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- Sharma T., Kwatra, G. (2008) Effectiveness of Social Advertising: A Study of Selected Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Edited by David Crowther & Nicholas Capaldi, Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Chapter 15, pp 287-303.

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## CONSUMER DEMOGRAPHICS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THEIR CAR PREFERENCES IN INDIAN FOUR WHEELER MARKET

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### ABSTRACT

*The automobile industry today is the most lucrative industry. Due to the increase in income of both rural and urban sector and easy finance being provided by all the financial institutes, more number of consumers are purchasing four wheeler based on the income level and needs. Competition is heating up in the sector with a host of new players coming in and others like Audi, BMW all set to venture in the Indian markets. One factor that could help the companies in the marketing of their car products is by knowing their customers' four wheeler preferences. However, the customers' four wheeler preference is based on their demographics influence such as age, gender, occupation, income level. Hence, this research attempts to answer this question regarding four wheeler preferences of Indian consumers based on their demographic profiles. This research will be helpful for the new car entrants and existing car companies in India to find new ways to market their products by understanding customers' tastes and preferences based on their demographics.*

### KEYWORDS

Indian Four Wheeler Market, Consumer Preference, Customer Demographics.

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of "buying behavior" is of prime importance in marketing and has evolved over the years. It is important to understand consumer buying behavior as it plays a vital role in creating an impact on purchase of products. The human wants are unlimited and always expect more and more. Cars are no exception to this behavior. This lead to constant modifications of Car Models & its features and today we see a new model coming into the market practically every quarter. The market is a very important place to study the behavior of consumers and also provide useful insights what a consumer requires in a product. It is only through research that a company will be able to study the buying behavior of consumers.

"As one of the measurements of the performance of the quality management system, the organizations shall monitoring information relating to customer perception as to whether the organization has met customer requirements. The method for obtaining and using this information shall be determined" The requirement has been there in the QS9000 standard clause 4.1.6 which says: "Trends in customer satisfaction and key indicators of customer dissatisfaction shall be documented and supported by objective information. These trends shall be compared to those of competitors, or appropriate benchmarks, and reviewed by senior management." There is obviously a strong link between customer satisfaction and customer retention. Customer's perception of service and quality of product will determine the success of the product or service in the market. With better understanding of customer's satisfaction, companies can determine the actions required to meet the customer's needs. They can identify their own strengths and weaknesses, where they stand in comparison to their competitors, chart out the path future progress and improvement. Customer satisfaction measurement helps to promote an increased focus on customer outcomes and stimulate improvements in the work practices and processes used within the company. The decision-making process consists of a series of steps which the consumer undergoes.

The constant use of the product leads to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the consumer, which leads to repeat purchases, or to the rejection of the product. The marketing strategy is successful if consumers can see a need which a company's product can solve and, offers the best solution to the problem. For a successful strategy, the marketer must lay emphasis on the product/brand image in the consumer's mind. Position the product according to the customers likes and dislikes. The brand which matches the desired image of a target market sells well. Sales are important and sales are likely to occur if the initial consumer analysis was correct and matches the consumer decision process. Satisfaction of the consumer, after the sales have been affected, is important for repeat purchase. It is more profitable to retain existing customers, rather than looking for new ones.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

**Bhupesh Gautam (28 Jun 2011)**, says Disadvantages of Diesel car over Petrol car are (1) Initial price of Diesel car is more than a Petrol car, (2) maintenance cost for Diesel car is more than that of a Petrol car. Disadvantage of Petrol car 1) Petrol costs more than diesel, (2) When compared with similarly powered cars, consumption of fuel per km. in Petrol car is more than Diesel car." Considering the above points, thumb rule given by automobile experts is that if one drives 1500 km or more on a monthly average, buying a diesel car makes sense. Otherwise, petrol car should be preferred.

**Anuroop (30 Jun 2011)**, says "customer may option for a petrol car if: (a) customer don't drive that often (diesel engines get problems if not operated regularly); (b) customer are not a long distance traveller (no need to invest on a petrol car for the sake of cheaper diesel). customer may opt for a diesel car, if: (a) customer drive quite often (b) customers you are a long distance traveller (can save a lot on fuel price)".

**Krishnamoorthy (05 Jul 2011)** says "If customer are seeking a car for personal use than petrol version is better than diesel but on the contrary if customers are using for commercial use than diesel version is recommended. Actually it depends on usage, if customers are using vehicle 40-60 km per day than petrol version is profitable otherwise go with diesel version. The maintenance cost for the diesel version is very high in comparison with petrol version."

**Kishore (11 Jul 2011)** says “It’s depends on customer usage, if customer daily travel 70+ km then go for Diesel no second thought. Diesel cars are 1 lakh expensive than petrol if you keep that 1 lakh in bank (FD) you will get 950 every month that will go into petrol maintenance cost.”

**P.V.S.V. Prasad (12 Jul 2011)** says, diesel price is less when compared to petrol. It’s better to use diesel cars. They emit less quantity of carbon particles into the atmosphere. Also diesel prices don’t hike as fast as petrol. Otherwise if customer use car for long distances customer opt a petrol engine car.

**Akanksha Pandit (28 Jun 2011)** says, the main difference between a diesel vehicle and a petrol vehicle (other than the fuel used) lies in its engine. A diesel engine is more powerful than a petrol engine. Diesel engine requires a complex propulsive mechanism and that’s why diesel cars are costlier. But the mileage of a diesel car is more than that of a petrol car because of powerful engine. The cost of petrol is also more than that of diesel. Diesel car thus is more cost effective. However, diesel car is more polluting than petrol car.

