

Identifying the Preferences and Brand Choices of Female Customers for Cars: A Study Conducted In Muscat Region, of Sultanate of Oman

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to review and understand the decision making influences faced by female segment in choosing and purchasing specific Brands of Cars in the Muscat region of the Sultanate of Oman. The paper reports an empirical analysis by classifying female segments into cohorts based on the decision making characteristics which provides qualitative insights of the female car owner driver segment residing in Oman. The Car Manufacturers will benefit from the data collected, especially in helping to build good customer relationships with the segment and in determining factors impacting on the profitability.*

Keywords: Women segmentation, Taste, Preferences, Habits, Brand preferences, Decision making

1. Introduction

The 21st Century Women is economically empowered and plays an important role in all issues pertaining to the family. The increasing proportion of working women has also had a dramatic effect on purchasing patterns. The purchase decisions made by women are largely based on very clear likes and dislikes, tastes, preferences and habits.

Consumer perceptions and attitudes are likely to be conditioned by their demographic characteristics and life styles. A working women in her early 50's with grown children is likely to emphasize a very different set of attributes in buying a car compared to working woman in her early 30's with two children in day care. The attitudes and perceptions of these two consumers will vary accordance with their needs. The Car manufacturers have yet to recognize the key changes in the demographic trends, and have not designed marketing programs to suit this segment. There is dearth for information with respect to the female segment for Cars. The paper is an attempt at making marketing sense in identifying the brand preferences and decision making process by the female segment, for Cars in Muscat region, of Sultanate Oman.

1.1 Women Car drivers segment in Muscat: A blend of Traditional and Strong Cultural Values with Modernity

The social development of Omani women, the growth of awareness and their urge for education has risen the level of their contribution to work from [22.2%] in 2003 to 27% in 2010. [Times of Oman][23] Under his Majesty's Sultan Qaboos Rule, The women in Oman have been granted equal opportunities in Education and find good representation in all areas and streams.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is reviewing, analyzing and classifying factors which determine the choice of Cars/

Brands in Oman by Women segment.

3. Hypothesis

- H1-Marketing of cars for women segment is the same as marketing to Male segment.
- H2 – Marketing of cars to women segment is different from marketing to Male segment.

The study involves an understanding into the decision making influences faced by this segment in choosing and purchasing specific Brands of Cars.

- How do women car drivers choose car brands?
- What is the decision making process when women choose a car brand?

The study also analyses the effectiveness of the marketing programs implemented by car producers over a period of one year [2011-12] in appealing specifically to the Middle Eastern region of women customers.

4. Methodology

The study is a descriptive research and involves Qualitative method. Information is collected to assess, review and analyze the decision making variables of the women customers in choosing/ purchasing cars and will also review the effectiveness of car manufacturers in implementing Marketing programs for marketing cars in Oman.

The qualitative element frequently takes place at the front end of the study exploring values that need measuring in the subsequent quantitative phase. Therefore, this project design hopes to enable the depth and understanding as well as allowing for enough spread capturing the different branding choice and preferences by this segment.

5. Literature Review

5.1 Consumer Decision Model

The Consumer Decision Model [also known as the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard Model] was originally developed in 1968 by Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell and has gone through numerous revisions. Consumption is followed by post-consumption evaluation which serves a feedback function into future external searches and belief formation. Divestment is depicted as the final stage in the consumption process acknowledging that the product purchased is likely to be disposed of at some point post consumption. These decisions are influenced by two main factors. Firstly stimuli is received and processed by the consumer in conjunction with memories of previous experiences, and secondly, external variables in the form of either environmental influences or individual differences. The environmental influences identified include: Culture; social class; personal influence; family and situation. While the individual influences include: Consumer resource; motivation and involvement; knowledge; attitudes; personality; values and lifestyle [Blackwell, Miniard et al. 2001][source: Jeff Bray Consumer Behavior Theory: Approaches and Models] [21]. The environmental and individual variables have drawn criticism due to the vagueness of their definition and role within the decision process [Loudon and Della Bitta 1993]; for example the influence of environmental variables is identified, but their role in affecting behavior is not well developed. Further, the role of individual motives for purchase is only alluded to within need recognition, appearing to somewhat neglect a rich theoretical and important area of consideration [Bagozzi, Gurhan-Canli et al. 2002, Loudon AND Della Bitta 1993] [1][2][3].

