Consumer Preference on Passenger Cars in Select Districts of Tamilnadu

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ABSTRACT *The recent boom in car sales has, to little bit, been dragged by liberalised financing options and also largely due to the enhanced income levels of the middle class people. In General the car retailers in Tamil nadu were concentrating on the metros. However, this age long attitude has undergone a sea change and to-day according to most retailers, the rural Tamil nadu is surfacing with amazing results in the sales of passenger cars. Finally, the car manufactures have started acknowledging the huge potential that the rural Tamil nadu has in its hub. Resultantly, more and more makers of passengercars are reaching out evento small towns in the state with their sales and service networks.*

There is cut throat competitions in the market. The characteristic of this specific industry is that the marketing defines, creates and forms the goods and their target groups, possible more than any other industry in the world. Ability to meet changing technology, customer's needs and styling and shortening product life cycle are the Challenges that passenger car companies will have to face. Consumer's buying preference attitude is forced by culture, social, personal and psychological factors. These factors are uncontrollable and beyond the hands of marketers but they have to be considered while trying to understand the complex behaviour of the consumers.

The research aims to study the preference of consumers on passenger cars in Tamil nadu. The researcher has decided to select five districts of Tamil nadu as sample districts. They are Chennai, Trichy, Kanniyakumari, Coimbatore and Tanjavur. A strong brand image is an important contributing factor to any successful company. Only by understanding how brand is perceived, the manufactures can develop and implement effective marketing strategies. Consumer prefers to buy the passenger cars which offer fuel consumption, reasonable price, availability of spares, outlook and safety. The manufactures of passenger cars should study the behaviour of consumers and try to bridge the gap between the needs and satisfaction for their success.

Introduction

The recent boom in car sales has, to little bit, been dragged by liberalised financing options and also largely due to the enhanced income levels of the middle class people. In general the car retailers in Tamil nadu were concentrating on the metros. However, this age long attitude has undergone a sea change and today according to most retailers, the rural Tamil nadu is surfacing with amazing results in the sales of passenger cars. Finally, the car manufactures have started acknowledging the huge potential that the rural Tamil nadu has in its hub. Resultantly, more and more makers of passenger cars are reaching out even to small towns in the state with their sales and service networks.

Review of Literature

Subadra. S et al., (2010) have stated in their article that Consumer Behaviour consists of all human behaviour that goes in making purchase decisions. Clear understanding of the consumer behaviour enables a marketer to take marketing decisions which are compatible with its consumer needs. There are four major classes of consumer behaviour determinants and expectations, namely, cultural, socio-economic, personal and psychological. Thiripurasundari U and Natarajan P (2011) have studied about five underlying factors, brand knowledge, brand application, brand relationship, brand preference and brand loyalty make up measures of Brand Equity. The car producers and dealers may conduct causal marketing like a 'wellness programme' or a 'literacy campaign' for the people of a particular rural or urban area. Akber, M and Ashokumar P (2012) have

concluded in their article that owning car is becoming pride object of every Indians. A car is one of the most significant and dreaming purchases that an Indian household makes. Every customer in India loves their car like a member in their family. A car company must find out and understand the nature of the customers' buying behaviour. Anandh K et al. (2014) have stated in their article that the need, ambition, accessibility, efficiency, comfortability and value are the factors affecting consumer's brand preference of cars. Passenger cars buyers are very much particular on price front and hence they have to find out better quality, fuel consumption and low cost of product. Whoever is selling low-priced and fuel-efficient cars with quality will concord and they are likely to have large volumes of sales. Hence, the car producers should pay attention on all these factors in their production and marketing strategies.

Statement of the Problem

There is cut throat competitions in the passenger car market. The characteristic of this specific industry is that the marketing defines, creates and forms the goods and their target groups, possible more than any other industry in the world. Ability to meet changing technology, customer's needs and styling and shortening product life cycle are the Challenges that passenger car companies will have to face. Consumer's buying preference attitude is forced by culture, social, personal and psychological factors. These factors are uncontrollable and beyond the hands of marketers but they have to be considered while trying to understand the complex behaviour of the consumers.

