

AUTOMOBILE MARKETING IN INDIA

Dr. V.D. Santosh Kumar*
Dr. V. Vijaya Ranga Rao**
Mohammed Mukthiyar Ahmed***

ABSTRACT

Automobile Marketing is of its own type, all over the world. In India, it is very much on public display and visibility, which it would be very interesting to make studies of, for marketing theory, strategies and practices. It may hold lessons for marketing theory, practices and strategies, not to say, in any case, of being a good case study of automobile marketing in India, holding an expanding automobile marketing in the world. The industry is composed of four segments, viz.,

- *Passenger cars*
- *Commercial Vehicles [light and heavy]*
- *Two – Wheelers [Scooters and Motor Bikes] and*
- *Three – wheelers*

The sectors (1) and (3) are of personal transport and sector (2) and (4) are used for commercial purposes. It is the passenger car sector which is the leading sector of the industry and stands for innovations, constant new models and innovative marketing methodologies or strategies and it is fast growing, clocking about 30 per cent per annum growth, which is a creditable. And, the sector is in ever on expansion mode, whether it is maruti or Nissan, with the intention of building capacities for growing domestic and export and Tamil Nadu state's capital ie., Chennai is called the Indian Detroit. The present study is focused on passenger cars in India, it is expected that the Passenger Car sales alone will be touching some 20 million by 2020, and India will be among the top 10 automobile markets in the world and a leader in making fuel – efficient small cars and biggies like Volkswagen and Toyota will be waiting in the wings.

KEYWORDS: *Automobile Marketing, Strategies, Passenger Cars, Commercial Vehicles.*

Introduction

Automobile Marketing is of its own type, all over the world. In India, it is very much on public display and visibility, which it would be very interesting to make studies of, for marketing theory, strategies and practices. In the automobile marketing of India, the importance of the marketing in the scheme of a business enterprise needs no elaborate explanation, it is marketing which decides the final fate of product, namely whether it is a success or a failure. Many a product fail if they are not successfully marketed. In this seeming age of automobiles, aviation, and personalize transport, conspicuous consumption and consumerism, the importance of the auto industry for the growing economy of Indian for domestic purpose calls for no over – emphasis. Hence, this forerunner study of Automobile marketing of the Indian automobile industry and the premier Tata motors, the big and reputed parent company of little Nano as well as the mighty Jaguar & Land Rover. India's is a developing economy with lot of scope of industrialization, specially of modern industrial products of cars such as E-Vehicles and other automobile products.

* Associate Professor, Vishwa Vishwani School of systems and Business Management, Hyderabad, India.

** Associate Professor, Vishwa Vishwani School of systems and Business Management, Hyderabad, India.

*** Principal Trainer, Turnkey -Bs, Business Management Training and Consulting, MBA, NET, CFS, PPE

Considering the age of automobiles itself is some 100 year plus, commencing with Ford's famous model – T, the age of Indian automobile industry must be much less given Indian's colonial and underdeveloped background and only recent resurgence of the Indian economy, India's development and industrialization are of shot version.

India's Development and Industrial Story

It comes as a surprise that India of continental size, then made up of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh was for nearly 200 years under the colonial rule of England (1757-1947) stunting her natural process of development, which could only pick-up following independence in 1947. According to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime minister of India (1947-1964) and the architect of its economic development especially the rough industrialization of basic type or capital goods or heavy industries, steel, coal, etc., the nation then was at the stage of bullock-cart and in the early 1970s India does not know how to build-up a motor, but now it is capable of manufacturing submarines. And, according to Nehru due to economic development and planning and industrialization initiated by the government of independent India, the nation had advanced to from the age of bullock-cart to that of bicycle, indicative of the economic advancement of the country through industrialization of which the automobile industry should be a part but it was not significantly for quite some time to come. The industries that were prominent on the industrial map of India were the following:

- Textile
- Jute
- Iron and Steel
- Coal
- Sugar
- Cement
- Fertilizers and Chemicals
- Machine tools

