A Study of Consumer Perception towards Small Cars in India

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บทคัดย่อ

อุตสาหกรรมการผลิตรถยนต์ในประเทศอินเดียเป็นหนึ่งในสิบที่ใหญ่ที่สุดในโลกที่มีการผลิตปีละประมาณ 2 ล้านหน่วยและคาดว่าจะกลายเป็นหนึ่งในอุตสาหกรรมรถยนต์ที่สำคัญของโลกในปีที่ผ่านมา คาดการณ์ว่าตลาดอินเดียจะยืนที่ตำแหน่งสูงสุดของ บริษัท ในปี 2020 การวิจัยปัจจุบันได้รับการดำเนินการประเมินความพึงพอใจของลูกค้าที่มีผลกระทบต่อปัจจัยการตัดสินใจและการรับรู้ของลูกค้าที่มีต่อคุณลักษณะขั้นสูงและมาตรการด้านความปลอดภัย เพื่อให้ได้ข้อมูลปฐมภูมิตัวอย่างที่ถูกเลือกจากรัฐมหาราษฎร์ พบว่าส่วนใหญ่ของลูกค้าเป็นเพศชายภายในกลุ่มอายุของ 20-50 ปี สำหรับรถยนต์เบนซินและดีเซ การประหยัดน้ำมันเป็นตัวแปรที่สำคัญ มันถูกเปิดเผยจากการสำรวจว่าส่วนใหญ่ของลูกค้าไม่พึงพอใจกับการบริการหลังการขาย ดังนั้นบริษัทควรคำนึงถึงผลการวิจัยข้างต้น

คำสำคัญ: อุตสาหกรรมการผลิตรถยนต์ ความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า การรับรู้ของลูกค้า

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Abstract

The automobile industry in India is the tenth largest in the world with an annual production of approximately 2 million units and is expected to become one of the major global automobile industries in the coming years. It is also projected that Indian market will stand at the third highest position by 2020. The present study has been carried out to evaluate the customer satisfaction,. factors affecting decision making and the perception of customers towards advanced features and safety measures. To get the primary data, the samples were selected from the progressive state of Maharashtra. It was observed that majority of the customers were males within the age group of 20-50, with a strong preference for petrol and diesel cars and fuel efficiency as the important parameter. It is revealed from the survey that majority of customers are unhappy with the aftersales service. Hence companies should take into consideration the above findings while designing their offering

Keywords: automobile industry, customer satisfaction, perception of customers

Introduction

The automobile industry in India is the tenth largest in the world with an annual production of approximately 2 million units and is expected to become one of the major global automobile industries in the coming years. It is also projected that Indian market will stand at the third highest position by 2020. It is also surprising to know that by 2014 the Indian passenger car market will leave behind the pioneer auto country like Japan. A number of domestic companies produce automobiles in India and the growing presence of multinational investment too, has led to an increase in overall growth. Following the economic reforms of 1991 the Indian automotive industry has demonstrated sustained growth as a result of increased competitiveness and relaxed restriction.

Market analysis:

The Indian car manufacturing industry has experienced strong double digit growth in recent years. The Indian car manufacturing industry had total revenue of $22.5 billion in 2010, representing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22.8% for the period spanning 2006-2010. In comparison, the Chinese industry increased with a CAGR of 24.4%, and the Japanese industry declined with a compound annual rate of change (CARC) of -2.2%, over the same period, to reach respective values of $79.6 billion and $170 billion in 2010.

Industry production volumes increased with a CAGR of 18.2% during 2006-2010, to reach a total of 2,871,240 units in 2010. The industry's volume is expected to rise to 3,348,500 units by the end of 2015, representing a CAGR of 3.1% for the 2010-2015 periods. The table given below shows the scenario of automobile industry from 2003-2004 to 2009-2010

Table No. 1

Category	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Passenger Vehicles	902,096	1,061,572	1,143,076	1,379,979	1,549,882	1,552,703	1,949,776
Commercial Vehicles	260,114	318,430	351,041	467,765	490,494	384,194	531,395
Three Wheelers	284,078	307,862	359,920	403,910	364,781	349,727	440,368
Two Wheelers	5,364,249	6,209,765	7,052,391	7,872,334	7,249,278	7,437,619	9,371,231
Grand Total	6,810,537	7,897,629	8,906,428	10,123,988	9,654,435	9,724,243	12,292,770

Automobile Domestic Sales Trends

(Source: SIAM - Report of SIAM - 2010)