**Lee Boyce (Published: 12:52 GMT, 18 April 2012)** A diesel will typically cost ten to 15% more to insure than an equivalent petrol car. It has higher average accident repair costs, especially if the turbo intercooler is damaged. And many diesels have twin radiators, which are more vulnerable in a head-on collision.

**PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Four wheeler has become a symbol of status in society. Now a day’s every class people wish to have four wheelers. There are many types of four wheelers available in market and there are a lot of differences between those four wheelers based on the price, features, maintenance, engine power, safety etc. Customers while making purchase decisions, assign priorities based on their preferences and usage patterns. Their preferences and usage pattern may again depend on their demographic factors. Their usage pattern will be a main factor which will determine what kind of car they will purchase. Hence this research focuses on customer brand preferences.

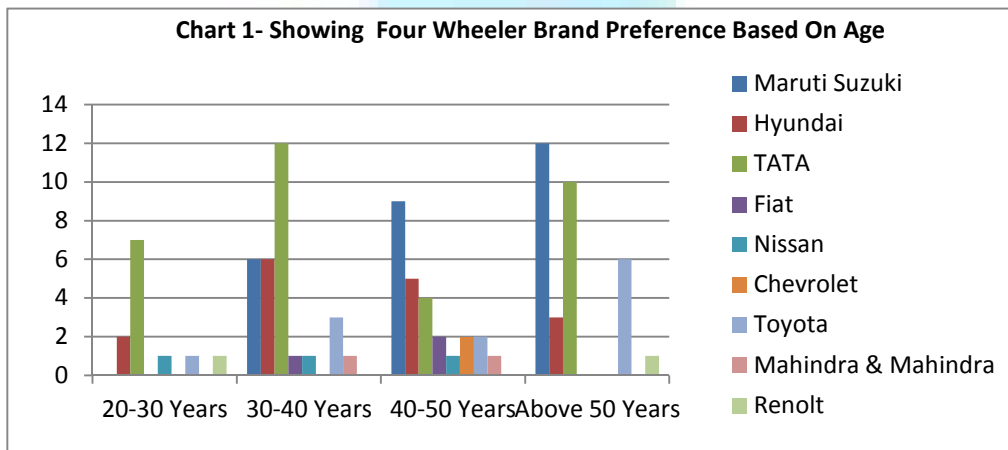
**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

To know the customer’s preferences of four wheelers based on their demographic profiles (such as age, gender, occupation & income level).

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

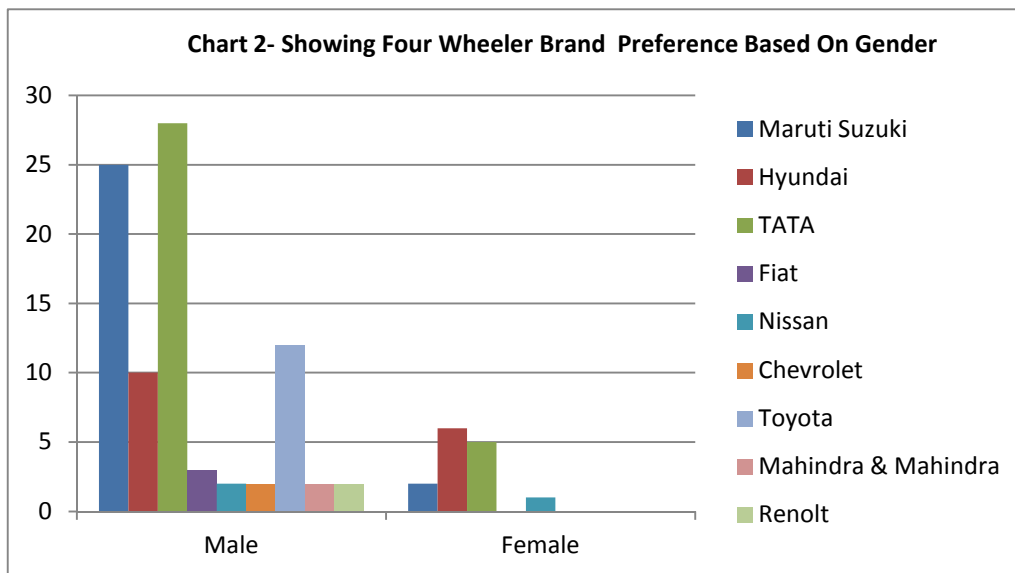
This research has adopted both exploratory and descriptive research designs. In exploratory research many focus groups and depth interviews were conducted among various demographics to understand the insights of brand preference and their tastes. Based on the ideas generated during exploratory research the descriptive research design was finalised. A well structured questionnaire was developed for the same and data was collected. The research has been conducted in Bagalkot city, Karnataka, India. The sample units chosen were car users and owners. Study was restricted to company cars like, TATA, Maruti Suzuki, Volks Wagon, Fiat, Toyota, Mahindra, etc ( Top end cars like BMW, Benz, Audi, Hummer, etc are not considered). The sample size to which questionnaires were administered was 100. and 100 respondents responded. Hence the response rate is 100%.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

