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BUYING BEHAVIOUR AND PERCEPTION OF CUSTOMERS' TOWARDS MUV/SUV SEGMENT CARS.



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ABSTRACT

The Indian Automobile Industry has flourished in the recent years. This extraordinary growth that the Indian Automobile Industry, has witnessed the improvement in the living standard of the middle class and an increase in their disposable incomes. Moreover, the liberalization steps, such as relaxation of the foreign exchange and equity regulations, reduction of tariffs on imports and refining the banking policies which was initiated by the Government of India, have played an important role in bringing the Indian Automobile Industry to great heights.

KEYWORDS : *Buying Behaviour , Perception Of Customers , Indian Automobile Industry .*



1.1 INTRODUCTION :

India produced about eight million two-wheelers, three million passenger cars and utility vehicles in 2009 - 2010. India ranks second in the world in the production of the two-wheelers and thirteenth in the production of the passenger cars. The manufacturing of passenger cars in the Indian car industry has recorded an overall growth of over 8per cent. Every year the rate of production is increasing because of the advanced technology and increasing number of establishments in terms of

production houses and design centers. Recently, many car manufactures like Hyundai, Maruti Suzuki, and Fiat have established their design centers in the country. Today, most of the car manufacturers are eyeing India as a hub for MUV and SUV car production.

1.2 NEED FOR THE STUDY:

Due to the fuel efficiency and multi usage potentialities, the MUVs have become much popular in India. Over the years, the demand of Multi Utility Vehicles has also increased. The MUVs produced nowadays are having excellent features. The MUVs come with a cluster of numerous comfort features that ensure smooth driving experience to the users. Although the other segments of car have recorded rapid production growth the manufacture of MUVs have grown slowly. In the last decade, the domestic sale of these vehicles has seen many ups and downs. Multi Utility Vehicle statistics indicate that the domestic sale of these vehicles will however grow in the following years. Multi Utility Vehicles are even exported to various nations. Multi Utility Vehicle statistics indicate that the exports

of these vehicles will grow even more with the introduction of new models by the various car manufacturers. The prevailing status of the market has motivated the researcher to critically evaluate "Consumers' Buying Behaviour towards Branded Multi Utility Vehicles (MUVs) and Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs) (A Study with Special Reference to Coimbatore District, Tamilnadu)".

1.3 OBJECTIVE :

- To critically evaluate buying behaviour and perception of customers' towards MUV/SUV segment cars.

1.4 SAMPLING DESIGN:

A sample of hundred (100) respondents from each zone: Coimbatore North, Coimbatore South, Coimbatore Central, Pollachi and Mettupalalyam had been collected in a face-to-face interview technique. At the end of the data collection process it had realized that nearly 10 questioners were unusable due to inconsistency of data supply, therefore, those ten questioners were deducted from actual sample, the sample research population was restricted to 490 respondents. The researcher used questionnaire as the data collection tool. The required primary data was collected with the help of well structured questionnaire after testing its reliability and validity measures. The secondary data needed for the study were sourced from India Automobile Association Bulletins, research works published in the journals and magazines and also published and unpublished thesis of various degree/diploma or research work.

BEHAVIORAL PATTERN

The term buying behaviour covers the decision-making processes from those that precede the purchase of goods or services to the final experience of using the product or service. Models of consumer buying behaviour draw together the various influences on the process of, the buying decision. They attempt to understand the proverbial 'black box' of what happens within the consumer between his or her exposure to marketing stimuli and the actual decision to purchase. Kotler et al. (2004) briefly explain the 'black box' model; however Figure 4.1 shows the content and process involved.

EXHIBIT 1 :BUYING BEHAVIOUR AND PERCEPTION

People's perception of something can vary greatly from person to person, with each one forming an individual opinion about the stimuli (agents, action or conditions that elicit a response) being received. Individuals are continually receiving "messages" through the five senses: touch, taste, smell, sight and sound. Successful marketers use those senses to stimulate consumers to examine a product. Perception is one of the key psychological factors that influence consumer behaviour. Moreover by studying consumers, business can gain a better understanding of the role of perception in consumer behaviour. Companies can greatly improve their marketing strategies when they have a firm grasp on the psychology of how consumers feel, think and reason their way to a buying decision. Knowing how consumers are influenced by their environment, their information-processing abilities and their perception of a product can help companies to more effectively reach consumers. The following draws clear understanding vehicle owners' buying behaviour and perception towards this segment of cars.