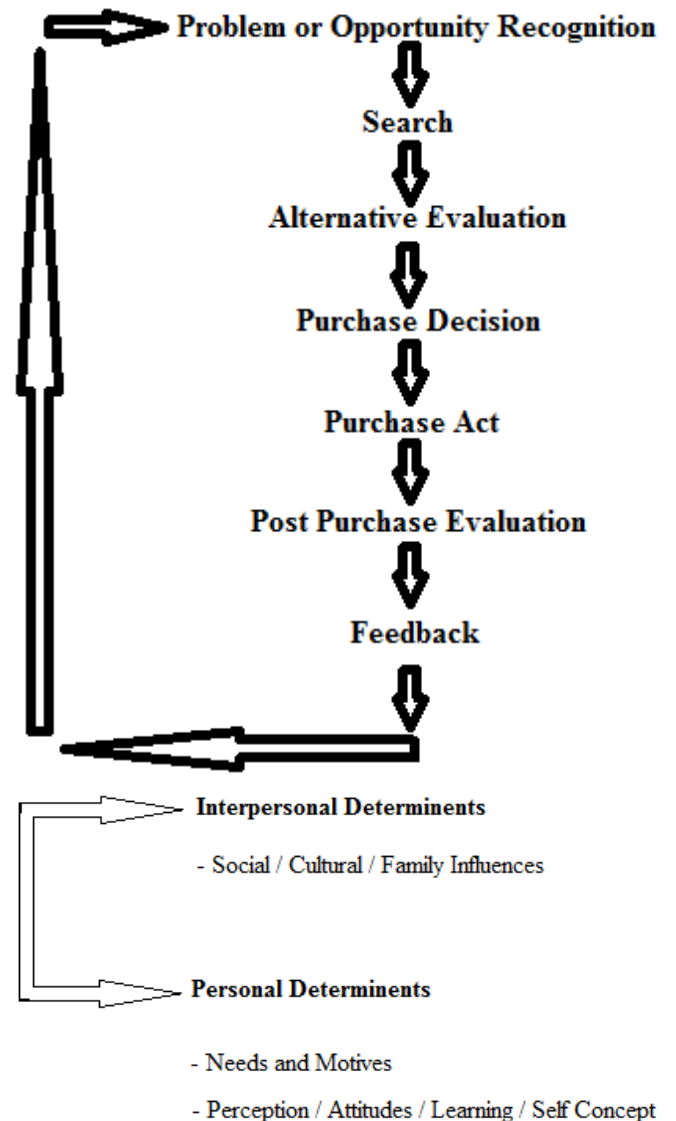


Figure 1.1: Consumer decision process

Source: *Consumer behavior, Engel, Blackwell, Miniard, The Dryden Press, 1990 6th edition pp 26-33 [8]*

6. Qualitative design

The Study involved using Qualitative method, by conducting an interview with Senior Marketing Personnel of the most popular automobile company in Oman, responsible for Marketing planning for the branded cars, followed by interviews with Women current and potential Customers comprising of both Omani Nationals and Foreign Nationals residing in Muscat Oman.

The Qualitative study involving in depth interviews with 8 women represented by 4 Omani Nationals and 4 Expats in Oman yielded information regarding important trends in the car purchasing and decision making process. The women represented both current and potential car users.