Objective of the Study

1. To identify the brand preferences of the respondents towards passenger car
2. To study the most influencing factors towards buying preference of passenger cars by the respondents

Scope of the Study

As there are so many market players in the passenger's car market segment only the four top most branded passenger cars have been confined for this study. They are Maruthi Suzuki Hundai, Mahindra and TATA. The researcher has decided to select five districts of Tamil nadu as sample districts. They are Chennai, Trichy, Kanniyakumari, Coimbatore and Tanjavur.

Methodology

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. For collecting primary data, interview schedule technique has been adopted. The respondents have been identified randomly by using convenience sampling technique. Appropriate scaling techniques has been adopted wherever the necessity arises. The secondary data were collected from various sources such as Journals, Articles, Books, News papers, websites and so on.

Sampling Strategies and Sample Size

The research aims to study the behaviour of consumers for passenger cars in Tamil nadu. As the population of the study is large, the researcher has decided to select five districts of Tamil nadu as sample districts. The total sample size has been targeted as 100 and these from each district 20 were identified by adopting convenience sampling technique. The primary data has been collected from the respondents through structured interview schedule at the public gathering places like shopping malls, parking areas, cinema theatres, parking nearby toll plaza, car service stations and the like.

Period of the study

The present study covers both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected from the period of July 2014 – Sep 2014.

Statistical Tools

The data collected from the respondents was examined, verified, edited for the completeness, accuracy and reliability. Therefore, the following are the statistical tools applied for this present study. They are simple percentage analysis and Garrette Ranking Technique.

Analysis and Interpretation
Brand Image

A strong brand image is an important contributing factor to any successful company. Only by understanding how brand is perceived, the manufactures can develop and implement effective marketing strategies. Brand is essential in order to differentiate amongst the competition and build trust with consumers. A brand's identity expresses the organization's unique mission, history, culture, values, and personality.

Table 1
Classification of Respondents on the Basis of Branded Passenger Cars Owned

S.No	Brand	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Maruthi Suzuki	39	39
2	Hundai	14	14
3	Mahindra	21	21
4	TATA	26	26
Total		100	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 exhibits the classification of respondents on the basis of the branded passenger cars what they are using. It is clear that out of 100 total respondents, 39 per cent of the respondents have owned the brand Maruthi Suzuki and 26 per cent of the respondents have owned the brand TATA. It is also to be noticed that 21 per cent of the respondents have owned the brand Mahindra and only 14 per cent of the respondents have owned Hundai cars. It is clear from this study that the brand Maruthi Suzuki has dominated other brands of cars in Tamil nadu.

Garrett Ranking Techniques

To find out the most significant factor which influence the respondent, Garrett's ranking technique was used. As per this method, respondents have been asked to assign the rank for all factors and the outcomes of such ranking have been converted into score value. Then for each factor, the scores of each individual are added and then total value of scores and mean values of score is calculated. The factors having highest mean value is considered to be the most important factor.

Table 2
Garrett Ranking towards Consumers Buying Preference on Passenger Cars

S.No	Factors of Preference	Total Score	Average Score	Rank
1	Brand Image	5768	57.68	1
2	Latest Technologies	4732	47.32	7
3	After Sales Service	4092	40.92	10
4	Resale Value	4708	47.08	8
5	Interior Elevation	4584	45.84	9
6	Out look	5100	51.00	5
7	Price	5324	53.24	3
8	Fuel Consumption	5412	54.12	2
9	Safety	4884	48.84	6
10	Availability of Spares	5200	52.00	4

Source: Computed from Primary Data

Table 2 ranks the list of consumers buying preference of passage car with the help of Henry Garrett Ranking Technique. After the pilot study there were 10 factors have been short listed. Among these 10 factors, brand image has been ranked as one by the respondents. Next to Brand image, respondents have ranked the factor fuel consumption as ranked two. Factors such as price, availability of spares and outlook have been ranked as three, four and five respectively. Factor safety, have been ranked as six and the factor latest technologies have been ranked as seven. It is interested to notice that the factors such as resale value, interior elevation and after sales service have been ranked only as eight, nine and Ten respectively.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the customers are very particular about brand image. They believe that the brand image tells them something favour about product quality, technology and the like. Consumer prefers to buy the passenger cars which offer fuel consumption, reasonable price, availability of spares, outlook and safety. The manufactures of passenger cars should study the behaviour of consumers and try to bridge the gap between the needs and satisfaction for their success.

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