

CUSTOMER PERCEPTION MODEL FASHIONED WITH REFERENCE TO THE MARUTI SUZUKI BRAND

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Abstract

“Customer Perception” is very important concept that every marketer has to analyze for their own development of the product. Knowledge of the marketers in the area of “Customer Perception” enables them to handle the customers by knowing, what they expect and how they perceive the product and how it reflects in the market space. The customer handling is a very interesting task and also it needs some special care.. The model shown in this research is a conceptual model which depicts the importance and intervention of the customer perception in the purchase-decision making process of the customers. The three factors “Satisfaction drivers”, “Customer Perception” and “Customer Intention” shown in the model are interrelated and complementary to each other. We can find the statistical evidence in the analysis part of this article for proving the relation among the above said factors.

Key Words: Customer Perception, Model, Maruti Suzuki, Purchase decision

Introduction

India is the second most populated country in the world and the growth rate of Indian economy is also high as compared to developed countries, which attracts the presence of huge demand in the Automobile Small Car Industry. India is becoming emerging market for worldwide auto giants. For most of the people, purchasing a car is the second most important and expensive decision, next to purchase of a house; for the automotive manufacturers, first-time car buyers give them the opportunity to create positive brand image which definitely could be reflected in next coming years because consumers could make repeat purchasing.

The concept of **“Buying Behavior”** is of prime importance in marketing and has evolved over the years. It is very important to understand consumer buying behavior as it plays a vital role while purchasing products. Day to day human wants are growing, expectation is growing. Car models are no exception to this behavior. Consumer behavior is fairly complex as car purchase implies a high level of social and psychological involvement. Consumer buying behavior is a blend of economic, technological, political, cultural, demographic and natural factors as well as Customer’s own characteristics which is reflected by his attitude, motivation, perception, personality, knowledge

and lifestyle. This leads to constant modifications of car models and its features in terms of their size, capacity, styling etc. and today we see a new model coming into the market practically every quarter. Market has become very competitive and has become very **'important place'** to study the behavior of consumers and also provides useful insights what a consumer requires in a product in a dynamic environment.

Need for The Study

Customer satisfaction is fundamental to the success of any organization. Without satisfied customers, no business or agency can survive for long. Therefore, in this context, the study on **"customer perception towards Maruti"** Suzuki brand becomes vital. According to the Consumer Reports' annual Car-Brand Perception Survey, consumers perceive each brand in seven categories: quality, safety, performance, value, fuel economy, design/style, and technology/innovation. Combining those factors gives us the total brand-perception. It is only through research that a company will be able to study the buying behavior of consumers. With better understanding of factors that influence the consumer preference for selecting the automobile brand will help the companies to take necessary actions required to meet the customer's need. They can identify their own strengths and weaknesses, where they stand in comparison to their competitors, chart out the future progress path and improvement. The passenger car market changed very rapidly due to the fierce competition and advance technology, therefore, it requires the automotive manufactures to understand the consumer's preference on time and take fast actions to reflect market changes quickly. So it would be very interesting to know consumer's preference in today's fast-changing passenger car market and how is the customer buying process.

Scope of the Study

The Study aims to find out the factors that influence the customers to select the automobile brands with special reference to Maruti Suzuki

Brand. Without knowing the factors, we cannot measure exactly in what way the customer is selecting the automobile brand. So Satisfied Customers able to create new customer effectively through their word of mouth. One mistake can have far-reaching effects on future as well as current customers. So it is essential to find out the customer satisfaction and their expectation towards Automobile brands with special reference to Maruti Suzuki Brand. If any dissatisfaction exists so that remedial measures can be taken by the Company to improve their products and services.

Statement Of Problem

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. An understanding of the consumer enables a marketer to take marketing decisions which are compatible with its consumer needs. Due to the emergence of globalization and liberalization there is a stiff competition among the Automobile industries which are focusing attention in capturing the Indian markets and automobiles are no more considered as luxury once, now occupies a part of day-to-day life and has become a necessity. Customers have now changed their attitude that yesterday's luxuries are today's necessities. To be a successful marketer it is absolutely essential to study the factors that influence the prospective buyers and track them in an effective way.

Objectives of The Study

- To analyze the customer intentions for the purchase of cars.
- To find out the satisfaction drivers, in the perception of the customers.
- To analyze the perceived quality of the Maruti Suzuki brand according to the customers of Coimbatore District.
- To analyze the post - purchase behavior of the Maruti Suzuki customers.

Review of Literature

Dr. Krishnan Kumar (2010) in his paper presented in the conference held in Canada, paper titled, “**Maruti Automotive Center for Excellence**”, he explained, Maruti Suzuki to upgrade their performance in terms of defect reduction, productivity improvement, delivery performance and energy conservation. In the beginning before starting the projects, a two day training program on Lean Manufacturing is given to staff from vendors. Sufficient details are provided about the SMED and how each vendor should attempt to reduce changeover time in order to improve the availability of machines. Chronic problems which are difficult to resolve on day to day basis are also taken up for detailed process observation, data collection and further analysis is carried out to find out real root causes of existing problems.