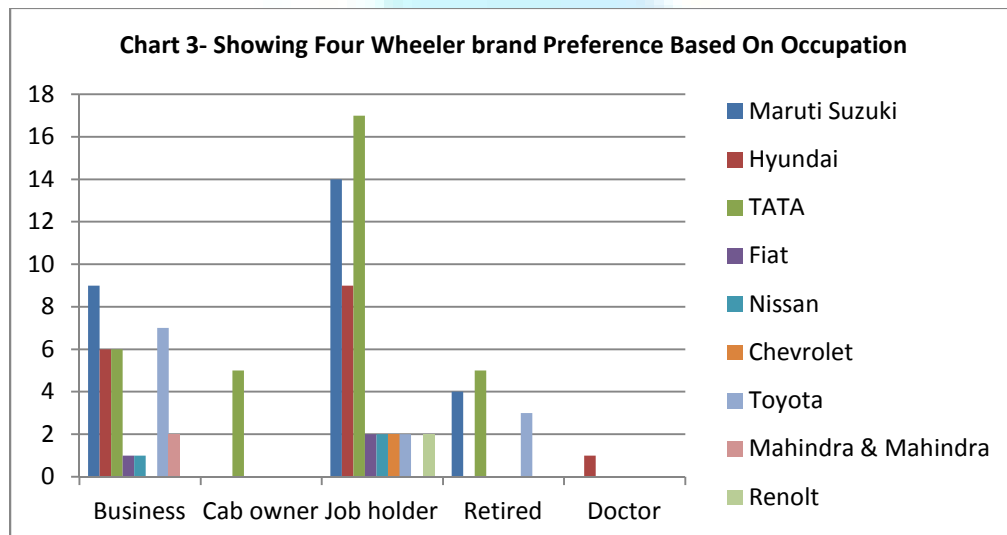


From chart 1 it is seen that, 20-30 aged consumers give more preference to Tata because Tata is famous for diesel cars and these people have low range income compare to other age segments so they go for diesel cars. And their next preference is to Hyundai because Hyundai offers cars which have good outlook and these cars attract more youths. And there equal preference to Nissan, Toyota, and renolt. 30-40 aged people also give more preference to Tata the reason is same as above. Next preference is to maruti Suzuki and Hyundai, preference for Hyundai is same as above and for maruti, it is offering good mileage and low maintenance cars. 40-50 aged people give more preference to maruti Suzuki because of low maintenance, next preference is to Hyundai because of its attractive designs and features, third preference goes to tata due to less unique features and their next preference is to fiat, Chevrolet and renolt. And last preference is to Nissan and Mahindra. Above 50 aged people gives first preference to maruti because of low maintenance, next preference is to tata for good mileage cars, next preference is to Toyota, next preference is to Hyundai and at last renolt.

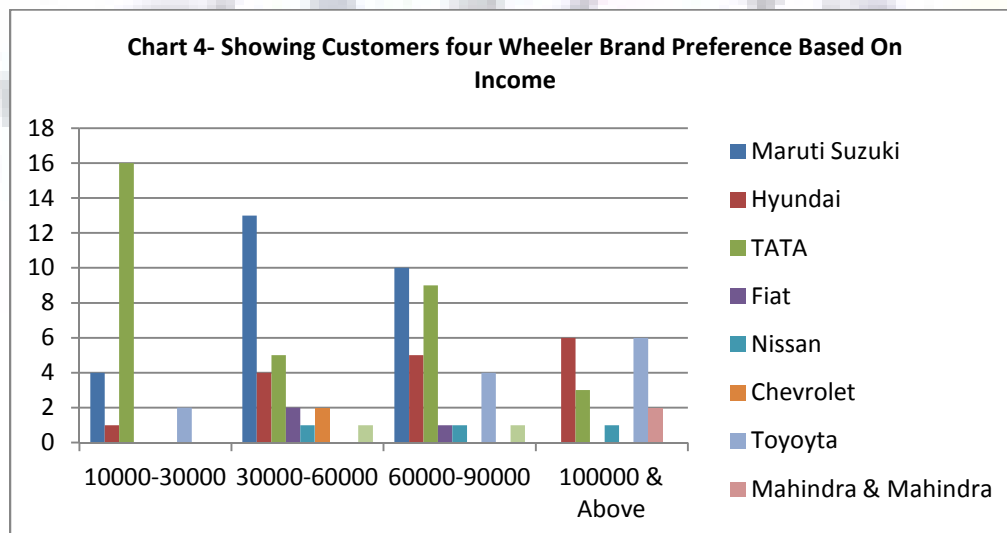




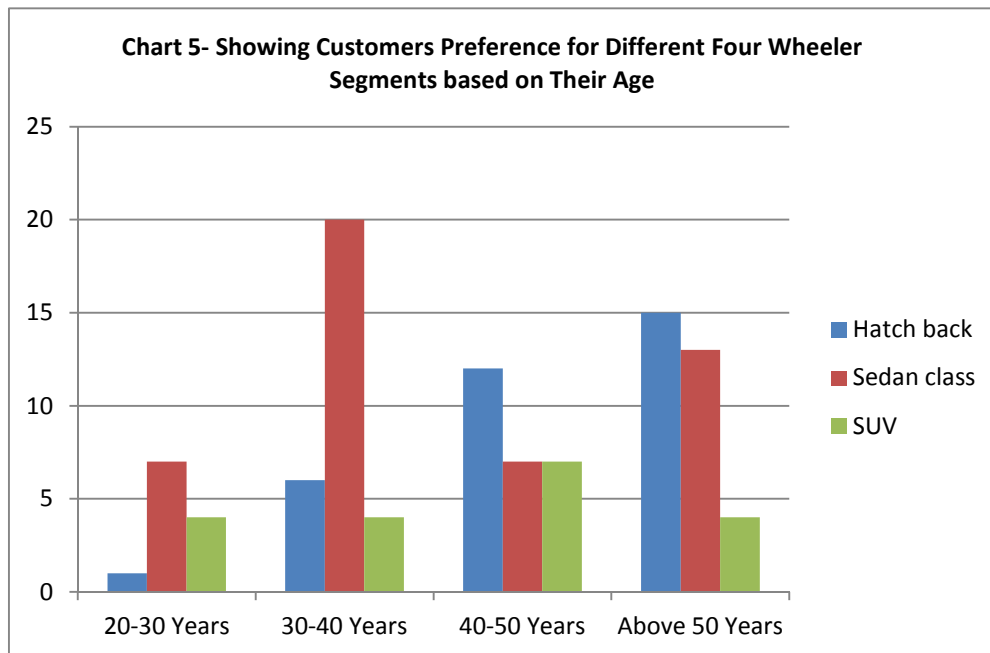
From chart 2 it is seen that, Male segment more prefer tata cars and next preference is to maruti, because in both company some cars suits for male’s personality. And third preference is to Toyota, it is famous for manufacturing SUV, these SUV also suits for male’s personality. And next preference is to Hyundai it look good for both male and female. Female segment give first preference to Hyundai, all Hyundai cars suits for female’s personality and next preference is to tata, some cars in tata also looks good for females. And next preference is to maruti and last preference is to Nissan.