In depth Interviewing: K Vale [1996] describes Qualitative interviews as “a construction site of knowledge” where two [or more] individuals discusses a “theme of mutual interest” [Kvale 7 Brinkmann, 2009,

p.2] [6]. He says “An interview is literally interview, an interchange of views between two persons”. Patton [2002] categorizes interviews into three general types: [1] the informal, conversational interview; [2] the interview guide or topical approach; and [3] the standardized, open –ended interview [pp. 341-347] [6]. For the study the Topical approach or the guided interview was chosen as it allows the researcher to explore a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s views respecting the participant’s frames and structure of responses. This method, is in fact, based on an assumption fundamental to qualitative research: The participant’s perspective of the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it [the emic perspective], not as the researcher views it [the etic perspective]. As noted previously, a degree of systematization – a tighter prefiguring with more structure- in questioning was felt necessary, as many participants are interviewed, This aided at the analysis and interpretation stage, and also in testing findings with a more focused and structured sort of manner. One of the most important aspects of the interviewer’s approach is conveying the attitude that the participant’s views are valuable and useful. The generativity of the interview depends on both partners and their willingness to engage in a deep discussion about the topic of interest. The current topic of study struck the right chord with all the women and was not in any way constrained in expressing their views. Three main type of questions as classified by Rossman and Rallis [2003] was used in the interview [1] open-ended elaborations, [2] open –ended clarifications, and [3] detailed elaborations [p188] [6].

7. Sample Plan

The methodology chosen for the study has been Qualitative in nature which includes In-depth interviews with 8 women current and potential Car owners, each representing a cross section of their age group and who were Nationals and non nationals residing in Oman and thereby representing 4 different age cohort. The representative sample was chosen primarily based on demographic basis for segmentation. Age and Urban

living factors were the main criterion. While, education and occupation were also considered, in the Muscat region, of the Sultanate Oman .Social class was not one of the major considerations for sample allocation.

Table 2.1: Age groups and classification of Women interviewed

Current Owners of car		Potential Owners of car	
Age in yrs	No	Age in Years	No
20+ Women belonging to Omani Nationality.	2	20+ ----- Woman Of Omani Nationality.	1
30+ Woman Of Omani Nationality	1		
40+ Women of Asian and Canadian Nationality	2	40+ ----- Woman of Asian Origin.	1
50+ Women of African Nationality.	1		

7.1 Marketing Effectiveness targeting women segments in Oman: Start up to the study

An interview with a senior manager in an automobile company [who are the strategic marketing partner for the Japanese automobile giant in Oman] yielded insights into the marketing effectiveness especially the approach used for women segment of Car purchasers. This acted as precursor to the study taken up.

According to the Manager, “All customers are treated same at our showroom”. - “This Japanese brand is a brand leader with 40% market share in the automobile industry in Oman. Rest all put together accounts for 60%. The Brand is No 1 in Oman. This is because of effective marketing strategies by the respective companies”. [His producer Company and His]

Marketing strategies: marketing strategies were decided by the manufacturer. The Cars arrived manufactured from Japan.

Table 2.2

Product strategy	Small and medium range cars offered to women segment	Target market : Ladies in the family	Decision makers :Men	Perception and role: Second car for the family	Popular features and benefits focused: Compact, maintenance free, color, safety.
Place strategy	Entire distribution operations in Oman, for Japanese manufacturer				strategic partner - responsible for implementing and monitoring Marketing plans
Price strategy	Value pricing strategy	Customers perceived value			
Promotion strategy	Print broadcast and outdoor promotion	Active sponsorships and event promotions		Sales promotions: extra offers*	Two main promotional offer in a year, During Ramadan and for Teachers

*The Japanese manufacturer did not believe in discounted prices: According to this senior employee of this dealership firm, the Japanese manufacturer of cars for Oman feels that discounts devalue the product. Instead they believed in adding value by offering “many extra’s”

like extra service maintenance, extra petrol, extra insurance etc., which was all meant to create value in the consumer’s mind and to reward customers.

There has been no advertising campaign directed solely at

women, in the last 15 years in Oman. As they do not see any reason for it, they believe in treating all customers alike.

8. Study Review and Analysis

The analytic procedure in this study can be classified under the following stages.

- Data collection
- Data reduction
- Interpretation

The researcher wishes to bring meaning and insight to words and acts of the participants in the study. The reams of collected data are brought into manageable chunks and the researcher has used preliminary research questions and related literature developed earlier in the proposal as guidelines for data analysis.

9. Key factors taken up for Review and Analysis

What do women in Muscat region feel and what they had to say about purchasing car, their very first purchase, subsequent purchase and aspiration choice and preferences related to car brands?

