
Age and Level of satisfaction with maintenance	6.18	15.51	20.09	Not significant
Educational Qualifications and Level of satisfaction with maintenance	36.60	21.03	26.22	**Significant
Occupation and Level of satisfaction with maintenance	18.3	21.03	26.22	Not significant
Income and Level of satisfaction with maintenance	14.4	15.51	20.09	Not significant
Marital status and Level of satisfaction with maintenance	17.2	9.49	13.23	**Significant
No. of family members and Level of satisfaction with maintenance	23.0	15.51	20.09	**Significant
Place of residence and Level of satisfaction with maintenance	19.9	9.49	13.23	**Significant

** Significant at 5% level and 1% level

It is observed from the table 3.8 that there is a significant difference between Sex and Level of satisfaction with maintenance, Educational Qualifications and Level of satisfaction with maintenance, Marital status and Level of satisfaction with maintenance, Number of family members and Level of satisfaction with maintenance and Place of residence and Level of satisfaction with maintenance.

IV. FINDINGS

- ✚ Majority of the respondents' level of brand awareness is independent of the member's gender, age group, marital status, type of family, educational level and size of the family.
- ✚ Majority of the respondents are aware of small car through advertisement and them aware through advertisement in TV.
- ✚ Most of the respondents reported that, the price paid for the small car is reasonable.
- ✚ Majority of the respondents avail the service at authorized service centers.
- ✚ The customers have minimum awareness about product features of the small car of company in the study area.
- ✚ The customers are satisfied with overall product features of the small cars manufactured by the company.
- ✚ Most of the respondents are not satisfied with the road conditions.

V. SUGGESTIONS

- The study further revealed that while giving opinion about free service and after sales service high rating was not given by consumers. In other words the customer has stated the free service as 'good' and towards after sales service they are 'fairly satisfied'. It means 'very good' and 'very much satisfied' are not found. It is up to the manufacturer to take sufficient steps to earn higher rating from customers.

- Creating new customers for the business, through the dealers maintaining good appearance and cleanliness of the showroom, explanation for enquiries by the employees and mechanics, prompt delivery of the vehicle and integrity of the dealer.
- The company should reduce all types of fees and charges for after sale services to a considerable extent and which are affordable to middle class customers.
- Today's scenario many nuclear families are growing so the car manufacturer analyze the need, want, taste, preference of the customer and design the product.
- Consumers feel that number of dealers can be increased. More service stations can be opened in and around the city, so that it will be convenient to the consumers to utilize the service regularly.

VI. CONCLUSION

Consumer behavior consists of all human behavior that goes in making before and post purchase decisions. One can succeed in the competitive market only after understanding the complex consumer behavior. As today's market is buyer's market. It becomes necessary to study the consumer taste, idea, preference etc... Its large numbers of products are available in the market the competition becomes serve, which leads to the discriminating practices adopted by manufacturers to boost up the sales of their product.

It is the lowest cost segment. Despite being the cheapest car, had serious initial quality issues which damaged its brand image and customer faith. As a product this segment will get preference for city drive over congested road conditions wherein safety on road will be better than two wheelers.

The Indian road condition accepts the small car to be best – suited transport mode. Small cars need a very less space for parking. The car turn-around at any place. The convenience in driving a small car cannot be expected from its others sized cars. The small toy cars are the best vehicle to ride inside the city. From this analysis, the attitudes of the customers are studied and this may help the other customers who are in a position of purchasing the small car.

“Small cars are small in size but big on ideas”.

“Small cars have big customer”.

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SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A similar study could be conducted in other small cars owner with a larger sample size so that results could be generalized to a larger population. The study can be carried out in other areas and other states comprised of multiple cultures to find out the customer towards small cars in India.

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