



CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS TWO-WHEELERS - A STUDY OF SUZUKI ACCESS MOTOR CYCLE IN WARANGAL, TELANGANA

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ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS:
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Success of a product majorly depends on how its consumers perceive it. Many brands have failed due to their inability to make the consumers perceive their products in a proper way. In this context, it becomes imperative for companies to understand the consumers' perception on its products. In this backdrop, the present study is undertaken to analyse the consumers' perception on two-wheelers regarding the factors influencing their decision making process, satisfaction and buying behaviour. For the study, Suzuki Access two-wheeler is chosen. The respondent's opinions are elicited and analysed. Mileage, safety, price etc., are found to be some of the important product attributes influencing consumers' buying decision making process with regard to two-wheelers.

INTRODUCTION

Perception is an important fact of human behaviour. It is the main mechanism by which people know about their surrounding milieu. It is the process whereby people select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into meaningful information about external environment¹. Perception is considered to be a collection of activities and role playing for the development of one's concepts of self and society that result in alignment and conflicts in human interaction². A successful Business Manager is one who can correctly assess the perception of his consumers and makes moves accordingly. Understanding various aspects of perception helps understand consumer buying behavior.

AN OVERVIEW OF INDIAN TWO-WHEELER INDUSTRY

The two-wheeler industry in India has grown rapidly in the country since the announcement of the process of liberalization in 1991. Previously, there were only a handful of two-wheeler models available in the country. Currently, India is the second largest producer of two-wheelers in the world. It stands next only to China and Japan in terms of the number of two-wheelers produced and the sales of two-wheelers respectively. The trend of owning two-wheelers is due to a variety of facts peculiar to India. One of the chief factors is poor public transport in many parts of India. Additionally, two-wheelers offer a great deal of convenience and mobility for the Indian family.

Bajaj auto began trading in imported Vespa Scooters in 1948. Meanwhile Automobile Products of India (API) commenced production of scooters in the country in the early 50's. Until 1958, API and Enfield were the only producers of two-wheelers in India. However, Bajaj signed a technical

collaboration in 1960 with Piaggio of Italy to produce Bajaj Scooters. This deal expired in 1971. The condition of motorcycle manufacturers was no different. Until the mid 80's, there were only three major motorcycle manufacturers in India namely Rajdoot, Escorts, and Enfield. The two-wheeler market was opened to foreign manufacturers in the mid 80's. The industry, which had seen a smooth ride before, faced fierce foreign competition.

Motorcycle companies like the Yamaha, Honda, and Kawasaki, set up shop in India in collaboration with various Indian two-wheeler companies. Companies like Escorts, Rajdoot and faced immense competition from smaller 100 cc Japanese technology motorbikes. Bikes manufactured by Hero Honda, the only company manufacturing four-stroke bikes at that time, gained massive popularity. In the mid 80's, Kinetic introduced a variomatic gearless scooter in collaboration with Honda. This scooter became instantly popular with the younger generation, especially people who found it difficult to use geared scooters. The introduction of scooterettes created another segment for people such as women and teenagers who could not get used to driving either motorcycles or gearless scooters. Many companies such as Kinetic, TVS, and Hero also started manufacturing mopeds that proved immensely popular with people who wanted a simple riding machine.

The change in the government's policy owing to pollution control norms and the Kyoto agreement saw the phasing out of two stroke two-wheelers from production. Currently there are around 10 two-wheeler manufacturers in the country, they being Bajaj, Hero, Hero Honda, Honda, Indus, Kinetic, Royal Enfield, Suzuki, TVS, and Yamaha. The latest trend in the two-wheeler market is the introduction of electrically operated

vehicles from a range of manufacturers such as Indus and Hero. These can be recharged from convenient household electrical points. The only disadvantage is speed, which is restricted to around 25 miles per hour. Currently, the motorcycle market is witnessing a demand for higher volume engines. Previously, 100 cc bikes were very popular owing to the high fuel efficiency offered. The industry is supported by various factors such as availability of skilled labour at low cost, robust R&D centers and low cost steel production. The industry also provides great opportunities for investment and direct and indirect employment to skilled and unskilled labour.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Review of past studies helps the researcher in defining the scope, concepts, working definitions of his research problem. It also improves his knowledge and helps in making his efforts more practical and effective. In this context, a brief review of past studies related to the proposed study is briefly presented here;