It may be noted here that in the course of the interview, the quotes and statements recorded are presented verbatim and are as permitted by the respondents to reproduce. The respondents were mainly quizzed in relation to purchase of car, be it the very first one to the most recent one and future plans in this direction, aspects surrounding the purchase of car, Personal tastes, Preferences, Choice factors, awareness of Brands, key associations to Brands, Opinions related to the Marketing effort of the cars dealers, Manufacturers, others. Product preferences, Role of Service component to sale, Significance of price and pricing related promotional offers and other forms of communicational influences. Where is their preferred place of purchase . and other purchase related influence factors.

Concept testing : In the form of opinion recording how women viewed the role of training to given by Car marketers to women car buyers in changing car tyres in case of emergency, along with oil and coolant checks and simple ways to familiarize and recognize aspects of mechanics of a car.

Symbolic meaning of the Car to Women: What Does Car mean to them at a personal level.

Psychographic insights pertaining to values, life styles and media graphics were also recorded and analyzed in the process of the interview.

Profiles of the Female Segmentation in the Muscat region in the Sultanate of Oman: preferences and brand choices:

Groups have been identified/named/classified based on one of their most dominant characteristic which clearly marks them as the representatives of their age cohort as shown in the table below.

Table 2.4: Age cohorts and their identities

20+ group -: Arrived and peer dependent group
30+ group-: Materialistic and Achievement Oriented group.
40+ Group-: The fiercely independent group
50+ group -: Inwardly content group

9.1 20+ Group: Arrived and Peer dependent

This group [2 current owners and 1 potential owner] includes 3 girls, 2 of the girls were employed and were also studying simultaneously and the potential owner is still a student. They carry with them the spirit of working hard and a sense of newfound independence and confidence. This group work extra hard and believes herself as an important member of the team in her place of work. Conferring to group norms seems to be top in her list of priority. Peer acceptance too plays a big role in her life. Social Pressures in choice of car is reflected in the conversation. While marriage is very much on the agenda they hope to find very understanding and at the same time a cherishing partner. The need car for transportation is seen primarily because of lack of other forms of transportation in Oman, The type of car choice was something they sought advice from family members, especially either from father or brothers. While the funding was seen mostly self and in case of not working, it has been family gifting, This group show a boldness in choosing fairly high premium brands like BMW, RAV4 in their very first car purchase. Awareness of different brands in the Marketplace has been very high with this group and consciously acquired even before the purchase was made. They wanted only first hand cars from the dealer car showroom and nothing less. The respondents were currently owning [second car after selling the first one], a GIT and a Toyota Yaris. Did not find any form of Commercial communication by car Manufacturers showing the lack of any specific marketing effort directed solely towards to the women segment. According to these women, there wasn't any specific preferential treatment shown towards the women segment especially when they visited the showroom to inspect the cars. Despite the fact, the purchase was made on their self finance.

What do they want in a car? -"Speed" Comfort and safety, and very little maintenance. [Basically hassle free], powerful engine to reassure the solidness of the car. Sports car features. Burberry upholstery, what does car mean to them? - "CONTROL" - In control of time, work and needs" A lot to me" – emotionally, stress relieving, and a huge necessity -[can't think of life without a car". The potential buyer of car was currently travelling by bus to the college and was doing the rounds to qualify and acquire the car license. She stated that the car was very important to her like. It was going to be "Her leg". She was eagerly waiting to complete her course as she wanted

to buy the car on procuring a job. She plans to buy a high ended car from Toyota like the Lexus or a BMW purely for safety reasons. She perceived there were more benefits from such branded cars, which is why price was not an issue with her. Buying a car will be her decision only. Which meant it was her call all along. Good Service would be a big point of issue for decision. She feels a woman driving in Oman is indeed credit worthy. This means a great deal for the family and that every woman should be able to drive.

Aspiration car: The girls [both of them currently working and studying] are very clear and aim high in their level of purchase of car brand. So much so that they have it all worked out and planned as to how much they would be able to put aside at the rate they are working now, to be able to achieve the type of cars in the first 5 years of their career and then after 12 years of service what would be their goal.

