



Profiling motorbike owners on the basis of their perception

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ABSTRACT

In an environment where people are constantly looking for and finding smarter and more efficient ways to address their needs, understanding the customer; both existing and potential is of prime importance for a marketer. When it comes to marketing products that have a high involvement for the customers, like a motorbike, this understanding becomes even more crucial. There are several ways of classifying the unique needs people, profiling being a commonly used way. In this study, a very unconventional mode of profiling customers based on their own perception about the kind of relationship they share with their motorbike is used. A mixed methodology research approach is used in this study. The primary data is collected through a questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews, which were formulated after an extensive study of the existing literature. The survey sample size is 100 respondents who own a motorbike. The 14 motorbike owners who participated in the interview are a different sample from the survey sample. The primary data from the questionnaire is analysed using the factor analysis, cluster analysis, discriminant analysis and the KANO model. The semi-structured interviews were analysed using the cluster analysis. The profiles or segments made in this study are based entirely on the findings and the analysis of primary data.

Keywords— Consumer Behaviour, Motorbike Owners, Perception, Profiling, Product Attributes

1. INTRODUCTION

Every individual is constantly occupied in the decision-making process while purchasing a product/commodity or availing a service. With the change in time, the way consumers take this decision has differed greatly (Kotler, et al., 2010). The growing dominance of customers has led companies to launch products and services to meet the ever-growing array of human needs and desires (Louth, 1966). Along with the dominance of customers comes a trend of a product being more than just a medium of making life easier. What used to be purchased for the benefits that the product offered, these products have started becoming an integral part of an individual's existence and is believed to help them understand themselves and often express themselves (Kotler, et al., 2010). One such commodity is motorbikes.

It is said that objects give the owner a sense of their origin, their identity and direction, that is, who we are, where do we come from and where do we plan to go (Damasio, 1999). A motorbike is a prime object of veneration and appeal because of what it promises on a practical level with the number of benefits it offers and in the symbolic level of grandeur. Motorbikes are usually a childhood or/and adolescent dream where it allows the owner to be a part of a characteristic community that shares a similar passion of thrill and adventure. Thus, motorbikes facilitate in self-expression and building their identity (Konstantelos & Christakis, 2018).

Therefore, the purchase of a motorbike needs even more deliberation and deep involvement from the customer in the decision journey itself.

This study is focused on the perceptual factors that affect a motorbike customer based on the connection that customers share with their motorbikes. It also endeavours to categorize the respondents based on these perceptions.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The study attempts to create similar profiles based on their perception of the functional and emotional connect that customers derive out of owning a motorbike and the kind of relationship they share with the motorbike. For this purpose, the study employs quantitative as well as qualitative methods to bring about a clearer understanding of the perceptions and feelings of the sample.

1.2 Objectives of the study

- To understand the perceptual factors that affect motorbike customers.
- To categorize the respondents on the basis of their perceptions about their motorbike.
- To suggest areas where the marketer can focus on the perceptual profiles of the motorbike customers created in the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer behavior has changed gradually because what consumers' want from a product or service is much more than what the product or service provides (Kotler, et al., 2010). The heart of modern marketing is in profit generation alongside creating value satisfaction for the consumers whose requirements and desires have to be in harmony with the products and the production programs (Reddy, 2011).

However, the consumers today seem to have a different behavior towards brands and their spending on products. The world's consumers seem to be "rebalancing the portfolio" where they spend less in those categories they do not favour any particular brand and spend relatively more in the others (Magni, et al., 2016). Consumers also look for a trouble-free service experience aided by technology and better quality salespersons. There is also a shift in the direction of products and services that are healthy and enhance the people's approach towards physical and mental wellness. Consumers seek proper information about products and services thus leading to a convenience due to the knowledge that leads to them finding the right products and services for themselves (Pricewaterhouse Cooper, 2016).

