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## CONTENTS

| Sr. No. | TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)   | Page No. |
|---------|--|----------|
| 1.      | <b>MARKETING PRACTICES OF SELECT RURAL INDUSTRIES IN SPSR NELLORE DISTRICT</b><br><i>Y. SRINIVASULU, Dr. K. RAJAIHAH &amp; P. R. SIVASANKAR</i>  | 1        |
| 2.      | <b>AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON CONSUMERS BUYING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS ONLINE SHOPPING</b><br><i>D. CHARUMATHI &amp; Dr. S. SHEELA RANI</i>   | 9        |
| 3.      | <b>EXPLORING THE STRATEGIES OF INDIAN RURAL NEWSPAPER DURING THE DIGITAL ERA</b><br><i>HEZEKIAH &amp; Dr. LALITHA RAMAKRISHNAN</i>   | 12       |
| 4.      | <b>A STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE CAR CONSUMERS - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ERODE DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU</b><br><i>S. ARUN PRASAD &amp; Dr. S. CHANDRAMOHAN</i>                               | 15       |
| 5.      | <b>EFFECTIVENESS OF VALUE ADDED SERVICE IN PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS - A FACTOR ANALYSIS</b><br><i>M. SURESH KUMAR &amp; Dr. G. SURESH</i>   | 19       |
| 6.      | <b>CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL CAREER</b><br><i>Dr. A. JOHN PETER &amp; S. VIDHIYA LAKSHMI</i>  | 25       |
| 7.      | <b>EMPOWERING WOMEN IN KERALA: ROLE OF MICRO FINANCE INSTITUTIONS</b><br><i>Dr. JOSEPH SEBASTIAN THEKEDAM &amp; NIMMI C R</i>  | 31       |
| 8.      | <b>LEGISLATIVE ROLE OF IRDA IN PROMOTING AND REGULATING AN ORDERLY GROWTH OF LIFE INSURANCE BUSINESS IN INDIA</b><br><i>RAVI KUMAR GABA &amp; Dr. ANGRISH KUMAR AGARWAL</i>                                  | 34       |
| 9.      | <b>ASSOCIATION BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND THE USAGE OF SELECT DURABLE COMMODITIES BY "LOW-LITERATE" PEOPLE USING MULTIPLE RESPONSE SET</b><br><i>MALAY BHATTACHARJEE &amp; Dr. GAUTAM BANDYOPADHYAY</i> | 38       |
| 10.     | <b>EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STORE IMAGE AND STORE LOYALTY OF AN ORGANIZED GROCERY RETAIL</b><br><i>ISHFAQ HUSSAIN BHAT &amp; Dr. SAPNA SINGH</i>   | 44       |
| 11.     | <b>REFLECTIONS OF INDIAN TOURISM SECTOR IN REFERENCE TO WORLD TOURISM</b><br><i>AMIT DANGI &amp; Dr. VIJAY SINGH</i>   | 47       |
| 12.     | <b>DIGITISATION IN INDIA A ROAD AHEAD</b><br><i>TAJINDER KAUR</i>  | 50       |
| 13.     | <b>TQM INFLUENCE ON QUALITY PERFORMANCE AT WORKING IRON AND STEEL FIRMS OF KARNATAKA</b><br><i>K C PRASHANTH</i>   | 52       |
| 14.     | <b>A STUDY ON CONTRIBUTION OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY TO THE ECONOMIC GROWTH OF KERALA</b><br><i>SINU.M</i>   | 58       |
| 15.     | <b>SUPER EFFICIENCY ANALYSIS OF CO-OPERATIVE SUGAR MILLS IN TAMILNADU</b><br><i>DR. K.UMA DEVI</i>   | 62       |
| 16.     | <b>DEMONETIZATION: 'ILLUSION OR REALITY'</b><br><i>MADHU SAITYA</i>  | 68       |
| 17.     | <b>DISCLOSURE OF INTANGIBLE ASSETS IN INDIAN CORPORATE SECTOR: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL (INFORMATION SECTOR)</b><br><i>KARAMJEET KAUR &amp; Dr. HARSH VINEET KAUR</i>  | 71       |
| 18.     | <b>INFLUENCE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICES ON PROJECT PERFORMANCE IN COUNTIES: THE CASE OF MOMBASA COUNTY, KENYA</b><br><i>MAALIM, MOHAMED ABDI &amp; JOHNBOSCO KISIMBII</i>                        | 77       |
| 19.     | <b>HOW THE DEMONETIZATION IMPACTED STOCK INDICES IN INDIA?</b><br><i>Dr. ASIF PERVEZ &amp; AHMED MUSA KHAN</i>   | 90       |
| 20.     | <b>DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK FOR EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS OF MANAGEMENT GRADUATES</b><br><i>SAVILENE JULIA GOMEZ &amp; Dr. A. JOHN PETER</i>  | 93       |
|         | <b>REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK &amp; DISCLAIMER</b>   | 98       |