Brand Lexus has a very high preference amongst the choice of car in the future, specially a car color as maroon.

9.2 30+ Group: Materialistic and Achievement - Oriented group

This group is by far the most aspirational group, much more than the 20+ age group. This age group lays great emphasis on acquisitions. The need to acquire possessions like house, car or finding the best of schools for their kids, buying best of the branded apparels, all seems to be in their list of priorities. While they are quite sure that career is very important for achieving their needs, family demands is something they are very firmly tuned to. The need to achieve status and a good standing in the society is foremost in their minds. They are the 'Cost Accountants' is the family. Multi tasking is a way of life for them. Love to watch TV, as a form of relaxation, which they claim, is few and far. This group claims they perform a fine balancing act with their career and homes.

First car purchase: The respondent's first car was a Honda CRV which belonged to her husband; she used it for a year taking it to place of work. Then she decided to change the car after it met with an accident.

What did she want in a car? She scouted around and honed in on GMC Arcadia in which she found all she was looking for, be it the special sensor, side mirror, Comfortable leg space, boot, etc was all very convincing large and made her feel very secure. Her young children too were very happy with the car. Though it was not economically viable car for her, but felt it is worth every penny spent on it [she spent 13,000. R.O], and the decision to buy the car was her's totally. Reinforced by her father's advice, she decided after test driving it for two days and she also enquired about the car from social sources like colleagues at work place, and become more knowledgeable about it through advertisements. She is very happy with the service and at the time of sale she was treated with a lot of regard overall purchase process was

very satisfactory thru the distributor. After sale service is mentioned as very good and they take care to give her a stand by till the car is serviced.

What does the car mean to her? "Everything" she was very animated in her reply, and it was very apparent that the car was very special as if it was a "person". She went on to say, when I go abroad, I miss my car it is like a family member to me.

What car to upgrade next? Pat came with the reply – "LEXUS". But that will happen little while later, first she needed to complete the house project, currently she was very involved in the building of her dream house in Bousher Oman, The 30+ age group cohort can very safely be extended to 40+ Age groups as their sentiments, values and predicament is very much similar.

9.3 40+ Category: Fiercely independent and adventurous

This group was represented by two women who were married but currently were single. Strongly feministic in their approach to life having weathered many hardships in their life they had matured to become fiercely independent and possessed a great deal of zest for life by engaging themselves in many hobbies which verged on outright adventurous activities and truly sporting in a country which was other than their own. These women represented Independent and working professionals: The women felt a car was just a means of transport. They classified themselves as not being "speed freaks", They put themselves down as cautious drivers. Above all felt "all women can drive"!

First Car purchase in Oman: They relied on advice from social sources in choosing cars. Being expats, they felt – "local nationals get a better deal than themselves. If a foreigner approaches to buy a car especially in the used car segment, prices were jacked up" and so enlisted help from local Omani's in finalizing purchase.

Reason of buying: Pure necessity- transportation, needed to be Independent, but had to wait till they had a job first, Bought car after a week on getting license. Constrained by budget both women were very clear about what they could afford.

Type of car preferred: Middle and lower range small car - Wanted good, fuel efficient and small and efficient car.

Brand awareness: Were very aware of all the brands during the time of purchase.

Place of purchase: While one of the women wanted a new car from the showroom, the other person wanted a good car, second hand and through reliable sources [preferably with a native's help].

Features and attributes preferred: "Maintenance free" was of primordial importance to both women.

Customer service: Wanted to be taken as serious buyers. One of the women recalled how when she went to buy her first car after her marriage, had gone to a car showroom with her husband. The salesman ignored her and was intent on explaining all the features and benefits of the car to her husband. This infuriated her as she was the buyer and it was her call. "I was paying for the car, so why ignore me?" were her words. Though she had liked the brand of the car, she did not buy it for this very reason.

Aspiration cars- Mini cooper was the aspirational car for women of Asian origin, While the Canadian wanted either a Pajero, Avalon or Yukon- 2door one specially, What was most important to her was that the 'Shape should be appealing'.