TABLE: 2 NATURE OF VEHICLE OWNED

Sl. No	Nature of Vehicle Owned	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Diesel engine	328	66.94
2.	Petrol engine	162	33.06
3.	Alternative fuel	0	0.00
	Total	490	100

It is clear that majority 66.94 per cent of the respondents' have diesel engine vehicle, followed by 33.06 per cent of them having petrol engine vehicle. Therefore it is said that majority of the surveyed respondents have owned diesel engine based vehicles. It may be because diesel engines are economical in usage and can be used for long distance travel.

TABLE: 3 PURCHASE DECISION TAKEN BY THE RESPONDENTS

Sl. No	Purchase decision	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Own / Self	220	44.90
2.	Combined (family members)	246	50.20
3.	Combined (senior officials)	24	4.90
	Total	490	100

It is understood from the table that most of the respondents (i.e., 50.20 per cent) have taken purchase decision for buying vehicles after considering their family members decisions to buy MUV/SUV segment car. Followed by 44.90 per cent of them have taken self decision to buy the vehicle. The remaining 4.90 per cent of them have consulted their senior officials before making a purchase decision. Therefore, it is concluded that most of the surveyed respondents have consulted their family members before taking decision to buy a vehicle.

TABLE: 3 RESPONDENT'S OPINION ON USAGE, PERFORMANCE AND MAINTENANCE OF VEHICLE

Factors	Very high Important	Important	Neutral	Low Important	Very low Important	Total sum	Average mean	Rank
Quality								
Body structure	194(39.59)	182(37.14)	65(13.27)	41(8.37)	8(1.63)	1983	4.05	5
Engine	325(66.33)	132(26.94)	8(1.63)	17(3.47)	8(1.63)	2219	4.53	1
Tyres	291(59.39)	166(33.88)	8(1.63)	17(3.47)	8(1.63)	2185	4.46	2
Paint quality	169(34.49)	249(50.82)	56(11.43)	8(1.63)	8(1.63)	2033	4.15	4
Fuel efficiency	243(49.59)	175(35.71)	56(11.43)	8(1.63)	8(1.63)	2107	4.30	3

Engine Performances								
Engine capacity	270(55.10)	163(33.27)	25(5.10)	16(3.27)	16(3.27)	2125	4.34	5
Transmission power	310(63.27)	156(31.84)	16(3.27)	0(0.00)	8(1.63)	2230	4.55	1
Acceleration	319(65.10)	130(26.53)	33(6.73)	8(1.63)	0(0.00)	2230	4.55	1
Fuel emission level	204(41.63)	222(45.31)	48(9.80)	8(1.63)	8(1.63)	2076	4.24	8
Suspension	236(48.16)	206(42.04)	32(6.53)	8(1.63)	8(1.63)	2124	4.33	6
Break	275(56.12)	174(35.51)	33(6.73)	0(0.00)	8(1.63)	2178	4.44	4
Clutch	283(57.76)	167(34.08)	32(6.53)	0(0.00)	8(1.63)	2187	4.46	3
Cock pit	218(44.49)	198(40.41)	66(13.47)	0(0.00)	8(1.63)	2088	4.26	7
Air conditioner	227(46.33)	165(33.67)	74(15.10)	16(3.27)	8(1.63)	2057	4.20	9
Passenger Safety								
Child proof gear	179(36.53)	205(41.84)	82(16.73)	16(3.27)	8(1.63)	2001	4.08	2
Door locks	195(39.80)	189(38.57)	74(15.10)	8(1.63)	24(4.90)	1993	4.07	3
Central locking	163(33.27)	205(41.84)	98(20.00)	16(3.27)	8(1.63)	1969	4.02	5
Front rear head and ramps	169(34.49)	239(48.78)	58(11.84)	16(3.27)	8(1.63)	2015	4.11	1
Foot rests	113(23.06)	304(62.04)	57(11.63)	8(1.63)	8(1.63)	1976	4.03	4
Day & night mirror	37(7.55)	231(47.14)	114(23.27)	0(0.00)	8(1.63)	1459	2.98	6