Ruchi Mankad, Dr. A.V Vedpuriswar (2006), in his case study titled, “**Maruti-Suzuki’s Swift Move**”, The case describes the Indian Passenger car industry and the presence of Maruti in each of the categories. It traces the origin, growth and evolution of Maruti and the role played by Suzuki in enabling it to achieve dominance. The case highlights the global strategy of Suzuki and the marketing strategy of Maruti in launching Swift. It describes the 5 P’s of marketing around the launch of Swift in an endeavor to change the image of Maruti as a manufacturer of fuel-efficient but non-stylish cars only. The case finally talks about the plans of other competitors and their strategy to gain dominance and the plans of Maruti to sustain its dominance in all segments.

Wasim Chauhan, “Customer Satisfaction Survey for Maruti Suzuki” is the project conducted for Maruti Suzuki Automotive Pvt.Ltd in the city of Amravati. Today Companies are facing toughest competition ever. The intense competition makes the companies to take the necessary steps. To retain their existing customer as well as attract new

once. In the environment of advancement of the technology the companies are trying hard to keep the pace with latest development. This survey will help the company to know the customers satisfaction level and feedback of customers at the product in Amravati. It will also help company to know about the competitors. This will help company to know about wants and expectation of customers.

Balakrishnanmenon, Jagathy Raj V.P (2012), in his paper titled, “**Dominant Partial Least Square Factors of Consumer Purchase Behaviour of Passenger Cars**”, the main purpose of this paper is to develop a model with major variables, which influence the consumer purchase behaviour of passenger car owners in the State of Kerala. Though there are innumerable studies conducted in other countries, there are very few thesis and research work conducted to study the consumer behaviour of the passenger car industry in India and specifically in the State of Kerala.

Sagar at al. (2004), in his paper titled, “**Technological Change in the Indian Passenger Car Industry**”, discussed, as to how the Indian car industry has advanced technologically, driven by a confluence of factors such as intense competition, demanding consumer preferences, government policies (especially tightening emission standards), and the global strategies of the various players. They elaborate that cars manufactured in India are based on designs, incorporating advanced technologies, that are often comparable with those available globally and Indian car exports are also growing.

Research Methodology

Research Methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. In it we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them.

Empirical Study

Empirical research relies on experience or observation alone, often without due regard for system and theory. It is data-based research, coming up with the conclusions which are capable of being verified by observation or experiment. We can also call it as experimental type of research. It is necessary to get facts at the firsthand, at their source, and actively to go about doing certain things to stimulate the production or desired information. Here the researcher must set the working hypothesis and should get enough facts for proving or disproving his hypothesis.

Sampling Unit

A decision has to be taken concerning a sampling unit before selecting sample. It may be geographical, construction unit or it may be a social unit. Here the researcher has selected the Coimbatore district as the sampling unit.

Sample Size

This refers to the number of items to be selected from the universe to constitute a sample. In this project 460 Respondents are selected to get optimum result.

Sampling Technique

The researcher must decide the type of sample he will use. i.e., he must decide the technique to be used in the items for the sample. Quota sampling technique is applied here.

Data Collection

Construction of The Questionnaire

A detailed questionnaire consisting of 5-point scale was constructed for the purpose of the study. A pilot study was conducted. Based on the observations in the pilot study, the tool for data collection was revised, refined and standardized.

Tools for Analysis

The following tools have been applied for analyzing the collected data.

1. Cronbach’s Alpha Testing
2. Frequency Analysis
3. Correlation
4. Chi-square Test
5. One way ANOVA
6. Factor Analysis
7. KMO Test

Cronbach’s Alpha Testing

As shown above, fifty one variables were taken for Cronbach’s alpha testing. Here the value for Cronbach’s alpha is .632. If some items may be reduced alpha value may go higher.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.632	51

FREQUENCY ANALYSIS

TABLE 1 PRIMARY REASON FOR THE RESPONDENTS TO PURCHASE A CAR

PRIMARY REASON FOR THE RESPONDENTS TO PURCHASE A CAR				
Valid	Primary Reason	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Need	221	48.0	48.0
	Comfort/Convenience	183	39.8	87.8
	Status/Prestige	49	10.7	98.5
	Others	7	1.5	100.0
	Total	460	100.0	100.0

SOURCE: PRIMARY DATA

From the table 1, we come to know that 48% of the respondents purchased car for their basic need, 39.8% of the respondents purchased car for their comfort, 10.7% of the respondents have purchased car for their prestige and remaining 1.5% of the respondents purchased car for other reasons.

TABLE: 2 IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS WHEN PURCHASING THE CAR

IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS WHEN PURCHASING THE CAR							
Characteristics		Extremely Important	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not at all Important	Ranking
Quality	No	346	107	4	2	1	1
	%	75.2	23.3	.9	.4	.2	
Price	No	205	222	27	6	-	2
	%	44.6	48.3	5.9	1.3	-	
Installation/First use experience	No	156	221	57	26	-	5
	%	33.9	48	12.4	5.7	-	
Resale value	No	176	225	54	5	-	4
	%	38.3	48.9	11.7	1.1	-	
After sales service	No	197	231	27	4	6	3
	%	41.7	50.2	5.9	.9	1.3	

Source: Primary Data

From the table 2, we come to know that the respondents ranked quality as the number one extremely important characteristics during purchase of a car, price as number two, after sales service as number three, Resale value as number four and Installation and first use experience as number five.