Nehru Era plans of industrialization were based upon priority to capital goods and other key or 'mother' industries in which consumer goods, particularly of the luxury types like motor cars have no prominence. It is only of late the automobile industry, specially of passenger cars burst upon the industrial horizon of India and is visible everywhere in the number and variety of motor cars crossing through the urban and rural roads of India in large numbers giving rise to the new urban phenomenon of great traffic jams. The reason for the late arrival of the automobile, especially the passenger cars are on the industrial scene of India calls for some explanation. It is due to the nation's economic policy of giving big preference especially in the public sector during the times of Nehru and also subsequently for quite some time, which is known as the policy of heavy industries industrialization or of mother industries as against the consumer and luxury industries of cosmetics, cars, etc. It is well-known that how people have to wait for a long time to get a two-wheeler 'Vespa' scooter and how even very old scooter prices were higher than that of the new ones. And, not the least, foreign capital participation was held to lead to new financial colonialism and dominance of the country just out of a long and dark night of British colonialism. The then Russia under communalism was held as a moral of India's economic development and economic power. It is a different matter and does not fall in the project, whether this restrictive and nationalistic economic policy of restrictions, licenses and per units and on private capital and foreign capital was an appropriate one for the nation of a big population, mass poverty, massive unemployment and a colonial-type administration. There are quite strong arguments both for and against the policy even today, quite understandably. One of the changes, however, against the restrictive, rather than liberal or free market, economic policy is that its growth is also restrictive or of a low magnitude. As if a confirmation of this criticism or by coincidence, India's economic growth, on an average between 1950 and 1980 was found to be of the order of a small 3.5%. The maximum aspiration of the growth of the development vehicles of the Five Year Plans was of the order of 5 to 6%.

Happily, India is made up of many industrial houses, the history of which is broadly the history of industrialization of India in different lines of industrial production of these, Tatas and Birlas are historical and pioneering industrial and business houses of India which are closely linked with whatever industrialization of India in colonial times and in Independent or free India after 1947. J.R. D. Tata and G.D. Birla are, long time heads of the Tata and Birla industrial houses in the 20th century are industrial legends and icons. Birla, more over, was closely allied with Mahatma Gandhi under whose leadership

India had attained its Independence after British colonial rule of two centuries (1757 – 1947). They were fired with the spirit of Swadeshi or economic nationalism of the early years of the 20th century, which is long history. The fact that the Tata Group considered a national symbol was the reason for foreign terrorist attack on iconic Taj Hotel in Mumbai in the year 2008, which however did not shake the Chairman Ratan Tata a bit and the Hotel was brought to business as usual within no time, which is just an instance of the indomitable spirit of the Tata, who also seem intended whole Indian, believing in no foreign collaboration. In this respect, the Nano is a wholly Indian or indigenous vehicle meant for both Indian and foreign auto markets.

The Cars of India

Whatever may be the automobile industry, especially passenger cars was not a priority industry and foreign automobile firms in the country were almost unthinkable, without any exaggeration, Passenger cars appear to have been considered, especially the costly ones, luxury item for the nation beset with mass, deep poverty. Not surprisingly, the big Ambassador-Amby, of the then premier Hindustan Motors, was the national from the Prime Minister of India down to the prosperous individuals. Incidentally, not only the Hindustan Motors not doing well financially but is also in the process of recasting its production portfolio and the Amby, once a National Auto symbol is increasingly disappearing from the national roads, garages and workshops. Now, in India, it seems times for smart, flashy, classy cars. For, from one's car brand it appears possible today to have fair and good about one's 'class' Next to the Amby was Fiat, a lighter passenger car, but of only private customers, unlike the Amby of official patronage and national flag over it. Thus, it was a twosome automobile industry of India.

To say Maruti revolutionized india's auto industry is an under-statement. It symbolized the country's industrial modernization and the coming of age of its consumer market. Maruti, as the carmaker was always known despite its three avatars, the latest being Maruti Suzuki Ltd, is one of those enterprises that defined reforms since 1991. Yet, Maruti is not a child of reforms. In many ways it is the mother. Since then its journey has been chequered and exciting. Maruti Suzuki today accounts for almost, half of the 24.97 million Indian car market and around half of the Japanese parent Suzuki Motor's sales. As on July of 2018, it had a market capitalization of Rs. 283,287.66 crore and sustains about a third of india's \$ 39 billion automotive component business.