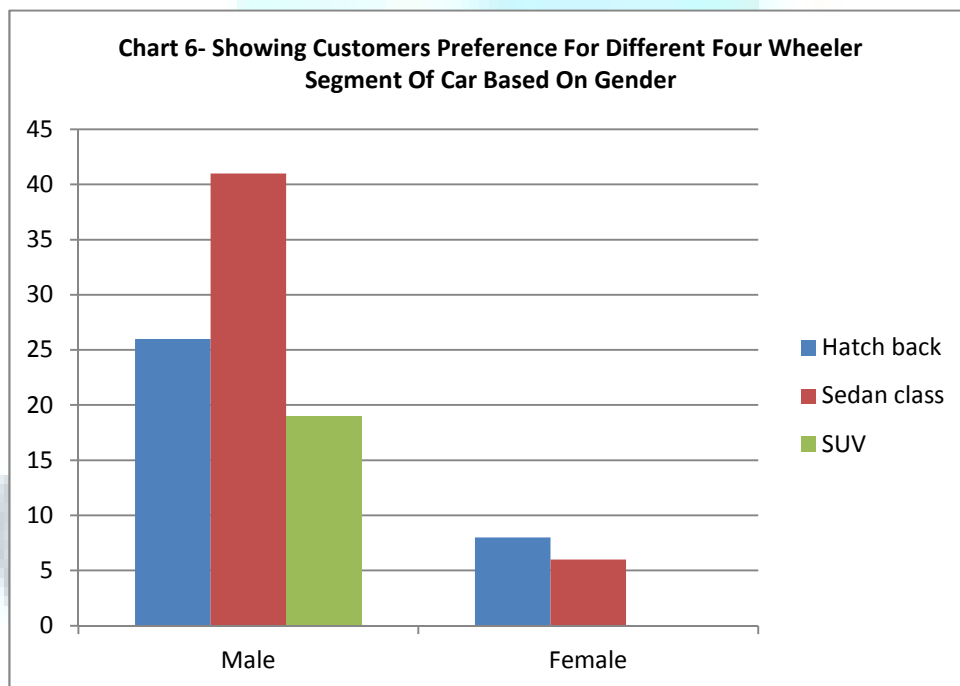
From chart 3 it is seen that, Business man’s first preference is maruti Suzuki because of spacious, attractively designed, cars and next preference is Toyota because of attractive SUVs and status delivered by those SUVs. Next preference is to hyundai and tata, at last Mahindra, fiat and Nissan. Cab owners only prefer tata because safety and mileage of tata cars. Job holder’s first preference is tata and next is maruti because of brand name and good mileage. Maruti and tata cars suits for the personality of jib holders. Next preference is fiat, Nissan, Chevrolet, Toyota, renolt.



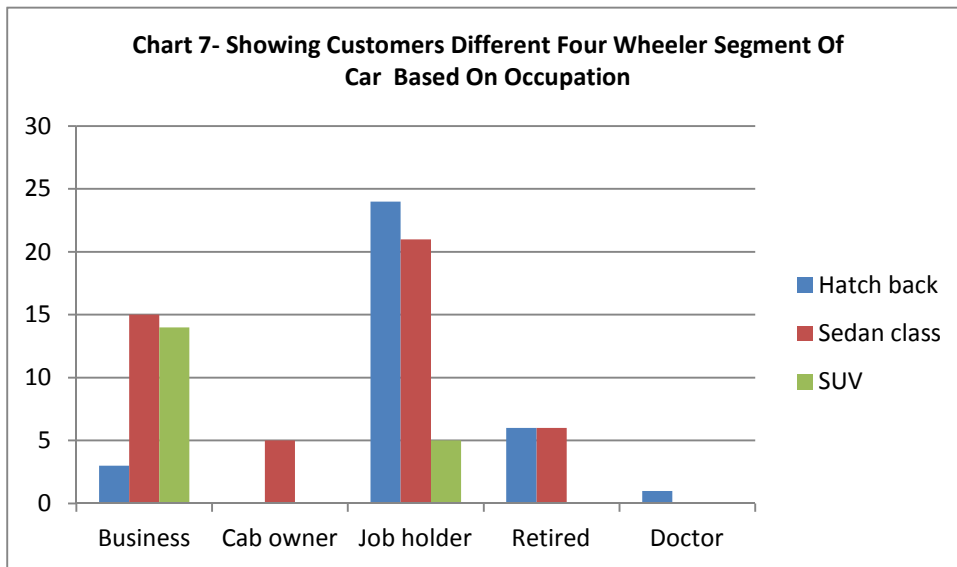
From chart 4 it is seen that, Tata is a first preference of people who are having 10000-30000 income per month. Next is maruti, and last is Toyota. These people purchase the cars which come under their budget. Maruti is the first preference of people who are having 30000-60000 income next one is tata and after that Hyundai, next fiat and Chevrolet and last is Nissan. This segment people little bit conscious about the luxury and status. Again maruti is first preference of people who are having 60000-90000 and next one is tata and third preference is Hyundai and next Toyota and at last fiat and Nissan. Hyundai and Toyota is first preference of people who are having 100000 and above income. This segment considers luxury and SUVs because of high income. And next is tata and third is mahindra and last one is Nissan.