The table no. 1 clearly depicts the annual increase of the domestic sale in automobile industry. Considering the base year 2003-04, there was an increase in sales by 15 percent in 2004-05. The next year of 2005-06, it has been increased by 30 percent i.e., increased of 15 percent compared to the previous year's sale. Similarly in the year 2006-07 it went up to 48 percent by an annual increase of 18 percent compared to the last year. The sales figures of the year 2007-08 shows 41 percent increase in comparison with the base year sale. But compared to the sale of 2006-07, there was decrease in sales by 7 percent. Again in the year 2008-09, it simply increase by 1 percent and went up to 42 percent. Above all the sales figures of 2009-10 shows a huge increase in sales and it is 80 percent compared to the base year and 32 percent increase compared to the previous year. All these figures indicate the continuous increasing sales trend in Indian Automobile market. The increase in sales trend had been boomed up in the year 2009-10 may be because of the entry of multinational automobile manufacturers in Indian market. Similarly, the Indian manufacturers have also introduced the multiple brands with wide variety of features. The another reason behind increasing sales trend since last 4 to 5 years is also sought on account of the liberal economic policies of the Government which allowed the entry of private financial institutions in the Indian capital and money market. To face the competition with private financial institutions, the Government and Semi Government financial organizations have simplified their money lending procedures and diluted the terms and conditions. These all reflected in increasing sales trend in the Automobile Industry.

Objective of the study:

The objectives of the research are -

1) To evaluate the customer satisfaction and its dependent variables.

2) To understand the factors affecting and persons involved in decision making process.

3) To access which version of cars is preferred by the customers in the study area.

4) To study the perception of customers towards advance features and safety measures in car.

Data Collection:

Primary data collection:

The Questionnaire method and interviews of the stakeholders have been undertaken for the collection of primary data. To get feedback of the customers the sample size decided was 575 and 425 from Pune and Aurangabad of Maharashtra state respectively. Out of the selected samples 550 respondents and 370 respondents from the study responded to the questionnaire. This sample size is taken in to consideration the total number of registered owners of the vehicles from Pune and Aurangabad cities after 2005.

Data Analysis

Table No. 2

Age group of the Respondents.

	Aurangabad		Pune	
Age Group	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
18-35 years	184	49.72	249	45.27
36-50 years	137	37.04	204	37.09
51 years And above	49	13.24	97	17.64
Total	**370**	**100**	**550**	**100**

The table no. 2 given above indicates that the majority of the customers in Aurangabad are in the age group of 18 to 35 and 36 to 50 years. This class consists of 86.76 per cent of customers. In Pune this age group consists of 82.36 percent. This shows that the major customers in the study area are under the age group of 50 years and below.

Gender of the Respondents:

The gender wise buying preferences of the respondents have been incorporated in the present research under following ratio:

Table No. 3

Gender of the Respondents

	Aurangabad		Pune	
Sex	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Male	299	80.82	417	75.81
Female	71	19.18	133	24.19
Total	**370**	**100**	**550**	**100**

The gender bias has been observed in the responsiveness of the subjects. Male are more in numbers showing ownership of cars than the women. The table no. 3 validates this point. It is observed that the ownership of cars in the name of women is 19.18 percent in Aurangabad and 24.19 percent in Pune but maximum use of these cars is done by their husbands. It is merely because of distribution of assets.

Table No. 4

Educational Qualifications

	Aurangabad		**Pune**	
Education	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Illiterate	21	5.67	038	6.90
Primary	34	9.18	24	4.36
Secondary	29	7.83	42	7.63
Degree	153	41.38	207	37.63
PG	128	34.59	161	30.00
Technical	05	1.35	78	14.18
Total	**370**	**100**	**550**	**100**

The table no. 4 indicates that only 5.67 percent and 6.90 percent of the respondents are illiterates in Aurangabad and Pune respectively. 17.01 percent and 11.99 percent of the respondents have been educated up to primary and higher secondary level. 75.97 And 67.63 percent of the respondents have completed their degree and post-graduation. Respondents who have taken technical education are more in number @ 14.18 percent in Pune city. The data makes it clear that most of the respondents owning cars are highly educated and in turn placed at a good position on sailable pay packages. It is surprising to know that illiterate and primary level educated respondents have also shown their share in ownership of cars the very reason is that though they are illiterate or having education up to primary schooling are doing well in business. Some customers having technical (ITI's) background have contributed their share in owning the cars in both the study areas.