Before Maruti, the market was dominated by Premier Padmini and Ambassador models, whose technology remained the same for decades, as few others got the licence to make cars. Almost all carmakers have entered India, throwing the market wide open. Hyundai Motor, Maruti's nearest rival, has lost steam in the past five years. Prospects have dimmed for Tata Motors, which unveiled the cheapest small car, Nano, in January 2008, to take on the biggest carmaker in the country.

Winds of Change and Coming of Automobile Time

The mid- 1980s appear to be a turning point in the history of economic development, industrialization and economic policy of India. World – Over there was the march of free enterprise economic philosophy including in the hardcore communist country of China, of all ! its triumph was very much visible in the ASEAN- Association of South East Asian Nations of Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, - founding members, which were noted as the models of free-enterprise economic development by the World Bank, and India had to take to the free enterprise path, constrained as it was by a many sick public sector units, capital and entrepreneurial shortage and technical handicaps. There was also opening of a new corporate chapter by the Reliance Industries (RIL), Maruti Udyog, Infosys, Wipro, and others – of new corporate generation, opening up a new chapter of industrialization of India of confident and dynamic corporate entities – meanwhile, Maruti Industry or Udyog was a big success opening up a new chapter in the automobile Industry of India.

1991, When the country's foreign exchange were not even \$ 1, and the Indian economy was a crisis marks the beginning of a new chapter in the history of economic development of India, when the economy was thrown open to competition private enterprise initiatives, foreign capital participation to push-up the country's growth rate by making use the new technologies of IT, computers, bio, Nano, etc. Thus, the age of automobiles or automobiles times is very much in evidence in India, though somewhat belatedly. The automobile industry, today, makes a prominent part of the industrial landscape of the country.

Automobile Industry & Its Dynamics

Today the automobile appears to be a new industry with none of its old traces. The once all-in-all and all-over Amby or Ambassador cars are almost in extinction and the Hindustan Motors, the maker

of the Ambassador is in the Red and is in the process of remaking itself according to the new modes of production with economic liberalization, new and higher growth rate of around 9% and strong and growing middle class and export prospects, rural, prosperity, India appears to have arrived at the age of automobiles. The Dynamics of the Industry is that of personal transport change over time from non-mechanized to mechanized. India in this respect has advanced from Pandit Nehru's Bullock-cart and bicycle age to that of scooters and motor-bikes, some costing a sum equivalent to that of the Nano, to the passenger cars age, of all varieties and prices, and the automobile Industry has turned out to be a large and dynamic one with great innovations, competitiveness, market segmentation, building up brand loyalty, brand ambassadors like the Bachchans (Amitab and Abhishek) and SRK (Shahrukh Khan) installment finance, informative export marketing advertising, comprehensive services, etc., which are propelling the Industry to higher and higher domestic and international weights.

The Industry looks not only of the present but also of future with great domestic and export prospects, as India is one of the fast growing economies of the world with export focus to bridge the growing export and import gap (M-X). In the Twelfth Five Year (2012-17) the targeted growth rate was 10 % of the Indian economy and the 12th plan was expected to get a big boost which would push-up national and per capita incomes that would considerably boost demand for passenger cars and other automobile products, especially PCs – passenger cars with more and more people upgrading their personal, family, and business transport to PCs.

Automobile Marketing Strategy (AMS)

The Industry's Automobile marketing strategy also turn out to be quite dynamic and innovative owing to keen competition and quite foreign flavour of the Industry and export drive. The Industry's AMS appears to be a class of its own in view of the competitive nature of the industry and the existence foreign players, giving a global prospective to the Industry. The AMS is addressed to the different segments of the great Indian society, which is a class-ridden and is made up of different higher income groups with varying purchasing power, which calls for different car brands, from the ordinary to luxury and super luxury. Each market segment, it is needless to say runs into millions of prospective customers, the only dampening being for- ever rising fuel prices (\$ 77.28 per barrel) Otherwise, the sky appears to be the only limit to automobile marketing in the country with a large middle class and High Net worth Individuals (HNIs). Who indulge in high level consumption, including luxury cars costing tens of lakhs to crores of rupees. The AMS of the Indian Automobile industry is 'Holistic' intended to increase sales, build-up brand loyalties, increase market share and promote exports and aid full capacity use and plant expansion, etc. And the strategy for the purpose, broadly, consists of product innovation and diversification, competitive pricing, print and electronic media advertisement (Digital Marketing), road-shows, auto shows, Boot Camps and melas, brand ambassadors, installment payments, easy financing and sales and distribution outlets, CRM, after sales services, etc.