Symbolically, vehicles are associated with a social value when it comes to its meaning as well as the social hierarchy and creates an emotional charge for the possessor/user of the vehicle. The world of bikes strongly recommends "*a persistent claim of the motorcycle as an object; a demanding symbol of unlimited freedom, autonomy and personal power*" (Konstantelos & Christakis, 2018). When it comes to motorcycles, human beings ride their bikes because they are fun, convenient and represents the lifestyle with which an individual wants to stay connected. The machine (motorcycle) is an expression of the emotional commitment and the lifestyle for the rider. If a company succeeds in selling the kind of lifestyle that an individual seeks, the consumer will definitely buy the products that fit the lifestyle. In order to do this, the marketers should understand the customers and how they "think". In doing so, the companies can sell better and thus support the customers with their products and services better. Instead of just selling the product, the companies could help the customers in understanding how these products enhance the lifestyle that they envision to live in and lead them to their own discoveries (Anderson, 2018).

The traditional outlook of consumer behavior focused intently on the purchaser and the direct antecedents and the effects of the entire purchasing process. A larger view leads to a more indirect impact on the consumption behavior and the consequences which reach beyond the buyer and the seller (Hawkins, et al., 2014). Marketers use a kind of market segmentation to group their target customers into diverse categories based on their personality characteristics, lifestyle and other similar or associated factors. These factors act as a major influence in a consumer's purchasing behavior. Marketing analysts can find a pattern from such factors to predict a consumer's buying behavior (Pratap, 2017).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quite literally, research means to "re-search" that means *to search again*. This term implies persistent study and a scientific investigation of the data where the researcher takes another, more observant aspect of the data to discover what is known about the subject under study (Zikmund, et al., 2014).

The data gathered for the purpose of this study is quantitative as well as qualitative in nature. Therefore, a data triangulation approach has been used to achieve a holistic understanding of the sample that has been taken. The quantitative data has been obtained with the help of a questionnaire administered to people who own a motorbike. The data collected from the questionnaire will help in achieving the objectives upon which this study is conducted.

The questionnaire has been prepared after an extensive study of the literature that has already been published in the areas of psychographics and consumer behaviour in online journal articles and textbooks. However, this study does not use the specific psychographic variables of values, attitudes, lifestyle, self-concept and emotions. These variables were contributory in deciding on the attributes to be considered to decode what kind of relationship do motorbike consumers share with their vehicle.

The sample taken for the purpose of the study is a convenience sample as the questionnaire was administered to motorbike customers available as per the convenience of the researcher. The respondents were further requested to share the questionnaire link to other people they knew and would respond to the questionnaire, leading to a snowball sample. The reason for such kind of sample is the short time period in which the study was conducted. The sample consists of 120 responses out of which only 100 were considered as the main criterion of the validity of the responses was that the respondent should own a motorbike which only 100 of the respondents fulfilled. The factor analysis, cluster analysis, discriminant analysis and KANO model was used to analyse the quantitative data using the IBM SPSS software.

The qualitative data has been obtained by conducting interviews. The interviews consisted of semi-structured questions that were derived from the detailed study undertaken during the literature review. The questions asked were structured to get the respondent talking about their motorbike. A content analysis using the MAXQDA 2018 software was undertaken to analyse the qualitative data from the interviews.

As there has been a use of both quantitative as well as qualitative data, a data triangulation takes place. It facilitates validation of the data with the help of cross verification from two or more sources. The data triangulation and method triangulation is used in this study where data is collected from different sources, primary and secondary sources, to study one problem. This study also employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to study the same problem.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The sample taken into consideration is 100 out of which 86 are male and 14 are female. The main criterion for the consideration of the sample is that the respondent should own a motorbike. The sample is further categorized on the basis of age, occupation and monthly income levels.

Table 1: Categorization of the sample on the basis of demographics

Category	Statistics (No. of Respondents)
Age	18-25 years: 61
	25-35 years: 34
	35-45 years: 1
	45-55 years: 4
	Above 55 years: 2
Occupation	Student: 39
	Self Employed: 16
	Employed: 45
Income level (monthly)	Below 25000: 51
	25000-50000: 21
	50000-75000: 14
	75000-100000: 3
	Above 100000: 4

In line with the objective of categorizing the sample based on the perception of the customer towards their motorbike, factor analysis, cluster analysis, discriminant analysis and the KANO model was undertaken.

4.2 Factor Analysis

In the factor analysis, the rotation and varimax method arte used. The rotated component matrix shows the value of the rotated variables to reduce the number of dimensions. Thus, the 20 attributes considered for this study was brought down to 5 factors. The table given below shows the values.

