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CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS SELECT NON-GEAR VEHICLES IN NORTH GOA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Goa is a small and beautiful state on the Western Coast of India. The state has population of about 1.45 million and area of 3702 sq. kms. It was given statehood on 30th May 1987 under the Goa, Daman and Diu Reorganization Act 1987. Tourism and mining are the major avenues of revenue. The State of Goa was ruled by Portuguese for nearly 450 years till it was liberated in 1961. Prior to the formation of the state, Goa was a major district of the former Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu. There are two districts viz., North Goa and North Goa and twelve talukas in the state. The present study is conducted in North Goa. A large number of non-gear bike riders are there in Goa and majority of them are young women. The perceptions of these modern young women are different from others. The present study revealed that every branded non-gear vehicle in the market has its own pros and cons, need to be studied, modified and introduced as per the needs of the land and people. The young women customers give priority to design, style, look and colour of the non-gear vehicles rather than the speed, the value and the mileage of the non-gear vehicles available in the market. These parameters observed to have dominated their buying decisions.

KEYWORDS

bike, Goa, non-gear, perception, transport.

INTRODUCTION

 Goa is a small and beautiful state on the Western Coast of India. The state has population of about 1.45 million and area of 3702 sq. kms. It was given statehood on 30th May 1987 under the Goa, Daman and Diu Reorganization Act 1987. Tourism and mining are the major avenues of revenue. The State of Goa was ruled by Portuguese for nearly 450 years till it was liberated in 1961. Prior to the formation of the state, Goa was a major district of the former Union Territory of Goa, Daman and Diu. There are two districts viz., North Goa and North Goa and twelve talukas in the state. The present study is conducted in North Goa.

VEHICLE POPULATION IN GOA

Two decades ago, before the introduction of non-gear vehicles in the country, *Goans* preferred to buy scooters because of topographical condition of Goa. The population of women riders and drivers increased at a galloping speed led to the sprinting demand for non-gear vehicles in Goa. The Times of India, daily newspapers reported that the registration of non-gear bikes shoot up till mid-October 2015 and the sale and registration of non-gear bikes as against to their geared counter parts has increased. According to statistics shared by the department of transport on the number of newly registered bikes in 2015 shows that 21,463 non-gear two wheelers were registered from January to mid-October this year as against 8,594 geared vehicles. In previous year (2014), 33,470 non-gear two wheelers have been registered as against to 12,749 geared ones.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The research scholars in India have not done a sizable quantum of research to ascertain the perceptions of non-gear vehicle riders. In order to support research problem and find out the research gap, an available research works done on two wheelers in Indian has been referred.

(i) Delli Kumar Koti, et al (2016), analysed consumers' perceptions while purchasing two wheelers in Rayalseema Region in Andhra Pradesh.

NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

It is observed that most of the studies done on customers' perceptions are relating to other products. The market for geared bikes is drastically reducing in the state of Goa. This perhaps has a lot to do with parking ease and comfortable usage. The non-gear bikes can be used by women, older adults and those with learning licences. The geared bikes are usually restricted to these motor bike users' communities. Many women in Goa purchased non-gear bikes enable everyone to use it irrespective of age group in the family. It comes in handy when someone needs to run errands or travel short distance. The average sale of non-gear bikes at showrooms is gone up to 85 per cent compared to that of the geared ones. The 30 plus working class mostly prefer non-gear bikes for the ease and comfort riding. Even though the common perception is that the non-gear bikes are for young women or female customers, today a transformation is observed that the male riders also preferring non-gear bikes because there is no stress about shifting gears, when in traffic, therefore making it user-friendly. Hence, the need is felt to study of the customers' perception to attract new customers and maintain them for ever.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A large number of two wheeler non-gear bikes riders are there in Goa and majority of them are young women. The perceptions of these modern young women are different from others. The pilot study revealed that every branded non-gear bikes in the market has its own pros and cons, need to be studied, modified and introduced as per the needs of the land and people. This study is need of the hour because the non-gear bikes have already encroached and grabbed the market share of gear bikes in Goa. With this back ground study, a survey was conducted in North Goa district of Goa State by meeting proud owners of non-gear vehicles of select brands viz., Activa, Dio, Maestro, Pleasure and Vespa.

OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse the profile of non-gear bike owners in North Goa district.
2. To ascertain the perceptions of non-gear bike owners towards their bikes.
3. To find out the factors determining the purchase decisions of non-gear bike owners.

HYPOTHESIS

A hypothesis is recognised and put for test after doing pilot study.