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## A STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE CAR CONSUMERS - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ERODE DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

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### ABSTRACT

*The automotive industry in India is one of the largest and is experiencing a significant growth each year. With increase in paying capacity and improved lifestyles, the industry is set to grow. According to Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers, the country is home to the largest two-wheeler productions with domestic market share of 81% in 2014-2015. The country produced over 23 million vehicles in 2014-2015 and is expected to be the global leader by 2020. Social Media Marketing is also boosting public relations business. Several PR agencies in India are undertaking brand building exercises for corporate organizations, brands and celebrities. A simple random sampling technique is adopted in the paper to select the sample respondents. The source of data is the primary research done by conducting survey of the targeted individuals. The targeted sample size was 50 respondents. Vast majority (78 per cent) of the respondents were very effective opinion about overall performance of social media. There is a significant difference between brand preference and their overall performance of social media. The research can find its usefulness in equating the impact social media leaves on the end consumers.*

### KEYWORDS

social media, car consumers, automobile industry.

### INTRODUCTION

India has 71 million active internet users. Social Media is really picking up new heights in India. According to the 2010 Regus Global Survey of business social networking, India tops the usage of social networking by business – it has the highest activity index, 127, far more than the US'97, and 52% of the Indian respondent companies said that they had acquired new customers using social networks while 35% American companies managed that. Many companies are coming big way for Social Media Optimization for their Product or Services nowadays. During Election 2009 Social Media was used for Influence Indian Voters. Social Media Marketing in India is being undertaken by brands like Tata Docomo, MTV India, Channel V, Clear Trip, Tata Photon, Axe deodorants, Microsoft, Naukri, Shaadi and many more. Besides, numerous Indian celebrities are also using SMM platform to promote their movies, music and events via Twitter, Face book and personalized blogs.

Social Media Marketing is also boosting public relations business. Several PR agencies in India are undertaking brand building exercises for corporate organizations, brands and celebrities. However, to the delight of many among us, the biggest gainers from SMM till date have been the organizations from the Not-for Profit sector. Several Campaigns like 'Bell Bajao' and 'Jaago Re' have been quite successful on Social Networking Sites. These campaigns have been spreading the word about their cause through blogs, Twitter and Facebook.

Social media in particular is one area that has radically changed the market and given a new face to the businesses. Consumers are much smarter and are not just interested in messages being broadcast to them and are engaging more with social networks. Through these they are finding out what products to buy, services to use, and so on, based on trusted recommendations from their friends and family. It is estimated that 78% of the time if you read a recommendation from friends online you trust that recommendation but what's more interesting is that if you read that recommendation from someone you don't know you still trust it 60% of the time. Internet Marketing is one of the means used widely to market business online.

(a) Social Media Marketing: It uses social media sites like Face book, Google+, Twitter, You tube, Instagram, etc. to advertise and promote the products. The real time updates keep the users interest intact towards the products. It also helps the companies to know about consumers' interest which helps them to market their product in a better way.

(b) Email Marketing: The sales and promotions are made via email to the registered customers as well as the potential customers. Different advertisements of products are sent through email which makes the customers familiar about the product. Moreover, to promote sales, the customers are sent different discount coupons through email to gain more attraction towards the products.

(c) Web Marketing: Through web marketing, knowledge about the product can be gained just by surfing different websites which includes all the information. Customers need not to actually go to the stores to know about the products which indeed have popularized web marketing.

### ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MARKETING

Social media is now increasingly becoming an ingrained aspect of political campaigns, national defense strategies, public policy, public relations, brand management and even intra company communication. Since the major task of marketing as tool used to inform consumers about the company's products, who they are and what they offer, Social marketing plays an important role in marketing.

- Social media can be used to provide an identity about the companies and the products or services that they offer.
- Social media helps in creating relationships with people who might not otherwise know about the products or service or what the companies represent.
- Social media makes companies "real" to consumers. If they want people to follow them they need not just talk about the latest product news, but share their personality with them.
- Social media can be used to associate themselves with their peers that may be serving the same target market.
- Social media can be used to communicate and provide the interaction that consumers look for.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Satish Kumar (2012), the paper investigated the changing ideal models of Marketing Communication and highlighted the vitality of Social Media as a successful advertising specialized apparatus. The paper looked at the Ford India's procedure of utilizing Social media as a part of making mindfulness and inclination for its Ford Figo auto. The Ford Motors were fit to adjust their autos and advancement devices to the Indian market. The achievement of Ford was mostly ascribed to its

development and successful promoting system for Indian market. The organization was fit to manufacture solid brands and reinforce its client relationship by successfully utilizing Social Media. The paper talked about the Social Media fight "Uncover Smart Drive" embraced by Ford India for its Ford Figo auto and the results of the battle. The paper additionally clarified the key triumph components and how Ford India could viably utilize social media for the Ford Figo's "Discover Smart Drive" campaign.