Table 2: Rotated Component Matrix

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
UniqueRelationship	.775	.168	.233	.143	.101
FunElement	.725	.113	.166	.124	.037
ShareInCommon	.723	.362	.090	.205	.040
ReduceAnxiety	.703	.218	.284	.010	.071
Reminder	.648	.219	.363	.101	.107
SomethingMissing	.627	.348	.238	.114	.160
GivesHope	.225	.768	.327	.077	.227
OwningAchievement	.195	.727	.511	.062	-.119
Motivation	.411	.693	.234	.230	.063
BrandMatters	.202	.557	-.196	.305	.157
FriendsSamePassion	.271	.489	.138	-.307	.062
Popularity	.337	.481	.479	.429	-.099
SenseOfSecurity	.292	.105	.708	-.062	.218
SenseOfPride	.365	.243	.662	.290	.030
Quality	.236	.148	.616	.265	.218
BikeAsReward	.484	.156	.539	-.020	.119
LookFeel	.114	.013	.177	.805	.047
ReflectsMe	.336	.459	.068	.653	.039
SaveTime	.135	.146	.082	.090	.878
VarietyOfNeeds	.074	.021	.184	-.025	.847

In each of the factors, values above 0.4 are considered. The highlighted segments show the variables that are considered under each factor. Thus, the five factors. The factors are named on the basis of the variables under each category.

Factor 1 Emotion: This factor is a combination of the attributes where the customer feels that they share a unique relationship with their motorbike, it adds a fun element in their life, it helps in reducing their anxiety, they share a lot in common with their motorbike and they strongly feel that there would be something missing in their life without their motorbike. As the factor is centralized on how much a customer relates to their motorbike emotionally, it is named Emotion.

Factor 2 Relationship: This factor considers the personal relation of the customer with the motorbike with respect to their owning achievement and their vehicle is a source of motivation in their life. However, it also considers the motorbike owners' relationship with their social circle as it related to gaining popularity among their circle with their motorbike with respect to their brands and also making friends with the same passion that they experience with their motorbikes. Hence, it is named Relationship.

Factor 3 Ownership: The variables that are part of this factor are focused mainly on the benefits derived out of simply owning a motorcycle. The respondents feel that the motorbike gives them a *sense of security* and a *sense of pride* in owning the motorbike.

They focus on the importance they give to *quality*. They also feel that *owning* the bike is its own *reward*. The variable of quality crops up here because only when a customer is positively inclined towards the importance they give to quality can they derive the benefits from owning a motorbike. Supporting this, the factor is named *Ownership*.

Factor 4 Self-Expression: The factor is a basic reflection of how a customer sees himself/herself. It is a way the respondent expresses themselves. A customer will like the *look or feel* of the motorcycle only when they consider that their vehicle *reflects* the kind of person they are. Thus, the name *Self-Expression*.

Factor 5 Functional: The final factor considers the variables which primarily focus on the basic requirements that a motorbike fulfils for the owner. It focuses more on how owning a motorbike helps *save time* and meets a *variety of needs*. Thus, it is named as *Functional*.

4.3 Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis can be used to form groups of related variables, which is quite similar to factor analysis. In this study, the k-means cluster analysis method is used to conclude the membership of the groups based on the variables identified in factor analysis to different clusters. In this type of clustering, the researcher defines the number of clusters in advance. For the purpose of this study, two clusters were decided by the researcher.

The final cluster table below shows the clusters and the distribution of the variables in each cluster. The characteristics of each cluster are centred on the most predominant variable.

Table 3: Final Cluster

Final Cluster Centres		
Variables based on Factor Analysis	Cluster	
	1	2
Emotion	-1.04752	.58923
Relationship	-.32212	.18119
Ownership	-.12835	.07220
Self-Expression	-.29931	.16836
Functional	-.03342	.01880

In cluster 1, the value of variables is low. There is high dominance of a *Functional* but there is the least effect of *Emotion*. They believe that a motorbike is meant more for the basic functions it provides and there is an absence or very less of the emotional connection that the owner feels towards the motorbike. They are also dominated by *Ownership* as they believe that owning a bike itself is its own reward and gives them a sense of security and pride. As this cluster is mainly inclined towards a functional aspect of owning a motorbike with the *Functional* and *Ownership* factors being dominated, this cluster will be further known as *Rationals*.