In sum, one meets automobile marketing in India, which appears of wholesome nature, at every turn, aiming at attracting customers and increasing sales, revenues and profits and market share and aiding further expansion and growth. It is a very competitive AMS. There appears to be constant marketing innovations and AMS innovations, as for example, Nissan Motors adding a 15 minute test drive for its innovative MICRA car. With respect to the competition and new technological innovations, a variety of marketing techniques have been developed to boost AMS, some of them are as follows

- Digital Marketing
- Precision Marketing
- Neuro Marketing
- Micro Marketing
- Ambush Marketing
- Milk –Shake Marketing
- Bush Fire Marketing, etc.

In the past Ratan Tata laid focus on social networking sites like face book to help build up a network of prospective customers to virally market the small car. Ratan Tata has worked out a viral marketing strategy to promote the Nano at the lowest cost and Anand Mahindra also used the online medium to grab consumer mind share when he launched XYLO in the past. Marketing is to make a success of a product. In a way, it is more important than making a product. It is giving the customer value for his money and keeping the customers a contended or more than a contended lot. It is building a

product image, familiarity, sales and profits. Marketing is bridging an association between a product and its customers and having a continuous stream of new customers. It is developing brand loyalty or rather affinity. A population of well satisfied customers is the first sign of good marketing, which does not happen, just happen or happen on its own, but, through a well laid out and executed market plan or strategy in which consumers / customers are very much partners. The consumers / customers are in fact, prime partners in the marketing play. The principle of marketing, so to say, is profits through service or value for money and keep customers optimally satisfied or at their optimum utility.

Thus, great responsibility rests on Automobile marketing to keep the firm going and expanding its horizon of activity and customer reach. It is consumerism or catering to the various tastes of consumers, which is the prevailing business philosophy. Hence, marketing is very much display in catering to the variety of consumer needs. Automobile marketing is good example of this all over the world and it is in top gear in India. A variety of automobile products are marketed to different customers and to different markets.

Nano was a grand entry into the Indian as well as international automobile market as the aam aadmi or common man car, the largest and the most working segment of the great Indian population of 1.2 Billion plus, serving the common man is the ruling economic philosophy of the country, inherited from the stellar personality and the father of nation, Mahatma Gandhi, one of the greatest personalities of the world history, whose ideology and ideals need to be imbibed by the corporate and market world as well.

BOP – Bottom of Pyramid

Thus, in the first instance, with his great love for the teeming humanity of India, Ratan Tata, the celebrity former chairman of the Tata Group, intended Tata, Small Car, to be named Nano – meaning a small car – later for the teeming population of the poor, famously called the bottom of the pyramid (BOP) people by the Late Prof. C.K. Prahalad, revolutionizing management science as a Science of the haves as a science of the have-nots too. Hence, the Nano is called 'People's car' – the people referring the BOP people or common people who are seldom given any attention by the Big business. Late Prof. C.K.Prahalad (1941-2010) one of the most eminent thinkers of management of all time had called for, through his famous pyramid theory, big business houses and MNCs to extend their sway to the people at the bottom of the pyramid made up of poor and other common people, Prof. Prahalad's was a revolutionary marketing theory, which brings marketing to the lives of the aam admi / common people, for example, popular clinic shampoo which is made available in one or two times use Re.1 sachets which can be afforded by the poorest of the poor, this culture of marketing for the common people is evident in the case of other commodities also, soaps, tea, biscuits, TVs, mobile phones, etc. A piece of color mobile phone is available for Rs.490, the price of which is most likely to come down further, making cell phones come within the reach of each and every Indian. The Nano too, in the passenger car market is intended for who may be called the proverbial small man who is at the base of the socio – economic pyramid. Significantly, in this market, the Nano stands out as the common man's or the bottom of the pyramid car, an aam aadmi car, the aam aadmi a much worshipped and allegiance paid political over lord. He is made an economic over lord too by Maruti. The next world's marketing frontier and field may be the late Prof. C.K. Prahalad made BPO.