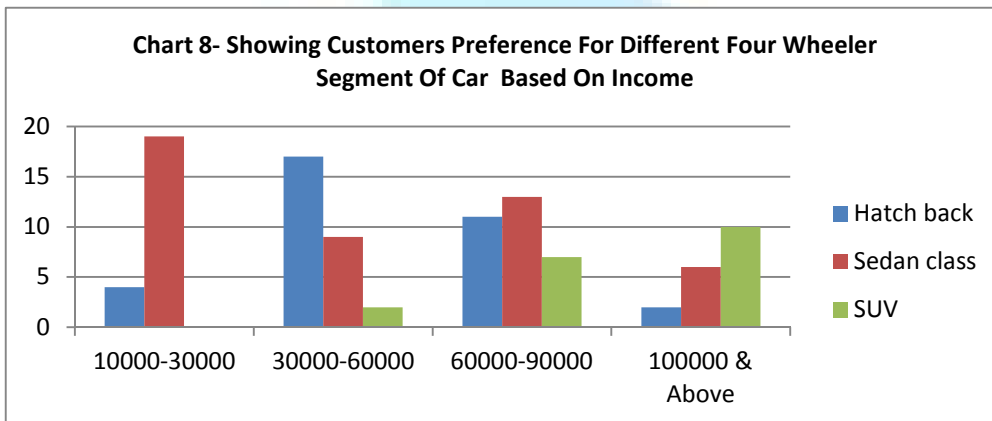
From chart 5 it is seen that, 20-30 aged consumers give more preference to sedan class, in this segment most of them are fresher for job and they are young moderate income people so they prefer sedan. And next preference is to SUV and at last hatch back cars. By this chart it is cleared that this segmentation is not having more interest in hatch back cars. 30-40 aged consumers also prefer sedan class more but they have interest in hatch back, due to attractive size and shape so second preference is for hatch back and at last SUV due to more maintenance and less mileage compare other two class cars.



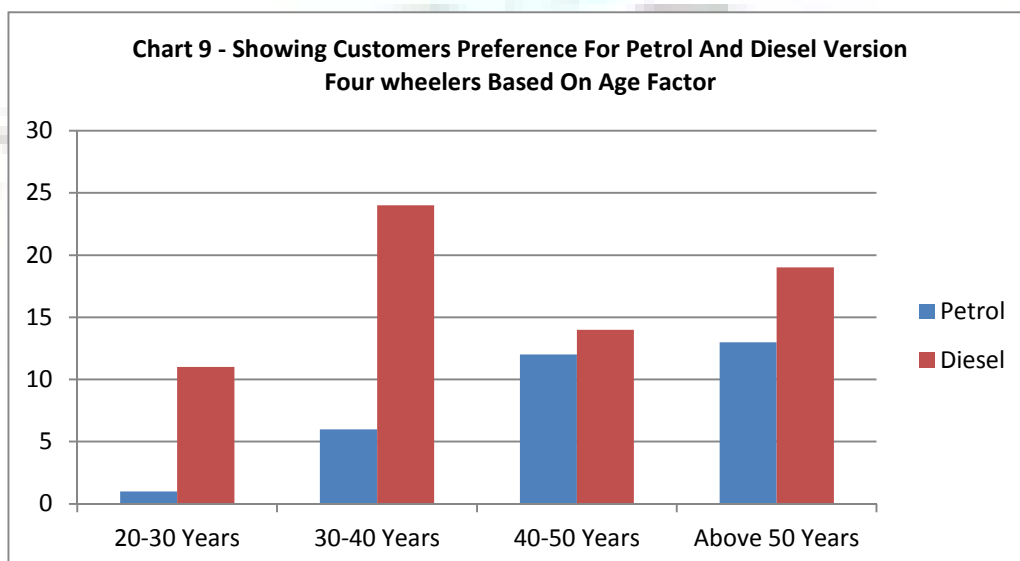
From chart 6 it is seen that, Male segment prefers all class, because for male all three class suits for their personality. And first preference is to sedan class, second preference is to hatch back and third preference is to SUV. Female segment only prefers hatch back and sedan because SUVs do not suit for female personality. So in female segment first preference is to hatch back cars, they feel easy to drive because of compact size, and next preference is to sedan class.