Table No. 5

Income group

	Aurangabad		**Pune**	
Income Group (P.M. in Rs.)	**Frequency**	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
20000 to 50000	59	15.94	095	17.27
50000 to 80000	97	26.21	63	11.45
80000 to 100000	161	43.53	219	39.81
100000 above	47	12.70	154	28.00
Not Reported	06	1.62	19	3.45
Total	**370**	**100**	**550**	**100**

Income plays a vital role in purchasing of luxury goods. And when it comes to purchasing a car it has a direct bearing on buying behavior of an individual. From the above table it is clear that 43.53 percent respondents of Aurangabad and 39.81 percent respondents of Pune fall in the income group of Rs 80000 to 100000 per month. There are respondents whose income is Rs 100000 and above contribute to 12.70 percent in Aurangabad and 28.00 percent in Pune. Out of the total respondents 25 respondents have not responded to this question; the reason may be that they don't want to expose their income. As far as the Pune city is concerned; respondents having income above Rs 80000 are more than that of in Aurangabad; it may because of more expose of industries in Pune city. There are many I. T. companies who are giving very high pay packages to their employees. This is evident from table no.5 given below: .

Table No. 6

Occupational pattern

Occupation Pattern	Aurangabad		Pune	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Farmers	14	3.78	30	5.45
Businessmen& Professionals	147	39.72	195	35.47
Govt. servants	81	21.89	144	26.18
Corporate employees	104	28.13	171	31.09
Others	24	6.48	10	1.81
Total	**370**	**100**	**550**	**100**

The table no. 6 illustrates occupational pattern where agricultural related respondents are 3.78 percent and 5.45 percent only. The biggest class of respondents is from business and professions and i.e., 39.72 percent and 35.47 percent respectively. The respondents working in corporate sector contribute their share 28.13 percent and 31.09 percent in the study area. From the facts and figures; it can be analyzed that the ownership of cars is dominated by persons engaged in business and professions followed by the persons engaged in corporate sector. The respondents holding positions in Govt. sectors have shown their interests in owning the cars. Their contribution in possessing the cars is considerable.

Table No. 7

Version of Vehicle

Sr. No.	Version	Aurangabad		Pune	
		Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
1	Petrol	141	38.10	317	57.63
2	Diesel	191	51.62	172	31.28
3	CNG/ LPG	38	10.27	61	11.09
	Total	**370**	**100**	**550**	**100**

Use of fuel is one the most important criteria in decision making of buying a car. In the study area only petrol, diesel and LPG fuel is available. As far as the use of petrol is concern the respondents of Pune prefer petrol version cars 57.63 percent. On the contrary, respondents of Aurangabad prefer diesel cars 51.62 percent. No doubt there is considerable difference in the price of petrol and diesel but still some people prefer petrol cars. The respondents of Aurangabad seem to be price minded and hence go for diesel cars. The use of LPG is 10.27 percent in Aurangabad and 11.09 percent in Pune. The very reason for this is that the car owners find it difficult to fill their vehicles with LPG when they are in the city. It is to be mentioned that there are only 2 LPG stations in Aurangabad and 11 in Pune. And most of these stations are functioning out of Municipal Corporation limits of both the cities. It is to be noted that; gone are the days when diesel vehicles where causing more pollution and vibrations. Now with the progressive development in science and technology it has reduced to a large extent where diesel vehicles are made available in Common Rail Direct Injection (CRDI) category hence preferred.

Table No. 8

Satisfaction Level in Fuel Efficiency

Sr. No.		Aurangabad		Pune	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	Fully satisfied	179	48.63	287	52.18
2	Partly Satisfied	75	20.27	104	18.92
3	Partly Dis-satisfied	62	16.78	73	13.27
4	Fully Dis-satisfied	31	8.37	47	8.54
5	Cannot satisfied	23	6.21	39	7.09
	Total	**370**	**100**	**550**	**100**

Consumption of fuel is a sensible factor on which the buying decision rests. It is a recurring expense to be borne by the car owners. And therefore this factor is to be considered very seriously. It is very serious that frequent increase in the fuel prices is disturbing/collapsing the monthly financial budget of the car owner. It is observed that nearly every car owner is conscious of fuel efficiency of his car. At the time of purchase decision he is very much interested to compare all the vehicles which he intends to buy. After purchasing the vehicle he should check whether the mileage claimed by the car manufacturing company come true or not. The table No. 8 depicts the reality as far as the customer satisfaction towards fuel efficiency is concerned. It is to be noted that 48.37 percent respondents of Aurangabad and 52.18 percent respondents of Pune are fully satisfied with the fuel efficiency of their cars. But 20.27 percent respondents of Aurangabad and 18.92 percent respondents of Pune are partly satisfied. It means that they are not happy with the mileage as claimed by the car company. It is surprising to know that 8.37 percent respondents of Aurangabad city and 8.54 percent respondents of Pune city are fully dissatisfied with the fuel performance of the car they are driving. It indicates bad sign on the part of the company and its marketing efforts. These unsatisfied customers may spread their negative feelings to prospective customers against the car and the company and it may affect the market in future.