According to the marketing Guru' Philip Kotler and others, there is a New Economy marked among other things, by hyper or super competition because of liberalization, globalization and information technology (IT). It is a digital economy, which is very much in evidence in India, with increased consumer power and the consumers being pursued in a number of ways in every line of production with a number of national and international brands. The Automobile industry in India is a good example of this, wherein the world auto majors, Ford, Toyota, General Motors (GM) are competing with Tata Motors, Maruti, Mahindra and others with a number of brands catering to the different segments of the Automobile market. The new economy calls for new Automobile marketing strategy of keeping the customers highly pleased and contented. The new economy's consumer seems to be no more a king but an Emperor, difficult to please being well educated, well informed and well calculating and a good judge of products and services.

Indian Automobile Industry and Market

It is needless to say that marketing and marketing strategies are allied with or dependent upon the type of industry and market, which range from monopoly to competitive markets. According to Philip Kotler, the doyen of marketing, today's marketing is marked by hyper or super competition, to which the automobile industry and marketing are no exception, whether in India or abroad. The world of automobile

industry is dotted with most famous and familiar names – General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, Toyota, Nissan, Fiat, Volkswagen and their world famous and familiar brands. The Industry is noted to have put the world and its people on wheels and in for ever motion. The auto industry's marketing is a high profile one, meeting the people at every turn.

In India, the automobile industry is noted to be a very fast growing one during the last two decades at about 12% every year, which are known to be the decades of economic reforms, liberalization and a higher rate of economic growth. Thus, the Indian automobile industry is quite competitive with an intensive marketing activity which calls for innovative strategies of marketing to take the auto products or cars near to their customers. In the automobile industry of India, Tata Motors Nano is regarded as a world-level innovation, as never hitherto. It is in fact regarded as a Revolution in the history of the world's automobile industry.

Production is only a part of the business, the other and most important part being marketing, successful making of which brings in the fruits or profits of the business, for which business enterprises work by serving their customers to the best of their capacity or giving value for their money. Marketing is a big business in itself. There are competitive to monopoly markets, with differences in marketing of different markets. According to Prof. Kotler, "Marketing deals with identifying and meeting human and Social needs. One of the shortest definition of marketing is "meeting needs profitably". Prof. Kotler is of the opinion that the business of marketing has changed radically of late giving rise to the concept of radical marketing which is today's highly competitive and globalised New Economy's New Marketing, wherein the 'consumer seems really a king;. The New economy is highly competitive, globalised and digitally moved. According to Prof. Kotler, the new economy is characterized by 'hyper-competition' of more marketing challenges than the old economy.

According to the government of India, industry ministry and Society Of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), the Automobile industry is one of the high growth industries with good exports performance and prospects, though the industry can trace its origin to the mid 1940's, the real growth story of the industry is said to have started in the early 1990's following the momentous economic reforms and liberalization of the Indian economy in the troubled 1991, following economic reforms and liberalization, in the first instance, the industry home to the world's automobile giants and legends – GM, Ford, BMW, Toyota, Suzuki, Nissan, Hyundai, Renault, Peugeot, not to say of the Indian companies of Maruti, Tata Motors, Mahindra, etc., with a number of brands to cater to different market segments ranging from the ordinary to the luxury and the companies are historical auto manufacturers of USA, Japan, Germany, France, Italy, South Korea and so on. Here are some of the list of automobile industries and its origin, country wise.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| • Maruti Suzuki | Indo – Japanese |
| • Hyundai | South Korea |
| • Tata Motors | India |
| • Renault | France |
| • Fiat | Italy |
| • Mahindra | India |
| • Toyota | Japan |
| • Mitsubishi and Hindustan Motors | Indo – Japanese |
| • Hindustan Motors | India |
| • Volkswagen | Germany |
| • Honda | Japan |
| • Skoda | Germany |
| • Mercedes Benz | Germany |
| • BMW | Germany |
| • Audi | Germany |
| • Nissan | Japan |