Choice out of Social pressure: These women being expats in Oman feel, that women in Oman choose car brands based on social pressure. It is mostly out of peer pressure and social conformance ["keeping up with the Jones's effect"] the choice is made. but this was not the case for expats by virtue of not being in their homeland, were not curtailed by any such factor and hence chose any brand that suited their budget.

Concept testing: To get trained to change car tires and check oil lubricants and recognize some important aspects of car at the time of purchase was very welcome to both the women and said they would like to willingly partake in it at the time of purchase.

What does the car mean to them? "Car is a Car, I really do not care". [Quote] Canadian "Means to help others by giving them drop whenever needed". Cause I know how bad it feels to wait for a means of transportation to take you to your destination", Asian

10. In depth interview with Potential buyer

Profile: Women was of Asian origin, was new to Muscat, married and working professional, had recently acquired the driving license and was all ready to buy a car.

What type of car and what were the requirements: Wanted small car which was easy to negotiate in small lanes and big highways especially easy to park, should be sturdy in build to provide safety and a secure feeling. She was currently driving her husband's Toyota Camry -which to her was very good car in all respects, but felt she would personally not prefer to buy it. "It is not me" She always conceptualized herself with a small car, for two reasons first she was tuned to budget which could only accommodate from the small car segment, second small cars are easier to park.

Response to car marketing: She was currently waiting for the promotional offer specially Ramadan season, Was also not totally averse to the idea of second hand [used] car provided it came with a good guarantee [that it was a good car] and a for a good price. Had not found any special marketing effort directed solely to women. Felt they deserved preferential treatment.

Women drivers: Respondent feels women driving cars in Oman is really very noteworthy and deserves all praise. "In a world dominated by male drivers, women have always been viewed as inferior drivers, which needs to change and women are more responsible on the roads as any other driver", "Responsibility is an inborn trait for women" – quote.

What does the car mean to her? "Car is something that breaks the shackles bound on a woman" Car helps you achieve your life goals and is a very important necessity for the modern day women".

Aspiration car: "A Volkswagen Beetle, I love the design, It presents a picture of very cute, warm and loving person to me" "If every I get this car for my budget I will jump to buy it. I feel it would be an extension of me".

Concept Testing: feels it is a very good idea to make women self sufficient in handling any car issues her. And that training will definitely and should add value to any purchase of car.

10.1 50+ Age Group category: The Inwardly Content Group

This group has by far has the most patience than any other earlier groups possibly becomes of the advancing age, and they have children who are older and are settled or in the process of doing so. Most of them have played the role of wife, mother, career women and now are into being more of a friend/ companion to the husband and more affectionately in to role of grandmother. Their view on changing role of women has been quite strong and critical. They are definitely for economic independence as a must for all women. But dereliction of homely duties is absolutely intolerable to them. They believe that women having kids need to manage time and spend quality time with them.

This group was represented by an interview with expat lady from Sudan who came to Oman in 1985 and has since, become an Omani Citizen.

First Car purchase: According to the respondent, Life was much more simple to her when she first came to Oman, Roads were lot different from now, She feared it then and continues to even now, this has to do with the high speeds at which cars ply on the roads. But it did not stop her wanting to be independent, so in 1996 bought Cresida from Toyota "Car was brought as a means of necessity and transportation" she said, It was her husband's encouragement and initiation, installed in her a sense of independence when he gave her his car to her first time.

Brand awareness: She was very aware of all the brands and could differentiate the features and attributes of each car. Information was gathered from personal sources and social sources [husband / colleagues] and commercial sources made her more aware of the features and benefits. Subsequently she has been purchasing it on her own. She

upgraded again to Toyota Corolla in 1997 this time bought it from a dealer who was offering many Promotional offers. She bought Toyota as it had reputation for good service and resale.

Repurchase and loyalty: In 2003, she bought Toyota Camry again.

Customer Loyal: Would like to upgrade soon but prefers to do from Toyota, and a newer Camry too this time.