In Cluster 2, the *Emotion* is the highest, followed by *Relationship* and *Expression*. It is mainly dominated by *Emotion* as the motorbike owners are emotionally inclined towards their motorbike. They feel that they have a unique relationship with their motorbike and they share a lot in common. Their vehicle is more than a vehicle as it helps them manage their emotions and are a major part of their lives. As this cluster is more inclined towards the emotional benefits one derives from their motorbike. This cluster will be known as *Emotionals* hereafter.

This difference in the cluster dominance shows that the sample is divided into two different groups where one cluster is emotionally connected with their motorbike while the other cluster has a motorbike only for its functional role.

Cluster 1 has 36 respondents while Cluster 2 has 64 respondents.

4.4. Discriminant Analysis

Discriminant Analysis is a predictive model which aids at discriminating groups or samples which leads to predicting the group behavior.

The following table gives the relative importance for each factor or the independent variable. A higher value represents that the corresponding variable is very important for discrimination.

Table 4: Standardized canonical discriminant function coefficients

	Function
	1
Emotion	1.109
Relationship	.539
Ownership	.220
Self-Expression	.503
Functional	.058

It is clear from the table that *Emotion* is the factor with a high discriminating score of 1.109 which is followed by *Relationship* factor with the second highest score of 0.539. However, the *Self-Expression* factor is also close enough to the *Relationship* factor with a score of 0.503.

Yet another reliable way of finding the relative importance of the factors in discriminating the group is the structure matrix. The Pearson correlation value given says the correlation between each factor and the discriminating function. Therefore, a high correlation value means high importance. From the given table, it is observed that the factor Emotion has higher importance and follows the order as explained in the canonical coefficient table.

Table 5: Structure Matrix

	Function
	1
Emotion	.756
Relationship	.147
Self-Expression	.136
Ownership	.057
Functional	.015

On further analysis, it was found that 97.2% of Group 1 (Rationals) have been classified correctly while 100% of group 2 (Emotionals) has been classified correctly.

KANO model

Kano model gives details and insights into the customer desires. It gives the depth of the information one can derive from the data. KANO model was made for both the categories to understand the customers. 19 of the variables were used in formulating the KANO model where the variable “ReflectsMe” has been used as the basis for the level of importance.

Cluster1-Rationals

The Must-be attributes for the Rationals were *SenseOfPride*, *VarietyOfNeeds*, *SaveTime*, *FriendsSamePassion*, *BikeAsReward*, *Quality*, *LookFeel*, *Reminder* and *BrandMatters*. This shows that these customers feel that their motorbike should give them a sense of pride in owning it and should meet a variety of needs which includes saving time. They prefer friends with the same passion and find that their motorbike is its own reward. For them the quality and its brand matters so do the look of their vehicle. It should also act as a reminder of the things the customer has done in his/her life.