William B Dodds et al³ found that price had a positive effect on perceived quality but a negative effect on perceived value and respondent's willingness to buy. Pavleen Kaur and Raghbir Singh⁴ have perceived that the family of a reference group has one of the strongest most immediate and most pervasive effects on a consumer's personality motivation and attitude. Virupaxi Bagodi and Biswajit Mahanty⁵ observed that it is an era of customer delight for the two-wheeler industry and the conventional measures implemented by the service organizations tend to be inadequate to attract customers persistently. Michael Cusumano et al⁶ have observed in automobiles sector, many automakers generate vast majority of their profits from a service activity closely tied to their product activity. D.Catherine Remy et al⁷ conducted a study to analyse the customer satisfaction of two-wheeler users and to study the extent of preference for bikes by Six Sigma model. Prof. S. Saravanan and Prof. N. Panchanatham⁸ observed that a customer considers all factors at the time of purchasing a two-wheeler, although the majority of customers give importance to the brand image. Dhananjay Datta⁹ found that while purchasing a two-wheeler, customers depend on advertisement, word of mouth, references from family, friends, own experience, features, price, etc. Humera Banu et al¹⁰ conducted a study to two-wheeler riding patterns, perception, and aggressive riding behavior among college youth.

D.V.Ramana and Dr. P. Subbaiah¹¹ explored individual consumer buying dynamics and consumer buying behavior of motorcycle users. The study reveals that Hero Honda is the most preferred brand followed by Bajaj. Moreover, it highlights that there is a significant influence of demographic factors on the purchase decision. Duggani Yuvaraju¹² investigated customer satisfaction towards Honda Two-wheelers. It is found that 90% respondents were completely satisfied with their mileage and performance. Huggi Basavaraj¹³ observed that two-wheelers have become a valuable support for increasing productivity and profits, as well personal transportation.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The concept of modern marketing is consumer oriented. Therefore, it is necessary to study the perception of consumers towards a product or service to formulate the product, price, channel decisions, and promotion policies. The study of consumer perception provides an insight into various factors which influence the buying decision of

consumers such as product design, quality, features, additional benefits, credit facilities, after sales service facilities etc. In this context, consumers' perception on two-wheelers is evaluated. For this purpose, Suzuki Access 125cc bike is chosen.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the specific objectives pertaining to the present study.

1. To identify the influence of various information sources and reference groups on consumers,
2. To analyse consumers' perception on the influence of various product attributes on their buying decision making process,
3. To analyse the consumers' perception on Suzuki two-wheelers especially Suzuki Access 125 Model, and
4. To offer suggestions for enhancement of customer satisfaction towards the organization.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study is mainly confined to Warangal, Hanamkonda and Kazipet cities. The data is collected from 145 respondents from Warangal, Hanamkonda and Kazipet tri cities. The study mainly covers the perception of consumers on two-wheelers with special reference to Suzuki access 125 Model in Warangal.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The present study basically depends on the primary data i.e., the data collected directly from some select respondents. The sample size of 145 Suzuki Access two-wheeler owners has been selected keeping in view of strict time and financial constraints. Enough precautions are taken to include people from the various walks of life such as officers, businessmen, doctors and engineers and others in the sample. The required data is collected by preparing suitable questionnaire and administering it to the select respondents. The data collected is tabulated and analysed for drawing conclusions.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following are some important limitations of the present study;

1. The study is confined to the tri cities of Warangal, Hanamkonda, and Kazipet of Telangana state.
2. The sample is only 145 Suzuki Access two-wheeler owners.
3. The subjected undertaken for the study is very critical, as it is to understand the consumers' mindset and their psychology which is not so easy to do.
4. Some of the respondents may have given answers without rational attention. This might have become a hindrance in arriving at realistic conclusions.
5. As the sample is small in size, the findings may not represent the same of entire population.