TABLE: 4

RESPONDENT'S OPINION ON USAGE, PERFORMANCE AND MAINTENANCE OF VEHICLE

Factors	Very high Important	Important	Neutral	Low Important	Very low important	Total sum	Average mean	Rank
Vehicle Safety								
High mount brake light	243(49.59)	207(42.24)	32(6.53)	0(0.00)	8(1.63)	2147	4.38	3
Power steering	261(53.27)	172(35.10)	49(10.00)	8(1.63)	0(0.00)	2156	4.40	2
Ground clearance	277(56.53)	157(32.04)	48(9.80)	0(0.00)	8(1.63)	2165	4.42	1

Rear window defroster	229(46.73)	188(38.37)	49(10.00)	24(4.90)	0(0.00)	2092	4.27	6
Side protection	268(54.69)	107(21.84)	90(18.37)	25(5.10)	0(0.00)	2088	4.26	4
Moldings	211(43.06)	156(31.84)	106(21.63)	17(3.47)	0(0.00)	2031	4.14	7
Door	196(40.00)	187(38.16)	66(13.47)	41(8.37)	0(0.00)	2008	4.10	8
Crumbled zones	188(38.37)	171(34.90)	115(23.47)	8(1.63)	8(1.63)	1993	4.07	9
Air bags	235(47.96)	157(32.04)	90(18.37)	8(1.63)	0(0.00)	2089	4.26	4
Ease of Handling								
Riding comfort turning radius	212(43.27)	172(35.10)	90(18.37)	8(1.63)	8(1.63)	2042	4.17	2
Power steering	261(53.27)	162(33.06)	42(8.57)	17(3.47)	8(1.63)	2121	4.33	1
Comfort (Interior)								
Seat interiors	277(56.53)	154(31.43)	51(10.41)	0(0.00)	8(1.63)	2162	4.41	2
Leg room	327(66.73)	106(21.63)	49(10.00)	0(0.00)	8(1.63)	2214	4.52	1
Space of cabin	224(45.71)	185(37.76)	56(11.43)	17(3.47)	8(1.63)	2070	4.22	4
Turning space	245(50.00)	132(26.94)	81(16.53)	24(4.90)	8(1.63)	2052	4.19	5
Music system	245(50.00)	171(34.90)	58(11.84)	8(1.63)	8(1.63)	2107	4.30	3
Style (Exterior)								
Aerodynamic body	197(40.20)	191(38.98)	106(21.63)	8(1.63)	8(1.63)	2091	4.27	1
Glossy look	198(40.41)	179(36.53)	49(10.00)	48(9.80)	16(3.27)	1965	4.01	3
Metallic/Pearl finish	204(41.63)	188(38.37)	66(13.47)	24(4.90)	8(1.63)	2026	4.13	2
Electrical and Electronic Features								
Head lightings	221(45.10)	180(36.73)	73(14.90)	0(0.00)	16(3.27)	2060	4.20	5
Wiper	238(48.57)	210(42.86)	34(6.94)	0(0.00)	8(1.63)	2140	4.37	3
Instrument panel	278(56.73)	139(28.37)	65(13.27)	8(1.63)	0(0.00)	2157	4.40	2
Power windows	293(59.80)	124(25.31)	65(13.27)	8(1.63)	0(0.00)	2172	4.43	1
Electronic start	187(38.16)	213(43.47)	74(15.10)	16(3.27)	0(0.00)	2041	4.17	6
Horns	250(51.02)	182(37.14)	33(6.73)	17(3.47)	8(1.63)	2119	4.32	4