Perceptions about Toyota car brand: Sturdy\ Secure, Has good cabin space and seats are good and physically comfortable as she is a tall Woman [5ft 10"]

About other Women drivers, a very contradictory view, "I am scared of them" "They have no control on the road" Does not have any confidence or faith in other women on the road. Feels woman drivers should be encouraged, but personally cannot have too much faith in their capabilities, "They need to become good drivers with lot of experience before I feel they can be trusted."

What does the Car mean? "A Car is like a second home to me". It means independence to me", Believes "Every family should have two cars, one for husband and second for wife". Feels her pensioner husband should buy a separate car now.

10.2 Specific Marketing activities directed to women by Car manufacturers

Did not find any specific promotion aimed at women. The Sales promotion offer was meant for general public and not specific to her. Would have liked it if it was aimed specifically at women. Feels it would have been a definite encouragement as more women would buy on their own.

Concept test: Would like to be trained by Toyota dealer to learn all about car mechanics but prefers to call for service man.

Table 2.5 [can be viewed in Annexure 1], Presents the summary of the key factors taken into account while making the decisions regarding purchase of Car Brands by the Female segment in the Muscat Region in the Sultanate of Oman.

11. Conclusion

Discussions with the women have definitely yielded a totally different picture not altogether from the one that is normally projected. It would do well for Marketing Business organizations to keep themselves abreast with changing times and the changing role of women. The way she would like to be seen and not the way they would imagine her to be, be it in Oman or elsewhere in the world.

11.1 What does this mean for the world of branding and marketing?

This study has been an exercise in trying to understand

measure of how brands affect a female customer's mind specially its role at the time of purchase at any level.. Although most are not aware of it, the brands that women see around them have a very powerful impact on their brains, which then has an effect on preferences and buying habits. It was observed that, People's associations are due to their experience with the products themselves, but also their experience with the brand and the way they perceive it. Because consumers 'experience' a brand through logo design, packaging, the website, and other visual elements, these will be of increasing importance for businesses hoping to break in to the highly competitive world

Hypothesis H2 is accepted and H1 rejected: Talking to women drivers in Muscat region of the Sultanate Oman, It can be said that to build a customer focused brand one should offer customers what they need rather than what you want or think they need and also by showing and not telling the customers your brand story but also by giving them a great customer experience. Other tips include monitoring the customer experience, planning for the future and being relevant to your customers. Not an easy task but by not being customer focused, you will have a greater challenge getting your brand noticed.

In such a study as this, the end result is a representative measure of the proportion of consumers who prefer each new description to their current brand.

A review of major segmentation techniques reveals an interesting pattern; each of the traditional market segmentation approaches appears to offer significant advantages for some problems but fails with regard to other problems. Now, a newly developed concept — that of training women on the service aspect—shows promise of having greater operational value to marketing managers than the traditional techniques. Of major significance is the fact that the segmentation approach shifts the primary marketing emphasis from "whom you reach" to "what characteristics to build into the product."

If there is an overall conclusion to be drawn from this study, especially to the marketing managers of the automobile company's in Oman and researchers, is that it may very well have therefore been concentrating too literally on the consumer herself. The promising beginning of segmentation study appears to indicate not only that an understanding of the consumers' perception of the environment may be more helpful in predicting consumer's behavior than is any measure of the consumer himself, but also that efforts in this area may mark a revolution in new product development.

In the study of automobiles brand preferences by women, it was necessary to construct two matrices for each of the five women segments. The first matrix focuses on the values and consequences level to determine what the product class can do for the consumer. The second matrix [for each segment] focuses on the group level to uncover product attributes. The purchase of an automobile is not affected by situations but rather by economic status, social

class and life cycle. Therefore, situations as inputs into the system are not used. To draw out differences among the segments based on grouping of values, consequences were held constant for the four segments. The following consequences were identified for cars with the help of in depth interviews: feeling safe, economical, and affordable, feel stylish, personal comfort, and practical/lifestyle.