RESPONDENTS' PROFILE

Around 42% respondents are below 30 years. Another 22% are between 30-40 years. The remaining are above 40 years. Majority of the respondents are either Graduates (50%) or Post-graduates (28%). Coming to economic background, most of the respondents (61%) have a family income of below Rs 20,000/- per month. It is also observed that almost 70% of the respondents travel less than 500 KM on their Suzuki Access bikes per month.

DATA ANALYSIS

The following is the presentation of the data which is analysed.

1. **Source of Information:** It is observed that company showroom is the major source of information used by 44% respondent. Another 20% got the information from friends/relatives followed by other sources (16%), print media (12%) and television (8%).
2. **Impact of Reference Groups on Buying Decision Making Process:** Around 34% of the respondents have purchased the select bike on their own choice. Another 26% are influenced by their friends followed by 24% by parents and 8% by dealer/mechanics.
3. **Perception on Influence of product Attributes on Buying Decision Making Process:** The respondents' perception towards the influence of various product attributes on buying decision making process is analyzed and presented under the following sub heads;
 - a. **Brand Name:** Around 50% respondents considered the product attribute "Brand Name" as somewhat important factor in taking buying decisions. Another 46% considered it as very important.
 - b. **Mileage:** Almost all the respondents are considering mileage of a bike as a very influential product attribute.
 - c. **Engine Capacity:** Again almost all the respondents have opined that engine capacity has high impact on their buying decision making process.
 - d. **Maintenance Cost:** Majority of the respondents (80%) has felt that maintenance cost is somewhat important while making a buying decision.
 - e. **Safety Features:** Around 74% respondents considered safety of the bike as somewhat important in buying decision making process.
 - f. **Resale Value:** It is observed that 56% of the respondents are indifferent towards the resale value of the bike.
 - g. **After Sales Service Facilities:** Almost 58% considered the after sale service as somewhat important factor.
 - h. **Dealer Location:** Approximately 70% respondents have considered the location of the dealer as somewhat important.
 - i. **Spare Parts Price:** It is seen that 80% respondents have considered the spare parts price as very important.
 - j. **Spare Parts Availability:** Around 72% respondents have considered the spare parts availability as very important.
 - k. **Credit Facility:** 74% of the select respondents have considered credit availability as somewhat important.
4. **Perception on Product Attributes of Suzuki Access Bike:** The following are the perceptions of the select respondents on various product attributes of the select two-wheeler i.e. Suzuki Access.
 - a. **Price:** Majority of the respondents (66%) have felt that the price of their bike is reasonable.

- b. **Mileage:** Above 70% of the respondents have felt average about the mileage of their bikes.
- c. **Style:** Around 54% of the total respondents have opined that the style of their Suzuki Access bike is very good. Another 38% felt it as average.
- d. **Maintenance Cost:** It is seen that 66% respondents have opined that the maintenance cost of their bike is reasonable.
- e. **Spare Parts Price:** Almost 70% of the respondents felt reasonable about the price of the spare parts required for their bikes.
- f. **Cost of Servicing at Company Showroom:** Majority of the respondents (76%) have opined that the cost of getting their bikes serviced at company showroom was reasonable.
- g. **Employee Responsiveness at Company Showroom:** Around 80% of the select respondents have perceived that the employees at company showroom are responsive towards customers.
- h. **Satisfaction towards After Sales Service:** Almost all the select respondents (92%) are satisfied with the after sales service provided by the company.
5. **Recommendation to Others:** It is observed that 70% of the select respondents are willing to recommend their Suzuki Access bike to others. The remaining 30% are not willing to do so.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that most of the respondents go to company showrooms to get the required information about two-wheelers. In this context, company should make more information available at its showrooms.

Among the product attributes which influence consumer decision making process with respect to two-wheeler, mileage, engine capacity, maintenance cost, safety, price and availability of spare parts are of high importance to consumers. Resale value, after sales service facilities and brand name assumed lower level of importance. So, Company can take some measures to enhance its brand image.

In case of consumer respondents' perception on Suzuki Access two-wheeler product attributes, majority respondents felt that bike price, price of spare parts, after sales service, mileage and maintenance cost are reasonable. About half the respondents felt that the style quotient is very good. Hence, company is advised to take measures to improve the style and appearance of its two-wheelers in order to make them more attractive to customers.

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