The only surprising omission from the list is China, out to conquer the world in every sphere and No.2 economy of the world, pushing the hitherto No.2 economy to No.3, of late, by a small margin. Another feature of the Industry each company having multiple brands. For example, Maruti, the market leader has the following brands

- Alto
- Swift
- Wagon R
- Ritz.
- Versa
- Omni
- S-Cross
- Estilo
- A-Star
- Baleno
- Ciaz

Hyundai Cars

- Sonata
- i-20
- i-10
- Santro
- Verna
- Accent.
- Kona
- Carlino
- Ioniq

The above 3 brands of Hyundai are launching soon in India, altogether , there appear to be some seventy plus passenger car brands, offering the Indian and foreign customers a wide range of brands to choose from. Tata Motors has the following models backed by the iconic Tata Brand and Tata Finances and All India distribution and service network of long association, as the noted Commercial Automobiles Pvt. Ltd at Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh or Malik Auto Agencies in Hyderabad, The familiar Non-Nano Tata Motors Passenger Car models are the following

- Indica EV2 (Diesel)
- Indigo Xeta (Petrol / LPG)
- Indica (Diesel)
- Vista Petrol)
- Vista (Diesel)
- Manza
- Safari
- Sumo
- Jaguar, Land Rover
- Tiago
- Zest
- Hexa

Thus each product has diesel and petrol versions. There is, of course the Nano and also an expected MUV – Multiple utility vehicle. The Models are meant for the continental market of India and its different segments and exports, the Tata Group Companies intent on proving their mettle in external markets, especially in the case of global products. Both internal and external marketing appears to be the marketing strategy (MS) of the Tata Motors. In fact, no company and product can be considered to be taken off or a success, unless it proves its worth in Global market in these days of globalization. In addition, with a great foreign trade deficit (M-X), India has the imperative of extending export in different lines of production and of different products, especially of automobile products which have world over depends, depending on their quality and price competitiveness. The Tata Group, apart from its own business considerations, appears to understand the National imperative of exports. The small car of Nano is also marked for export, after its successful domestic marketing run.

Thus, the industry with many world class companies and world class brands appear to be an auto customers paradise, a buyer market, bringing the once luxury item of cars within the reach of every segment of the Indian and world auto consumers society.

Problems and prospects

Not the least is the problems and prospects of the industry which is a very prominent segment of the industrial landscape of India, even if the mass poverty and gross inequalities are forgotten, the industry looks weak in research and development. A few years ago the auto industry did not make up to the list of the major industries of the country but the SIAM is very optimistic about the prospects of the industry, the ongoing or the current decade is drawing up figures of ever growing sales, it is expected that the Passenger Car sales alone will be touching some 20 million by 2020, and India will be among the top 10 automobile markets in the world and a leader in making fuel – efficient small cars and biggies like Volkswagen and Toyota will be waiting in the wings.

Thus, in terms market position and sales Tata Motor has a good deal of head way to make with Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai as No.1 and the No.2 competitors of Tata Motors. With so many market players who are around 16, and so many brands or Models, of around 70 and still more coming, India's automobile specially PC or passenger cars appears to be quite tough and competitive one, testing the mettle of each and every company with the Indian Automobile buyers of any segment well known to be quite discerning, informed and tough bargaining ones who wants a good value or more value for their money. Senior vice president, and director, Shri Rajesh Goel of Honda Cars India limited says the new Amaze compact sedan will be a game-changer for the company, both in terms of boosting its business and strengthening its model line-up.

Conclusion

India is no longer a dumping ground for the manufacturing world, instead of importing equipment and knitting it around one's needs, India now boasts of a macro-market within itself which manufacturers around the world are vying to cater. The Indian Automobile industry, in the last 20 years saw a tremendous growth and with the presence of foreign firms, the industry is likely to be a dynamic one, serving the domestic market and at the same time meeting export obligations as well.

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