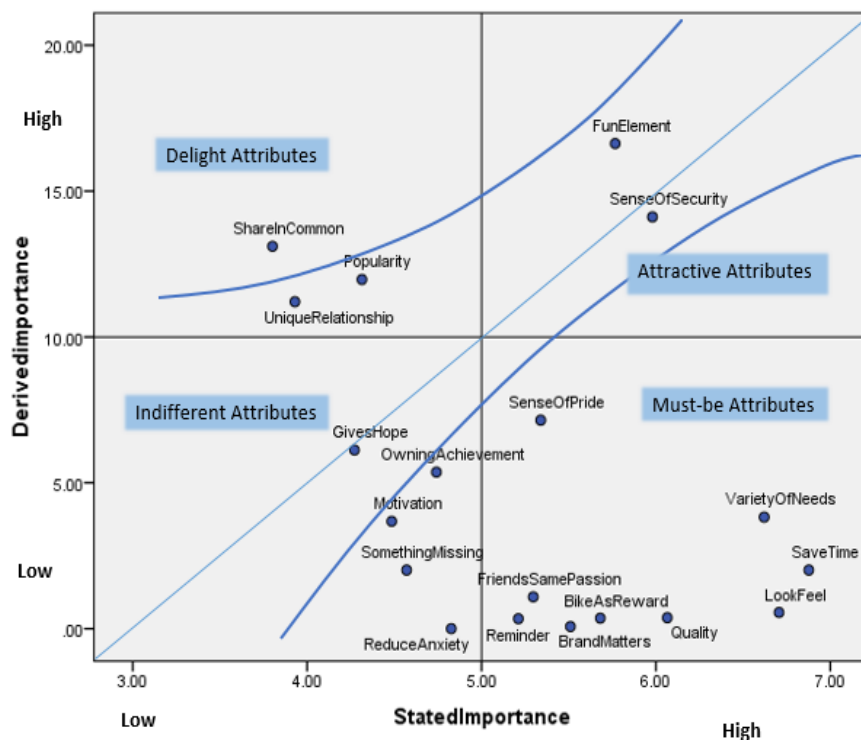


Fig. 1: KANO Model for the Rationals

The Indifferent attributes that these customers do not find of much importance are *GivesHope*, *OwningAchievement*, *Motivation*, *SomethingMissing* and *ReduceAnxiety*. These customers do not feel that their motorbike gives them hope or help in reducing their anxiety and that it is a source of motivation in their lives. They do not find any achievement in owning the vehicle and would not feel something missing in their life if their motorbike did not exist.

The Delight attributes for these customers are *ShareInCommon*, *Popularity* and *UniqueRelationship*. These customers would not state it but they would be delighted if they could share things in common with their motorbike and develop a unique relationship with it. They would also be thrilled if their motorbike helped them in gaining popularity among their social circle.

The Attractive attributes for the Rationals are that it adds a *FunElement* to their lives and that it gives them a *SenseOfSecurity*.

Cluster 2- Emotionals

The Must-be attributes for the Emotional customers are *Reminder, SenseOfPride, UniqueRelationship, ReduceAnxiety, LookFeel, Quality, FunElement, BrandMatters, VarietyOfNeeds, SomethingMissing, BikeAsRewardandSaveTime*. The Emotional customers feel that their motorbike should remind them of the things that they have done in life. They should feel a sense of pride in owning it. They should have a unique relationship with it to such an extent that it can reduce their anxiety. They are particular about the quality and the look of the vehicle. For them, the brand matters and their bike should add a fun element to their lives. They also feel like there would be something missing without their motorbike and feel that their motorbike is its own reward.

The Indifferent attributes for these customers are *OwningAchievement, FriendsSamePassionandSenseOfSecurity*. They are indifferent about whether they have friends who share the same passion and do not feel like owning their motorbike is an achievement. They do not stress upon the sense of security it provides as well.

The Delight attributes are *ShareInCommon, Motivation, Popularity* and *GivesHope*. The customers are simply delighted when they can share so much in common with their motorbikes and their motorbike acts as a motivation in their life. They are thrilled with the popularity it gives them and they feel that it gives them hope in their life. There were no Attractive attributes to be plotted in this section.