Table No. 9

Safety Measures and Advance Features

In an answer to the question on safety measures and advance features like airbags, proximity censors, power windows, power steering, ABS system, seat belt and door alarm, the opinions of the respondents are mentioned in the following table:

Sr. No.	Opinion	Aurangabad		Pune	
		Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
1	Extremely Imp.	64	17.29	219	39.81
2	Very Imp.	93	25.13	102	18.54
3	Somewhat Imp.	109	29.45	84	15.27
4	Not very Imp.	45	12.19	108	19.65
5	Not at all Imp.	59	15.94	37	6.72
	Total	**370**	**100**	**550**	**100**

The Table No. 9 indicates that 40 percent respondents of Pune city are putting emphasis on airbags, censors, power windows, power steering, and ABS system. There are on the contrary that around only 17 percent respondents of Aurangabad city are in favor of all these modern features and advance safety measures. 25 percent respondents and 19 percent respondents of Aurangabad and Pune cities respectively rated this question as very important. 16 percent respondents of Aurangabad and 7 percent of Pune consider that these features are not at all required. The mentality behind this opinion is to avail these facilities they have to pay more. Considering this situation it is observed that the respondents of Pune city possess a modern approach towards safety and driving pleasure and hence they are ready to pay more amount of premium. While discussion with the respondents of Aurangabad city nearly 28 percent respondents stated that it is waste of money, and such type of advance vehicles need heavy maintenance costs. They further gave the example that the power windows get disturbed frequently and hence need heavy maintenance cost for its alignment. A question was administered on the respondents in which an attempt was made to check how customers rate the after sales service facility given by the company/ dealer. For this; use of rating scale was done. It was based on the service they get, which is depicted in the table below:

Table No. 10

After Sales Service

Sr. No.		Aurangabad		Pune	
		Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
1	Excellent	34	9.18	87	15.81
2	Very good	129	34.86	182	33.09
3	Good	47	12.70	120	21.81
4	Fair	107	28.91	91	16.57
5	Poor	53	14.35	70	12.72
	Total	**370**	**100**	**550**	**100**

From the above table No. 10 only 9.18 percent respondents of Aurangabad and 15.81 percent respondents of Pune are happy with the after sales service provided by the company/ dealer. They remark that is excellent. 35 percent and 33 percent respondents of Aurangabad and Pune respectively claim the service to be very good. The respondents who are of the opinion that the service is fair are 29 percent and 17 percent respectively. 14 percent and 13 percent respondents of Aurangabad and Pune reported that the after sales service provided by the dealer is poor and not up to the mark. It means that once the customer purchases the car, proper care is not taken by the local dealers. Some of the customers suggested that the company/dealer should give high attention to provide excellent after sales service. It will result in increase in the goodwill of the company/ dealer. And hence the company/dealer may avail the substantial benefits of the market by increasing the sales volume. Company/ dealer should give priority to satisfy the customer as the market is customer centric.

Table No. 11

Market share of small car companies in the study area

Sr. No.	Name of the company	Aurangabad	Pune
1	Maruti Suzuki	49.18	47.45
2	Tata	22.97	12.57
3	Hyundai	07.56	17.63
4	Chevrolet	04.86	5.63
5	Other	15.43	16.72
	Total	**100**	**100**

From the above Table No. 11 it seems that the car company Maruti Suzuki is the market leader and contributing its share in the study area around 49 percent and 47 percent respectively. The company's marketing strategies and its policies to give priority to care for the customer have achieved the success not only in study area but at national level. It has been observed that the company has appointed dealers in all the districts of the country. Even they have put emphasis on after sales service. The company has opened service stations at remote places and they are really serving their customers valuably. The company is still successful in creating its brand image in such a way that if any customer intends to buy a car he shows his first inclination towards Maruti Suzuki.

The Indian car company Tata stands second in respect of market share. Tata is successful in acquiring 23 per cent of share in Aurangabad and only 13 per cent in

Pune city. While having discussion with Tata owners of Aurangabad city it has been observed that they are giving preference to diesel version. According to their opinions Tata Indica is an ideal model. They said that price wise it is reasonable, mileage performance is better. They again claim that its interior is spacious and it is comfortable even on country side roads. It was very strange to know that most of the customers buy Tata vehicles to put these vehicles in taxi business and their customers are multinational business houses and IT companies. The brand Nano has not shown paradigm shift in car ownership as it was expected and forecasted.