TABLE 3
CRITERIA FOR SELECTING THE PRESENT MODEL

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Price	77	16.7	16.7	16.7
Mileage	134	29.1	29.1	45.9
Maintenance	79	17.2	17.2	63.0
Look/Aesthetics	51	11.1	11.1	74.1
Safety features	18	3.9	3.9	78.0
Company's Service	11	2.4	2.4	80.4
Space	5	1.1	1.1	81.5
Comfort	26	5.7	5.7	87.2
Ready Availability	3	.7	.7	87.8
Fuel Type	8	1.7	1.7	89.6
Two or More Option	40	8.7	8.7	98.3
Others	8	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	460	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data

From the table 3, we come to know that 29.1% of the respondents select the present model due to mileage, 17.2% of the respondents select the present model due to maintenance, 16.7% of the respondents select the model due to the price, 11.1% of the respondents select the present model due to look/aesthetics, 8.7% of the respondents select the model due to two or more options, 5.7% of the respondents select the model due to comfort, 3.9 % of the respondents select the model due to safety features, 2.4% of the respondents select the model due to company's service, 1.7% of the respondents select the model due to fuel type and other options, 1.1% of the respondents select the model due to Space and .7% of the respondents select the model due to Ready availability.

TABLE: 4
DRIVERS OF SATISFACTION

Drivers of Satisfaction	Highly Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied	Ranking
Exteriors	No 175	248	36	1	-	1
	% 38	53.9	7.8	.2	-	
Interiors	No 132	261	66	1	-	5
	% 28.7	56.7	14.3	.2	-	
Storage and Space	No 107	269	87	2	-	7
	% 23.3	58.5	17.8	.4	-	
Audio/entertainment/Navigation	No 74	290	69	25	2	11
	% 16.1	63	15	5.4	.4	
Seats	No 109	281	59	7	4	8
	% 23.7	61.1	12.8	1.5	.9	
Air-Conditioning	No 105	286	60	3	6	9
	% 22.8	62.2	13	.7	1.3	
Driving Dynamics	No 146	264	47	1	2	3
	% 31.7	57.4	10.2	.2	.4	
Engine/Transmission	No 132	281	44	3	-	4
	% 28.7	61.1	9.6	.7	-	
Visibility	No 125	271	57	3	4	6
	% 27.2	58.9	12.4	.7	.9	
Driving Safety	No 114	256	72	14	4	10
	% 24.8	55.7	15.7	3	.9	
Fuel economy	No 140	276	43	-	1	2
	% 30.4	60	9.3	-	.2	

Source: Primary Data

From the table 4, we come to know that the respondents ranked the main drivers that lead to their satisfaction level are the Exteriors as the number one, Fuel Economy as the number two, Driving Dynamics as the number three, Engine Transmission as the number four and the Interiors as the number five.

TABLE: 5

FURTHER RECOMMENDATION OF MARUTI BRAND CAR IN YOUR CIRCLE				
Fur Rec	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Definitely	243	52.8	52.8	52.8
Probably	181	39.3	39.3	92.2
Not sure	29	6.3	6.3	98.5
Probably not	4	.9	.9	99.3
Definitely not	3	.7	.7	100.0
Total	460	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data

From the table 5, we come to know that 52.8% of the respondents definitely further recommend Maruti Suzuki car to the colleagues and contacts, 39.3% of the respondents probably further recommend Maruti Suzuki car to the colleagues and contacts, 6.3% of the respondents not sure for further recommend Maruti Suzuki car to the colleagues and contacts, .9% of the respondents probably not to do any further recommendations, .7% of the respondents definitely not recommend Maruti Suzuki car.

Findings

- 48% of the respondents purchased car for their basic need, 39.8% of the respondents purchased car for their comfort.
- Majority of the respondents feel all the attributes are extremely important when purchasing the car.
- 29.1% of the respondents select the present model due to Mileage, 17.2% of the respondents select the present model due to ease of maintenance.
- Respondents ranked the main drivers that lead to their satisfaction level are the Exteriors as the number one, Fuel Economy as the number two, Driving Dynamics as the number three, Engine Transmission as the number four, and the Interiors as the number five.
- 52.8% of the respondents definitely further recommend Maruti Suzuki car to the colleagues and contacts.

Conclusion

For a lot of people now-a-days car is becoming a basic need after food, water and shelter as everyone wants to lead a comfortable life. It is mainly due to the reasons like standard of living, high disposable income, women are equally earning, etc. With the rapid increase in car brands, consumers really have to think hard while making a choice or deciding for the

Maruti Suzuki car to be purchased. Due to increased competition, more and more work is to be done by the marketing department so as to understand the purchase behavior of the consumers. Therefore this study would help the companies in understanding the factors that influence the purchase decision of the consumers and their expectations from the passenger cars and it explains how the three important factors have a great reflection on the market space and again how the market space reflection is connected with the customer perception.

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