Michael A. Stelzner (2013) in his report examined that to know how advertisers utilized Social media to develop their business led a study of 3000 advertisers and found that there was a period responsibility from advertisers side on week after week foundation on social advertising subsequently they got real preferences from social promoting exertions, uncovered which stage was utilized generally by them to advertise their items or administrations, social destinations they were intrigued to research.

Automobile Digest (2013) in their report examined about the web advertising correspondence fights which incorporated 30 publications, advertorial and videotorial stages with constraining customer flag promoting and messaging. They presented their site called [automotivedigest.com](http://automotivedigest.com) is an on-line media magazine that gave an electronic media overview of the most noteworthy news, improvements, and exercises.

### **RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

The paper focuses on four wheeler automobile industry in India for studying the existing and potential usage of social media in marketing & promotional activities. Four wheeler segments in India have a high potential to grow in near future. Proper means of marketing elements may elicit the company's performance. Hence this study has been conducted to know the awareness level of social media, existing usage of social media in marketing of four wheelers and consumer preferences towards different forms of social media.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS**

Social media usage in India is in primary stage and needs to be explored to strengthen marketing activity or brand image of an automobile company for two-wheeler. For achieving marketing goals, one should have the clear understanding of perceptions and preferences of consumers about social media usage.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To understand the current scenario of social media usage in Indian automobile (four-wheeler) industry.
- To find out the consumer preferences for social media channels or activities of a four wheeler company.
- To acquire understanding about consumer perceptions towards social media usage by a company.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology followed in this research was descriptive research. A simple random sampling technique is adopted in the paper to select the sample respondents. The source of data is the primary research done by conducting survey of the targeted individuals. The respondents filled up the data using online forms. For this purpose, a survey was made using Google Forms as an application and an excel file was maintained for the same. The file was analyzed using in-depth analysis and insights were drawn which are shared in this paper. The targeted sample size was 50 respondents.

### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

It is a well-known fact that with the advent of increasing purchasing power and changing life style towards luxury, now car has become a commodity of necessity and has become one of the most important elements of life even to the middle class people. With the advent of social media penetrating into every other industry, automotive industry too can sense its footprint. Many manufacturers and dealers have to adopt new business strategies to adapt themselves with the going flow of social media marketing. The paper aims at studying the scope of the social media and its influence in the Indian automotive sector and the mood of today's consumer. The research can find its usefulness in equating the impact social media leaves on the end consumers.

Study is limited within Erode districts of Tamil Nadu as it would be feasible to analyse the population where awareness of internet technology is high. Sample units include mix of students, professionals, businessmen etc. Following forms of social media are considered for the market study. Social Networking Sites (like MySpace, Facebook etc.) Wikis (like Wikipedia etc.) Micro-blogging (like Twitter etc.) Blogs (WordPress, Blogger, TypePad etc.) Forums (like Consumer forum etc.) RSS feeds (like Google alerts etc.) Content Communities (like YouTube, Flickr, and Slideshare etc.)