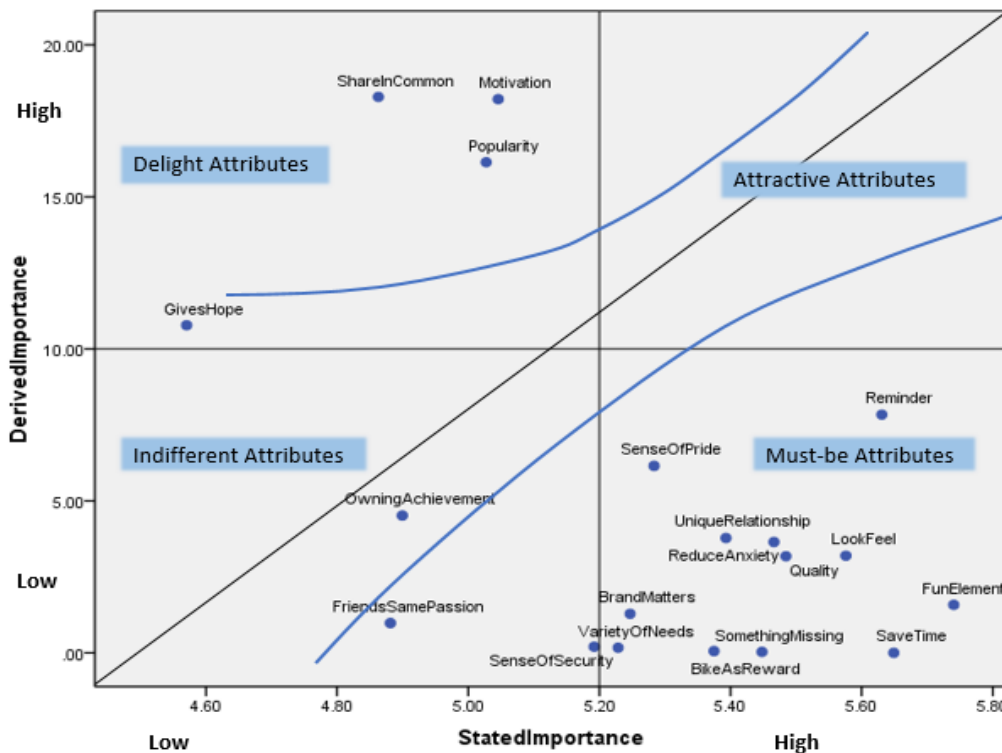


Fig. 2: KANO Model for the Emotionals

4.5 Qualitative Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were taken for the collection of qualitative data. The number of interviews taken was 14. Although the number of interviews is fairly few to be a true representative of the population, in the qualitative tradition, the depth and the insight derived from a small sample is sufficient.

The interviewees consisted of both male and female and most of them were enthusiastic motor bikers. The individuals interviewed consist of students, professionals and employees of organisations. They come from different parts of India. They share a common inclination towards riding and travelling in their motorbikes. The semi-structured interview was centred on the following key areas:

- Motorbike being more than a vehicle
- Emotionally connect with motorbike
- Kind of relationship shared with the motorbike
- Motorbike is a reflection of themselves
- Definition of possession of motorbike
- Feelings when riding a motorbike

On the analysis of the text documents, three main codes were generated, namely, Benefits Sought, Emotion and Life Changing. The term Benefits Sought is given to this code as it describes mainly about the various benefits that every motorbike owner would expect from their vehicle. However, there are a lot of benefits that a person derives from owning a motorbike which is not expressed explicitly but is implied. In this case, the sub-codes are based on the benefits that motorbike owners enjoy and have expressed explicitly in the course of the interview. Considering all these, the code Benefits Sought is further sub-coded into Possession, Helped in situations, Gain popularity, Stand out in a crowd, Features offered, Saves time and Saves cost.

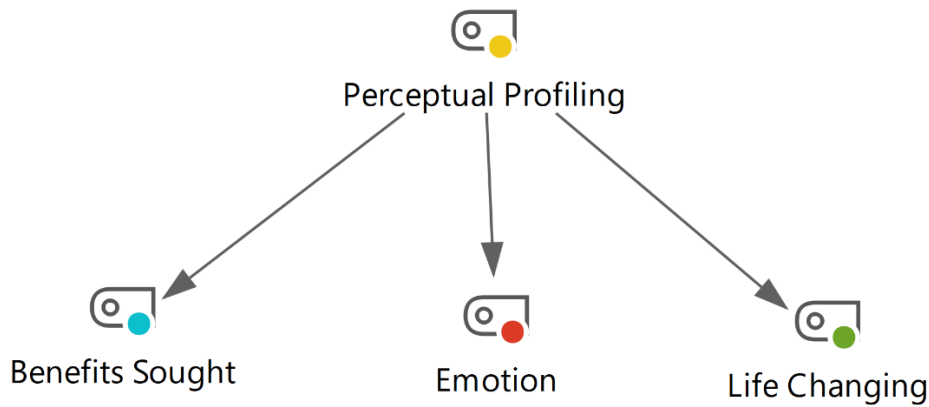


Fig. 3: Main heads of codes considered for the analysis

The next code is named as Emotion because the respondents spoke at length about their emotions and their feelings when it comes to their relationship with their motorbikes. These emotions could not just be categorised under one head, therefore a number of sub-codes were made to further classify the kind of emotion that the customers expressed when it comes to their motorbike. This classification cannot be justified as emotions are deeper than mere words. However, an attempt has been made. The code Emotion has been sub-coded in a number of categories to understand the granular details when it comes to people's expressions. Thus, the code Emotion has been further sub-coded into Relationship, General feelings, Strong feelings, Conversations, Reflects me, More than a vehicle, Love/The significant other, Matters of the heart and soul and Feelings when you ride.