TABLE: 5
RESPONDENT'S OPINION ON USAGE, PERFORMANCE AND MAINTENANCE OF VEHICLE

Features	Mean	SD	CV	Rank
Quality	1.70	0.87	51.12	3
Engine performance	1.62	0.81	49.54	5
Passenger safety	1.95	0.87	44.87	8
Vehicle safety	1.74	0.84	48.25	6
Ease of handling	1.75	0.89	51.16	2
Comfort (Interior)	1.67	0.87	52.14	1
Style (Exterior)	1.92	0.98	50.97	4
Electrical and electronic features	1.68	0.82	48.61	7

To understand usage, performance and vehicle maintenance perception of the MUV/SUV vehicle owners, a set of eight queries with 45 variables were framed and respondent's perception towards the same was recorded. From the result of detailed data analysis it has inferred that sample respondent's are more attracted towards MUV/SUV segment cars due to its interior features and comforts they enjoy. Customer's liking is ranked in 'preferences towards leg room' as first, 'seat facilities' second, 'liking towards music system' third, 'cabin space fourth and turning space' as fifth. Easy handling of vehicle is placed in the second place as per customers' perception towards MUV/SUV vehicles. Overall summary is customers have expressed most liking towards: power steering and riding comfort turning radius.

Quality of vehicle is well appreciated by the sample respondents, and it placed third as per the overall result analysis. Out of five variables considered for analysis the customers have ranked: engine power in the first place, tyres quality as second, fuel efficiency in the third place, vehicle paint quality in the fourth place and body structure as fifth important criterion on MUV/SUV buying decision parameters. Exterior features of the vehicle are placed in the fourth place. The buyers' decisions on the exterior features of these vehicles are based on: aerodynamic body features, metallic/pearl finish of the body and glossy look. Engine performance is ranked fifth place as per overall score card, nine variables are constituted in this segment of variable they are duly ranked in the order of one to nine as: engine transmission power, acceleration (speed up of engine), clutch performances, braking features, engine capacity, suspension power, cockpit room, fuel emission characters and air condition features. Vehicle safety is the sixth attracted feature as far as MUV/SUV segment cars are concerned. This feature is assessed with help of nine variables and as per the mean score they are ranked as: ground clearances first, power steering second, high mount brake light third, side protection and air bag facilities in fourth order, Rear window defroster is in the sixth place, molding eighth and crumpled zone in the ninth place. Electrical and electronic features and passenger safety are ranked in the seventh and eighth places respectively.

Customers' feel factors such as buying attitudes are classified and analysed with the help of six variables in each category. As far as the electrical and electronic features are concerned the MUV/SUV segment buyer prefer to seek product attributes like: power window facility as first, instrument panel as second, wiper facilities as third these vehicles are used in long distance and hilly areas travel, horn feature is the fourth important feature, head lights and electric start are fifth and sixth important considered feature. Passenger safety are viewed with help of front and rear head lamps, child proof

gear, door locks systems, foot rests features, central locking facilities and day & night mirror provision. MUV/ SUV segment car owners give more importance for the interior comfort, easy handling and quality of the vehicles while they make purchase decisions.

CONCLUSION:

Indian car industry has a number of MUV/ SUVs. The demand of which is gradually increasing among car consumers. SUVs have come a long way from the traditional jeep to the stylish and high-tech Honda CR-V, Tata safari, Mahindra Scorpio and Ford Endeavor. Multi/ Sports Utility vehicles are rapidly capturing the market due to its multifarious use. Utility vehicles are found in two kinds: - SUV or Sports Utility Vehicles and MUV or MultiUtility Vehicles. Its spacious interior and sturdy exterior have made this vehicle one of the fastest selling vehicles of India. This is multi use vehicle to accommodate many passengers in one vehicle, especially while going for a long trip with a big family or with a folk of friends. Sporty attributes of this vehicle is not negligible when mentioning about its use. To name few SUV manufacturers of India- Toyota India, Ford Motors, Force Motors, General Motor, Hindustan Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra and Hyundai.

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