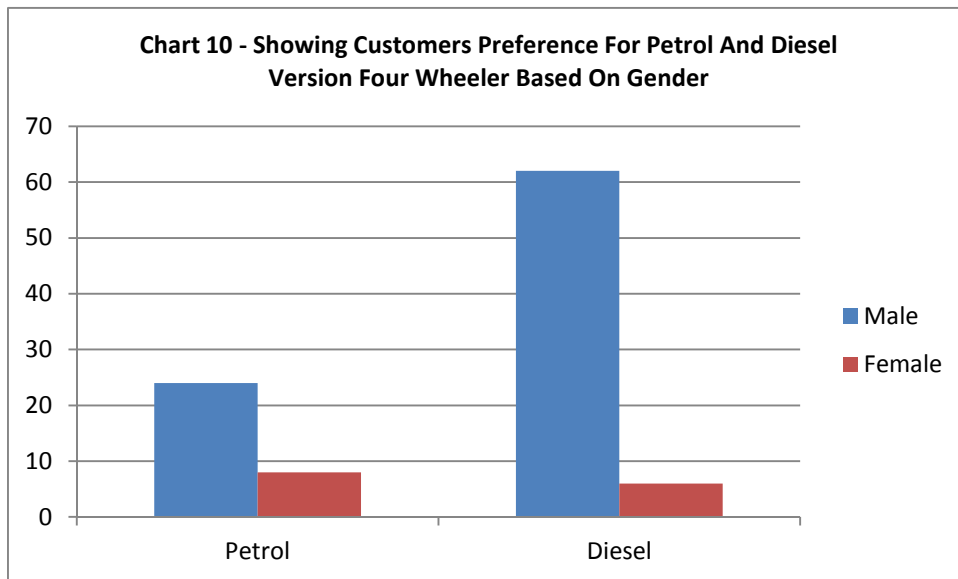
From chart 7 it is seen that, Business man first preference is hatch back cars and next is SUVs these two class increases the status of business man, as per chart preference towards hatch back cars is least compare to sedan class and SUVs. Cab owners only prefer sedan class. They use cars for business purpose so they purchase specious cars and cars which gives more mileage. Job holder’s first preference is hatch back cars and second preference is sedan class because these cars suits for their profession. And least preference to SUVs because SUVs don not revel professionalism. Retired people only prefer hatch back and sedan class, these segment people will not feel comfort with SUVs because of age. Doctor’s first preference is hatch back car because its suits for personality.



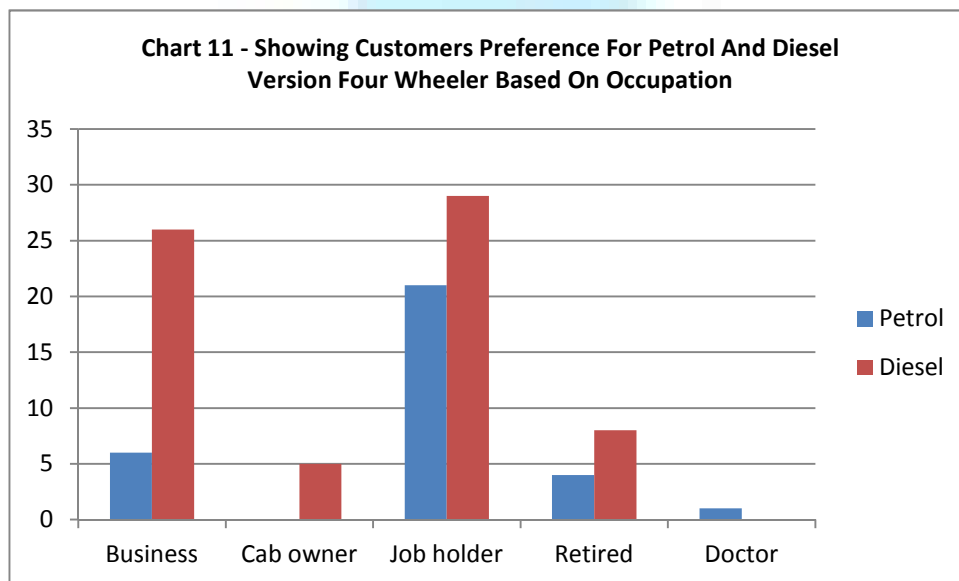
From chart 8 it is seen that, People who are having 10000-30000income, they prefer sedan class because they need such cars which gives more mileage. And least preference for hatch back cars. People who having 30000-60000 income they prefer hatch back cars and next sedan class. As there is hike in income some of them has preferred SUV. People who are having 60000-9000 income their first preference is sedan class and next is hatch back car. As again increase in income, some of them have preferred SUV. In this segment preference will as per their status. People who are having 100000 and above income, they first preference is SUVs because hike in income, do not consider maintenance cost etc. only luxury and status is considered while purchasing car.



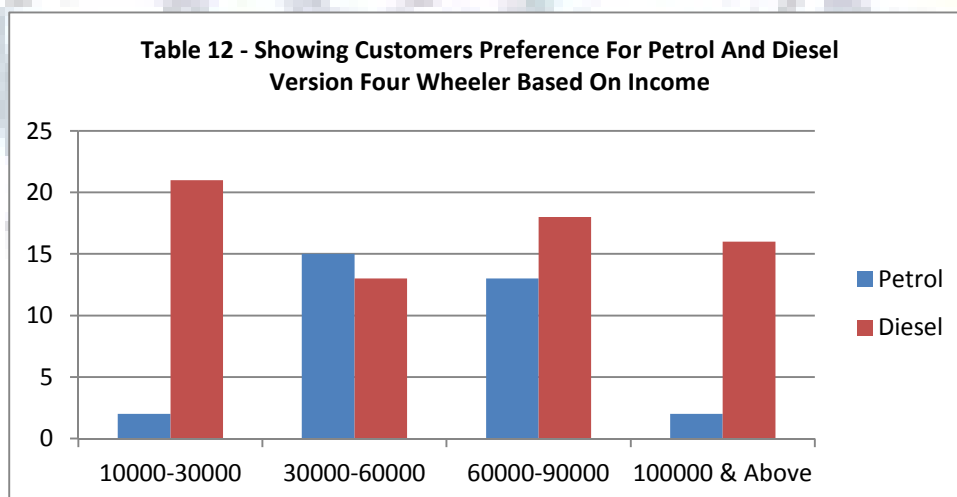
From chart 9 it is seen that, in the entire age segment most of them prefer diesel car, because diesel price is less than petrol, though diesel cars costlier than petrol cars. And next preference is to petrol cars, due to high fuel price. And petrol four wheelers gives less mileage compare to same segment of diesel four wheelers. And one more reason is no consistency in petrol price. Diesel price do not goes up within short period but petrol price varies from month to month.