The last code in this section is the code named Life Changing. This code is named thus because the responses coded in this section refers to how their motorbikes have been instrumental in changing their view and their way of life. The code Life changing is further sub-coded into Beliefs and attitude and Motivation.

5. INTERPRETATION

The world is going through what is known as a period of rapid and transformative progression. With the change in the environment, the consumer behavior has changed which leads to a change in the way products and services are marketed. It has moved from being product-centric to being consumer-centric. However, marketing has further developed to becoming human-centric. Instead of treating the people as simply consumers, marketers now approach them as "human beings with minds, hearts and spirits" (Kotler, et al., 2010). When we talk about matters of the mind, heart and spirit, we cannot expect the consumers to be in the same plane. Approaching the consumers as a homogeneous market would be a huge mistake (Singhi, et al., 2017). Thus, market segmenting is used to divide the market into groups and/or segments(s) which are based on their geographic, demographic, psychological and behavioral factors.

However, in the midst of it all, the emotions and the kind of involvement customers feel with the products is put somewhere in the back of the list. When it comes to commodities with high involvement and high emotional affinity towards certain products, the marketer cannot just look past this major factor. As Zig Ziglar, a motivational speaker and author, put it "People don't buy for logical reasons. They buy for emotional reasons."

Customers do not just buy products and derive the benefits of using them, they develop a relationship with the products they use. One such product or commodity is the motorbike. It is bought after much deliberation and has a high involvement of the customer in the entire process.

The motorbike is said to have been more than transportation since its inception (Hoiland, 2018). The use of motorbikes integrates escapism and playfulness to the rider. Riding a motorbike involves risk and danger and is considered as an extreme sport in a number of occasions. However, it is also considered as an experience that is "self-upgrading", thus riding the motorbike does not just enhance the image of the self but also supports the feeling that life is worth living (Konstantelos & Christakis, 2018).

"The sensation of being on a motorcycle embodies what we're all seeking in life. Freedom."

-Steven Alford, Biker

When such a crowd of bike enthusiasts exist in the market, motorbike companies can definitely consider segmenting their market on a base that is the emotional connect that these customers have towards their motorbike.

A similar attempt was made in this study where the researcher tried to understand the customer using their own perception of the kind of relationship that they share with their motorbike. The factor and cluster analysis showed that the sample considered for the study can actually be categorized into two different groups, the Rationals and the Emotionals. The discriminant analysis proved that there is indeed a significant difference between the two groups. The KANO model showed the kind of attitude these customers had towards the motorbikes and how the two groups and their motives are different from each other.

The study does have its limitation of considering a small sample and only considering a few of the elements that the customer may focus on when owning a motorbike, the findings still highlight the untapped emotional connect that motorbike customers feel with their vehicles. These insights not only show the importance of emotions but also opens up a different facet that the marketer can profitably address.

6. CONCLUSION

In the course of this study what is understood is that are different facets to the views or perceptions that a customer has towards their motorbike. The relative importance of these factors differ from person to person. However, the discriminating factor that distinguishes the two main clusters (of perception) of motorbike owners is emotion. The emotions are very intense and the respondents consider their motorbikes more than just a vehicle. They have a deep relationship with their vehicle.

Marketers can venture into this area of understanding their customers better and providing enhanced features or products as per their needs and desires. The method of profiling based on their own perceptions can be put together with the conventional methods of segmenting and profiling that exists and the combined result can give much better insights into understanding the customers. The use of in-depth interviews gives a deep insight into the customer's perceptions and emotions which can be used to add gravity and granularity to the strategy marketers develop. Thus, the perceptions of customers are vital in understanding customers and aid in developing enhanced strategies for marketers.

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