(i) The young women customers give priority to design, style, look and colour of the non-gear bikes rather than the speed, the mileage and the value of the non-gear vehicles available in the market.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Present study is based on primary data collected through pre-tested questionnaire, issued to the non-gear bikes owners and riders, while doing survey in North Goa district. The secondary data is collected from news clips and web site of Government of Goa to give introduction to research study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The survey revealed that the general sex ratio of non-gear vehicle owners is 48:52 (Male: Female) in North Goa district. Survey also revealed that Maestro is liked by 18 per cent of the respondents followed by Vespa (17%), Dio (16%), Activa (13%) and Pleasure (12%). Interestingly almost a reverse picture is observed in case of women two wheeler riders i.e. Pleasure is liked by majority of women followed by Dio, Activa, Vespa and Maestro.
2. Survey revealed that a large number (35%) of the young generation between 16-25 years, observed to have purchased non-gear bikes followed by age group of 26-35 years (23%); 20 per cent each from the age groups of 36-45 and 46-56 years. It is also observed that just 2 per cent of the buyers are above 56 years. This indicated that non-gear bikes are actually a comfortable two wheeler, especially for youngsters (college going girls) and old people, who are above 50 years. Among the five brands, taken for study, Dio and Activa (12%) observed to have liked by young buddies and Vespa is liked by old people (3%), who are above 56 years.
3. It is observed that a large (30%) number of non-gear bike owners observed to have fallen under 'not earning group', majority of them are college going students, and also observed that 22 per cent of buyers are from the income group in between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 20,000 p.m. This indicated that low income group earners, most of them are women, who preferred more mileage, small vehicles and controllable speed. These three basic needs made them to go for non-gear vehicles. It is also observed that Activa is the most popular among the low income earners (less than is 10,000 p.m.) followed by Dio, which is popular among the college going students.
4. The occupation structure revealed that about 32 per cent of non-gear bike owners are working in private concerns followed by student community (27%) and others (41%). Further, the vehicle owners from private employee category observed to have purchased Activa (8%) followed by Vespa (7%); students preferred Dio and others preferred Vespa.
5. The medium size (4 to 5 members) family observed to have preferred Dio (17%), Maestro (15%) and Activa. So far small families (less than 3 members) are concern, the members preferred Maestro (5%) followed by Pleasure (4%). The families with larger number observed to have preferred Pleasure.
6. The survey revealed that two fifth of the total number of the families observed to have two riders in their families followed by one fourth of the families, who have three riders. One fifth of the respondents observed to have one rider and just 4 per cent of the families observed to have five and above riders. In Goa generally people prefer to buy new vehicles. Survey also revealed the same fact that 96 per cent of the vehicle owners purchased from show rooms and the rest 4 per cent have purchased from their relatives and friends.
7. The number of vehicles came on the road increased from single digit to double digits (in terms of percentage), observed to have taken place in the last 3 years. The survey also revealed that there were upward and downward trends in sale of bikes in the past 5 years; sudden jump in sale is observed in the second and third year and again reduction in sale is observed in last year. Pleasure was popular 5 years back; Dio took its place 4 years back again. Dio and Pleasure retain their position 3 years back. Just 2 years back Vespa overtook Activa and Maestro and about a year back Vespa retain its position followed by Maestro.
8. To be owner of two wheelers, about 60 percent of the people observed to have used their own hard earned savings; one third of the people observed to have taken bank loan; about 12 per cent of the respondents, especially students and married women, observed to have got gift from their parents. About 7 percent of the students, especially girls and married women got pleasure bike in the form of gift. Maestro and Activa observed to have purchased with the help of vehicle loans from banks. Dio bike owners purchased their vehicles from their own savings followed by Vespa.
9. Survey revealed that 83 per cent of the bike owners purchased their vehicles as per the advice of the family members and rest 7 percent influenced by friends, colleagues (3%), neighbours (4%) and TV advertisements (3%). If we look at the individual brand and the person influenced, the family members' advice stands first. These family members have influenced on the buyers' purchase decisions effectively. The data says about the degree influence in terms of percentage are Vespa (19%) followed by Maestro (18%), Dio (17%) and Activa (16%).
10. One can see that 48 per cent of the respondents observed to have been using their two wheelers for business purpose or go to work destinations, 26 per cent of them have given their bikes on rental basis and earning money. Majority of them are from coastal belt people in North Goa. About 12 per cent of the respondents, especially students, who purchased non-gear bikes to impress their friends. About one tenth of vehicle owners observed to have purchased as a pride. Hardly 4 per cent of them using their vehicles to go market visit their relatives.
11. Survey revealed that 63 per cent of the people used their vehicles every day, 33 per cent of the bike owners used twice in a week and hardly 4 per cent observed to have used their vehicles twice in a month. Among the 5 brands taken for study, Brand Activa two wheelers (19%) are used by the owners almost every day. Majority of the respondents, who have purchased Vespa have told that their two wheeler performance is Good followed by Maestro owners.
12. In Goa, on an average, one *taluka* place is 30 km. away from another *taluka*. Goan people prefer to go by their own vehicles rather than make use of public transport. These two elements make them to buy their own vehicles and use everywhere. Thirty five per cent of the respondents revealed that they find it comfortable to go for long distance up to 60 km. without much problem and the rest of them found uncomfortable, especially the riders, who crossed 40 years of their life. About 19 per cent of the Dio owners told that Dio is not suitable to go for long distance followed by Maestro. Survey revealed that 53 per cent of the respondents that other factors such as road conditions, small vehicle size, speed, wheel size etc., made them not to go by non-gear vehicle to a far distance. So far individual brands are concerned, the riders opined that Pleasure's seat is uncomfortable and Dio's handle bar is uncomfortable.
13. Today's youngsters are very crazy to have two wheelers of their own. Most of their purchase decisions are influenced by a special character or features of the vehicle. The analysis shows that non-gear vehicle buyers observed to have given priority to Design, Style, Look and Colour (45%) followed by Brand Image (33%), and rest three parameters, Mileage, Speed and Value of the non-gear bikes, which have influenced less on buying decisions. It is also observed that Vespa stood at top so far Brand Image, Design, Style, Look and Colour are concerned followed by Pleasure.