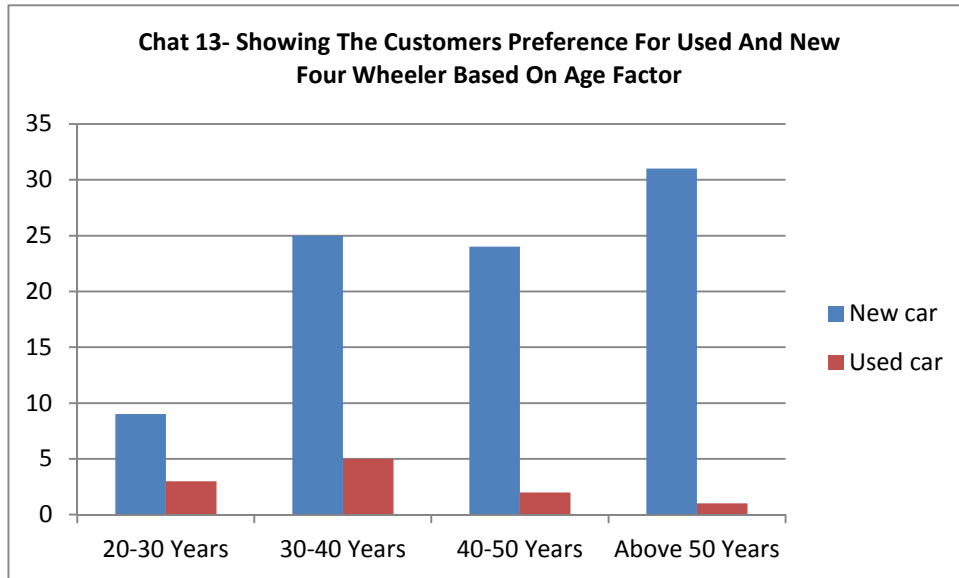
From chart 10 it is seen that, if we come to the choice between petrol car and diesel car both male and female give first preference to diesel though diesel car's price is higher than petrol car, because petrol price is higher than diesel price and diesel cars gives more mileage than petrol cars. By this chart it is clear that fuel price affects the preference towards cars.



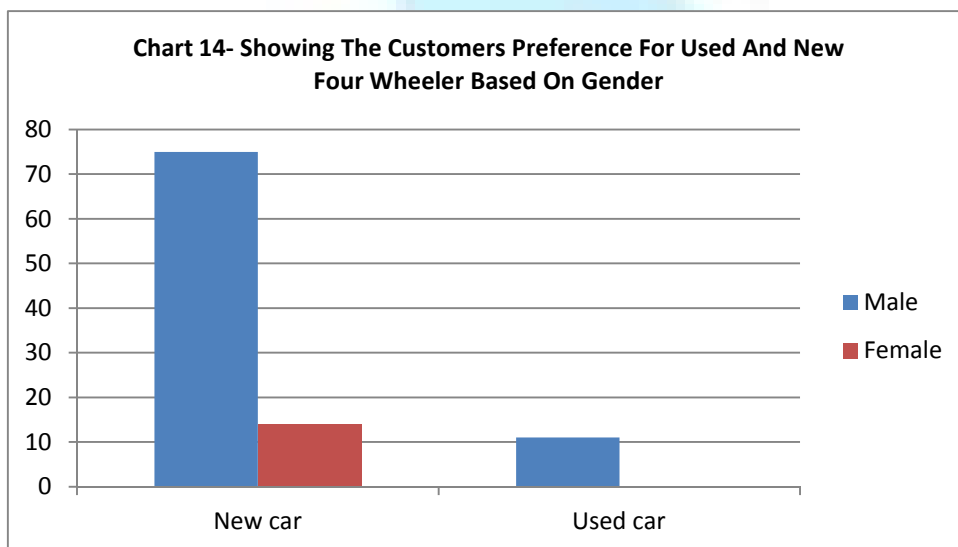
From chart 11 it is seen that, except doctor remaining segment's first preference is diesel. Business man's drive more so they highly prefer diesel cars. All segments preference is diesel car because, petrol price is higher than diesel. And job holders prefer petrol car also because of low maintenance.



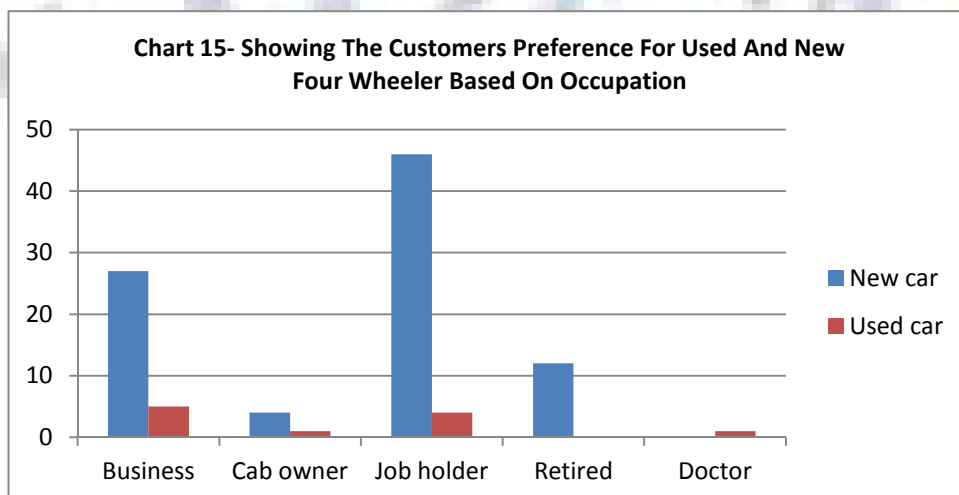
From chart 12 it is seen that, all segment income people prefer diesel car because price diesel is less than petrol. Here it is cleared that sometimes high class people also prefer diesel cars, because most of SUVs are diesel version.