Hyundai; a foreign car manufacturing company has contributed its share in Aurangabad market and that is 18 percent and it is 14 percent in Pune city. The rational thinking of customers has pulled down the market share of Hyundai. The reason which is found while discussing with the car aspirants is that the shape of the Santro is not that way appealing. The new generation of car buyers dream to have sleek and cute shape. Taking feedback from the customers; Hyundai innovated its new i-10 and i-20 models in the shape which has appeal to the customers, but unfortunately due to high price these two models are not marketable to large extent.

Chevrolet being new in small car market will have to fight for its position because there are already well established models in the study area like Maruti and Tata. No doubt the General Motor Company is the oldest and having high regards over the world, but it seems difficult to get established in the Indian environment.

Decision Making Process

Decision making can be regarded as the mental processes resulting in the selection of a course of action among several alternative scenarios. Every decision making process produces a final choice. The output can be an action or an opinion of choice. Decision making is a complex process for every article but it becomes more complex and complicated when it comes to high investment luxury goods. While making decision to buy car information about various models are to be collected and compared, and then only the final decision is possible. And of course; it is not an individual decision. Buyiying a car is a major decision not only in individual's life but in family. The person who is aspiring to buy a car can't avoid the participation of his family members in the decision making. Every member of a family; even a child who just began to put his step on the floor is anxious to take a long drive in the car of his

Dad. In general how the members of a family actively get involve in decision making to buy their dream car is shown in the following table

Table No. 10

After Sales Service

Sr. No.	Decision makers	Aurangabad		Pune	
		Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
1	Husband& spouse	92	24.86	146	26.54
2	Husband, spouse & children	134	36.23	168	30.54
3	All family member & friends	122	32.97	223	40.54
4	Individual	22	05.94	13	02.38
	Total	**370**	**100**	**550**	**100**

From the above table it makes very clear that buying a car is the unanimous decision of a family. In this process husband, spouse, kids and many a times family friend are involved. This family friend may be an opinion leader. The opinion leader is a person who is either a technical person or he may be a car owner. He plays an active role and may have direct involvement in decision making. From this information an inference can be drawn that the decision making is mix in nature.

Recommendations:

1. It is observed that the maximum respondents are in the age groups between 18 to 35 and 36 to 50. The car manufacturing company should concentrate on these age groups and more focus should be given to fulfill the requirements of these age groups. Hence more and more customers could be aççommodated in the car owner's society.

2. In the survey, it is observed that there is male domination in car ownership. In this modern society both husband and wife are employed and they are supporting their family to get financially well established. To have equilibrium in ownership the automobile companies should give special incentives for the women who intend to be car owners.

3. Most preferred version of vehicle is petrol followed by diesel. Petrol and diesel vehicles have more emission and cause air and noise pollution. By making LPG/ CNG available on the highways of the country the vehicles of petrol and diesel version could be reduced. It is therefore recommended that the car manufacturers should concentrate on Green marketing and aware the customers to go for Green products.

4. As far as the fuel efficiency is concerned, it depends upon the car brand. Some cars are more fuel efficient and some are less. While survey it was noted that maximum of the customers are looking for a more fuel efficient car. The company should use advance technology and increase the efficiency of a car. As the prices of fuel are increasing day by day the customers will prefer only those cars which will give more mileage.

5. Near about all the car manufacturers have added safety measures in their cars but at a premium prices. The customer' perception towards safety measures is not so positive and say by adding these; it is an additional burden and hence do not go for it. Company should reduce the additional cost so as to have a break-even in safety parts. On the other hand it is also recommended that Government should provide some sort of subsidy for safety measure parts which will reduce accidents and save human being from severe accidents.

6. The after sales service provided by the dealers on behalf of the company is not so satisfactory. There are several complaints against the dealers. The company should have direct linkage with the customers through E-mail and try to know from the customers as how, when and for what purpose they did not get the after sales service satisfactorily. If it happens the dealers will be compel to give the best possible after sales service.

7. It is evident from the facts and figures that decision making of a car is not an individual's decision. The company should concentrate on the spouse, children and make display as how this will be their own dream-car.

8. The car manufacturing company should fairly advertise their car. There should not be any misleading contents. The information provided to the customers should be very clear and without any work (condition applied). The mileage shown in the advertisement should match the reality, where some variation can be accepted.

9. The main concern of the customers is fuel efficiency. Company should advertise in a true way, showing the actual millage considering the road conditions and driving style.

10.Every car manufacturing company should continuously work on research and development and to manufacture a green car should be their agenda.

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