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

TABLE 1: CLASSIFICATION TOWARDS PERSONAL PROFILE AND PERCEPTION WISE

| items  | No.of respondents (n=50) | Percentage (100%) |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>  |                          |                   |
| Male   | 46                       | 92                |
| Female   | 4                        | 8                 |
| <b>Occupation</b>  |                          |                   |
| Business   | 29                       | 58                |
| Professors   | 14                       | 28                |
| Others   | 7                        | 14                |
| <b>Reason for buying</b>                                       |                          |                   |
| Fuel Efficiency  | 5                        | 10                |
| Updating of Car  | 39                       | 78                |
| Trouble free   | 2                        | 4                 |
| Less Maintenance   | 4                        | 8                 |
| <b>Reason for choosing Brand</b>                               |                          |                   |
| Looks Good   | 36                       | 72                |
| Very Popular Brand   | 5                        | 10                |
| Highly Advertised  | 6                        | 12                |
| Fuel Efficiency  | 3                        | 6                 |
| <b>Purpose of using Car</b>                                    |                          |                   |
| Prestige symbol  | 42                       | 84                |
| Family travel  | 5                        | 10                |
| Convenience  | 3                        | 6                 |
| <b>Reasons for social media usage in four wheeler industry</b> |                          |                   |
| To browse four wheelers related information                    | 32                       | 64                |
| To make comparisons  | 6                        | 12                |
| To search preferred dealer network                             | 4                        | 8                 |
| To check reviews of brand                                      | 3                        | 6                 |
| To refer latest news about company                             | 3                        | 6                 |
| To check for promotional schemes                               | 2                        | 4                 |
| <b>Brand Preference</b>  |                          |                   |
| Maruti Suzuki  | 12                       | 24                |
| Hyundai  | 7                        | 14                |
| Mahindra & Mahindra  | 3                        | 6                 |
| Toyota   | 2                        | 4                 |
| Tata Motors  | 4                        | 8                 |
| Honda  | 2                        | 4                 |
| Ford   | 4                        | 8                 |
| Chevrolet  | 3                        | 6                 |
| Volkswagen   | 4                        | 8                 |
| Renault  | 5                        | 10                |
| Nissan   | 3                        | 6                 |
| Skoda  | 5                        | 10                |
| Fiat   | 6                        | 12                |
| HM-Mitsubishi  | 5                        | 10                |
| <b>Overall performance of social media</b>                     |                          |                   |
| Very effective   | 39                       | 78                |
| Effective  | 7                        | 14                |
| No opinion   | 1                        | 2                 |
| Ineffective  | 2                        | 4                 |
| Very ineffective   | 1                        | 2                 |

Vast majority (92 per cent) of the respondents was male and remaining 8 per cent were female. More than half (58 per cent) of the respondents were worked in business, 28 per cent were professor and remaining 14 per cent were others. Vast majority (78 per cent) of the respondents were buying reason for updating of cars, 10 per cent were fuel efficiency, 8 per cent were less maintenance and remaining 4 per cent were trouble free. Vast majority (72 per cent) of the respondents were brand chosen reasons for looking good, 12 per cent were highly advertisement, 10 per cent were very popular brand and remaining 6 per cent were fuel efficiency. Vast majority (84 per cent) of the respondents were using prestige symbol, 10 per cent were family travel and remaining 6 per cent were convenience. Majority (64 per cent) of the respondents were browse four wheelers related information, 12 per cent were make comparisons and remaining 8 per cent were preferred dealers network. Nearly one fourth (24 per cent) of the respondents were preferred Maruti Suzuki brand, 14 per cent were Hyundai, 12 per cent were fiat and remaining less 10 per cent were others brands. Vast majority (78 per cent) of the respondents were very effective opinion about overall performance of social media, 14 per cent were effective, 4 per cent were in effective and remaining each 2 per cent were no opinion and very ineffective.

TABLE 2: DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BRAND PREFERENCE AND THEIR OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

| Overall performance of social media | n  | Mean | S.D   | Statistical inference                 |
|-------------------------------------|----|------|-------|---------------------------------------|
| Maruti Suzuki                       | 12 | 4.52 | 0.843 | f=19.973<br>0.004<0.05<br>Significant |
| Hyundai                             | 7  | 3.59 | 0.815 |                                       |
| Mahindra & Mahindra                 | 3  | 3.15 | 0.948 |                                       |
| Toyota                              | 2  | 3.68 | 0.997 |                                       |
| Tata Motors                         | 4  | 3.86 | 0.999 |                                       |
| Honda                               | 2  | 3.51 | 0.841 |                                       |
| Ford                                | 4  | 3.81 | 0.891 |                                       |
| Chevrolet                           | 3  | 3.78 | 0.884 |                                       |
| Volkswagen                          | 4  | 3.84 | 0.948 |                                       |
| Renault                             | 5  | 3.42 | 0.845 |                                       |
| Nissan                              | 3  | 3.97 | 0.884 |                                       |
| Skoda                               | 5  | 3.25 | 0.918 |                                       |
| Fiat                                | 6  | 3.68 | 0.847 |                                       |
| HM-Mitsubishi                       | 5  | 3.86 | 0.987 |                                       |

### RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

There is a significant difference between brand preference and their overall performance of social media.

The above table reveals that there is a significant difference between brand preference and their overall performance of social media. Hence, the calculated value less than table value ( $p < 0.05$ ). So the research hypothesis is accepted.

### CONCLUSION

This research depicted quite principal results and it can be inferred that a lot of research is expected to fully utilize the social media influences in the automotive consumers. The number of people searching information relating to their next purchase vehicle was significantly dependent on Social Media platforms and reviews formed a good part in influencing the buying decision of the same. It can also be inferred that many people look forward toward connected vehicle technology. Most of the people today are present on some or the other social media platforms and new vehicle launches related posts followed by promotions attracted most of the response. It can be concluded that social media marketing is one of the key areas the manufacturers need to focus on in this modern era for the promotions of new advancements and activities.

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