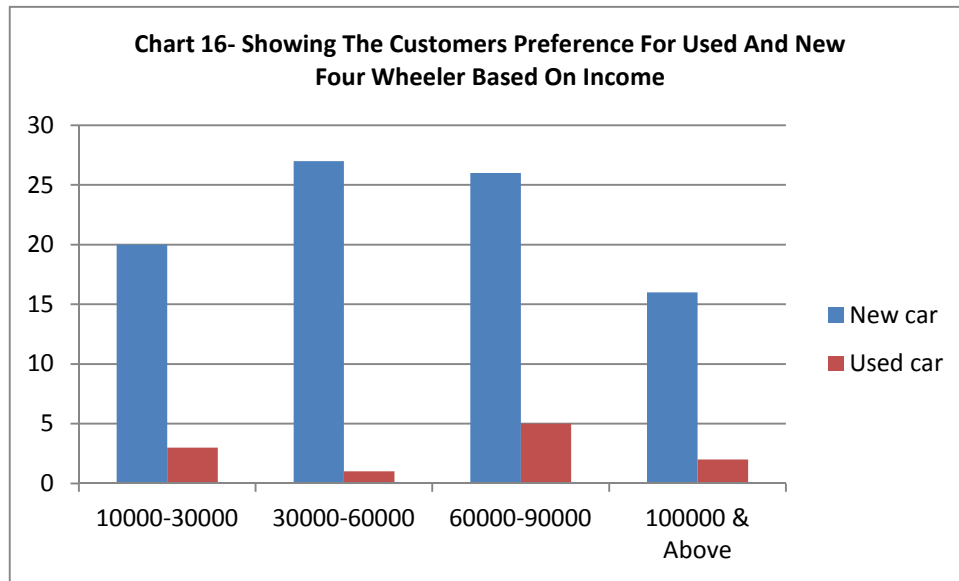
From chart 13 it is seen that, in every age segment consumers prefer or showing interest towards new cars. Consumers think that they have to purchase always new products for personnel use, purchase of used products reduces their status, and this is a customer perception. So there is a least preference to used cars. Only cab owners purchase used cars.



From chart 14 it is seen that, Male segment highly prefer new car, because of status. And only some cab owners prefer used cars because they use it for business purpose. And females do not prefer used car for personal use. Consumer's perception is that purchasing used car reduces their status level because car is symbol of status and their perception is that they have to spend more for used cars.



From chart 15 it is seen that, except doctor remaining segments first preference is new car. For personal use these people purchase new car and it increases the status of person. Some business mans, cab owners, and job holders have prefer the used car because they do not use it for personal use, they use it for business purpose.



From chart 16 it is seen that, all segment income people prefer new car for their personal use. Used car performance and luxury will not be good so least number of people prefer used car. They purchase used car for business purpose not for personal use.

## FINDINGS

- 20-30 aged consumers are not preferring maruti Suzuki cars, they are preferring TATA, Hyundai, Nissan, Toyota, Renault. 30-40 aged consumers first preference is TATA, then maruti and Hyundai, then Toyota. Maruti, tata and Hyundai are the most preferred cars by 40-50 aged and 50 above aged consumers.
- 20-30 aged people first preference is sedan class next is SUV and last is hatch back. 30-40 aged people first preference sedan class, second preference is hatch back and last is SUV. 40-50 aged people first preference is hatch back car and same preference for SUV and sedan class. Above 50 aged people's first preference is hatch back, second preference is sedan class and last preference is SUVs.
- All segment people first preference is diesel car then second is petrol car.
- Less preference for used cars in all segments, first preference is for new cars.
- Male 'first, second, third and fourth preference is tata, maruti, Toyota and Hyundai respectively. And least preference is towards Fiat, Nissan, Renault, Mahindra and Mahindra, Chevrolet. Female first preference Hyundai, second is tata, third is maruti Suzuki and last is Nissan, and female do not prefer Fiat, Mahindra & Mahindra, Chevrolet, Renault, Toyota.
- Male first preference is sedan class, second is hatch back and last preference is SUVs. Female prefer sedan and hatch back cars, they do not prefer SUVs.
- Male gives more preference to diesel cars and less preference to petrol cars. Female gives more preference to petrol car and less preference to diesel cars.
- Female do not prefer used car. Male gives least preference to used cars.
- Business man's first preference is maruti Suzuki, next is Toyota and same preference towards tata and Hyundai. Cab owners only prefer tata. Job holders more preference is tata, maruti and Hyundai.
- Business man gives more importance to sedan class and SUVs. Least preference for hatch back cars. Job holders prefer hatch back and sedan class, least preference to SUVs.
- Cab owners do not prefer petrol car. Business man, job holder and retired people give more preference diesel car and least preference for petrol car.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to know the consumer preference of four wheelers based on their demographic profile. From the study it can be conclude that, maximum preference in middle class, upper middle class and in high class is for new car. Only cab owners prefer to buy used cars. In all classes female do not prefer SUVs because they are having perception that SUVs do not suit for their personality. From the survey it is clear that most of consumers prefer four wheelers from TATA, Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai brands.

The price difference between the petrol and diesel affects the consumer and many consumers prefer diesel version four wheelers even though the diesel version four wheelers are costlier than petrol version four wheelers. By this study it is clear that hatch back and sedan class segment four wheelers are attracting more number of consumers. In all classes preference is more for sedan and hatch back segment four wheelers. Job holders do not prefer SUVs whereas business men do prefer to buy SUVs.

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