FINDINGS

- (i) The sex ratio of non-gear bikes owners in North Goa district is about 1:1 (Male: Female). The orders of preference is given by male are Maestro, Vespa, Dio, Activa and Pleasure. Interestingly almost a reverse picture is observed in case of women two wheeler riders.
- (ii) Survey revealed that a large number of the young generation between 16-25 years, observed to have purchased non-gear bikes followed by age group of 26-35 years. The non-gear bikes are actually a comfortable two wheeler for youngsters and old people, who are above 50 years.
- (iii) It is found that one third of non-gear vehicle owners observed to have fallen under students group and also observed that one fifth of respondents are from the income group of less than Rs. 20,000 p.m.
- (iv) The medium size family observed to have preferred Dio and Maestro; small families preferred Maestro and Pleasure; the families with larger number observed to have preferred Pleasure. If we look at the types of the vehicles used by individual families and the number of riders, the figures indicated that 14 per cent of the vehicle owners preferred Vespa followed Dio (9%). Further also seen that the families in which just one-member rider, is observed to have preferred to purchase Maestro (8%) followed by Dio (5%).
- (v) Deviations in quantum of sales of all five brands are observed in last five years. Most of their purchase decisions are influenced by a special character or special features of the vehicle. The non-gear vehicle buyers observed to have given more priority to Design, Style, Look and Colour followed by Brand Image, Speed, Mileage and Value of the non-gear bikes, which have influenced less on buying decisions. So far Brand Image is concern, Vespa is at top. So far Design, Style, Look and Colour are concerned again Vespa stood at top followed by Pleasure.

RECOMMENDATIONS / SUGGESTIONS

- (i) The topography of Goa needs special type of engine to be fitted in non-gear bikes, which can easily climb up hilly areas with a load carrying capacity of two adults.
- (ii) Due to climatic conditions (heavy rain, salty weather and sun light) in Goa, vehicles are getting rusted within a year. The vehicle manufacturers should look into this suggestion given by the respondents and design forth coming models, which can sustain extreme weather conditions of Goa.

CONCLUSIONS

The set hypotheses after doing pilot study, which was put for test proved positively.

(i) The young women customers give more priority to Design, Style, Look and Colour of the non-gear bikes rather than the Speed, the Mileage and the Value of the non-gear vehicles available in the market observed to have proved positively.

LIMITATIONS

- (i) Since the study is conducted with limited sample size of respondents, conclusions arrived based on the data and personal opinions of non-gear vehicle users, hence, the opinions stated in this study cannot be generalised.
- (ii) Since the respondents are selected at random and the area covered is limited, the conclusions arrived cannot be considered as the opinions of non-gear vehicle users of the state of Goa or entire community of non-gear vehicle users of our country.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research can be taken up at state level, which may give concrete conclusions so that non-gear bike manufacturers can design their non-gear vehicles as per the needs and passion of *Goan* people and *Goan* topography. The present study revealed that every vehicle has its own pros and cons, need to be studied, modified and introduced as per the needs of the land and people of Goa.

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