A look at the first set of matrices shows that the "20+ Group -Arrived and Peer dependent " puts high importance on feeling safe, being economical and enjoying personal comfort consequences. These benefits relate to the values of family security, comfortable life and inner harmony. The "30+ Group -Materialistic and Achievement-Oriented group" group enjoys an automobile that is practical for their lifestyle, economical and safe relating to the values of comfortable life, family security and responsibility. "This segment would prefer the characteristic consequences of sporty, stylish and economical which ties to the values of independence, a sense of accomplishment and social recognition. In comparison the 40+ Category- fiercely independent and adventurous group ranks high on feeling sporty, stylish and enjoying personal options connecting to the values of intellectual, independence, sense of accomplishment and social recognition." 50+ Age Group category : - The Inwardly Content Group " prefer practical and relaxed lifestyles, clear focused approach of consolidation , experienced track record and nothing fancy for them, Comfortable and safety.

Transferring the highest ranked consequences to the second set of matrices for each segment, the relevant consequences are related to product attributes. Based on these matrices, the "all the groups perceive greatest benefits be it from a medium sized car or a luxury car features of low maintenance, high mileage and sturdy build to give it a sense of security and safety.

Toyota Lexus ranks the highest brand preference amongst the female segment. Cars connote a sense of "Independence". This is a dominant feeling across all women categories. The concept tested also reinforces this very feeling and can definitely add value to the overall experience of buying the car.

Toyota Brand can do better to reposition its image especially with regard to this segment. This can be done by focusing on these very attributes identified and stressed upon in any advertising message aimed at "current and potential buyers of car " for the women segment in the Muscat Region. If the marketers were to be interested in segments " 20+ ,30+, 40+ and 50+ group " They should think of should advertising the qualities of compact, low maintenance, high gas mileage and a sleeker design. "Career oriented women" prefer luxury and sleekness in either a compact or a large car. But one can also emphasize on compactness, yet with plenty of room, sturdy, low maintenance but high gas mileage cars.

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Author Profile



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Annexure

Table 2.5: Classification of the female car drivers segment according to age cohorts

Classifications			Segment: Female, in Muscat Region										
Age Cohorts: Key factors related to purchase	1.Current owner - car	2. Potential owner	occupation: current -1 potential 2	Need recognition	Information: sources	Funding	Evaluation	Awareness of brands	Features and benefits	Response to car marketing inputs	Meaning of car	Aspirational car/upgrade	Concept testing
1. 20+ group - Arrived and peer dependent group	GIT / TOYOTA YARIS	Private transporter	1. Students - unmarried, and working	Basic Need for transportation	Social sources	Family help,	Only First hand, showroom cars.	High	Speed, solidness, comfort, Burberry upholstery, maintenance free, sports car features	No special treatment to women or any promotion directed towards the segment.	1. "Control" 1. "Everything", 2. "Her leg".	LEXUS, BMW, RAV4	Agree to the idea
			2. Student - unmarried, not working		[Family: Father, brother]	Self	No Second hand cars						
2. 30+ group- Materialistic and Achievement Oriented group.	GMC ARCADIA	-	1. Student - married, and working	Transportation	Social sources - Colleagues, commercial source - advertisements	Self	First hand car	High	Special sensor, side mirror, Comfortable leg space, boot, very secure.	after sales service	1. "Like a person." "Miss it like a family member	LEXUS	willing to try
3. 40+ group- the fiercely independent group	TOYOTA YARIS / SUZUKI ALTO	Private transporter	1. Married /single and working[2 women]	Necessity, Independence	social, brother in law, local, Trials and demos	self - Budget	Middle and lower range small car -, fuel efficient	High	"Maintenance free" compact efficient car	Turned off by bad customer service. Changed brands	1. - "Car is car" 1. "Help others" 2. Independence	1. Toyota Avalon, 1. Mini Cooper 2. Volkswagen Beetle	Positively viewed.
			2. Married working										Feels very essential
4. 50+ group :- Inwardly content group	TOYOTA CAMRY		1. Married working	Necessity, transportation	Personal sources, Husband colleagues	self -	Brand loyal and upgraded thrice.	High	Sturdy\ Secure, good cabin space, good seats, comfortable	Nothing specific for women, but sales promotion during Ramadan helped.	1. "A second home "	upgrade to a newer Camry, Customer loyalty	Would like the training