

# Women Riding a Two - Wheeler in Chennai : Has the Perception Changed ? A Perspective

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## Abstract

Riding two wheelers by Indian women is still not common - it is more a compulsion than choice. Physical inability to move around more easily, a traditional outlook in society- joint families are the conventional impediments that affect the purchase decision of two wheelers among Indian women. Initiatives have been taken by a few two-wheeler marketing companies to break the myth of an almost impossible task through innovative designs, targeting women riders too. A large market is untapped as indicated by their survey; while little is happening. Under this backdrop, this study is an initiative to convert the compulsion into choice after studying the mass opinions based on a primary field survey. Three groups of women participated in the study as samples and the purposive sampling method was used; the women respondents were categorized into three categories: namely working women, students, and homemakers. The study indicated interesting results, signaling choice disparity. The impact is yet to set in, in a big way, and it is rather a challenge for marketing companies to convert the chance into choice in future by preparing appropriate plans to target more women users and persuade them to use two wheelers as a convenient mode of transport.

**Keywords :** two wheelers ; social, functional, and epistemic values ; accessibility ; homemakers ; students ; working women

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The scene on roads with women on a two-wheeled vehicle in India is still not a common sight. A cosmopolitan outlook and globalization are still having a weak psychological effect on the Indian society. Riding two wheelers by Indian women is still not a common phenomenon. Penetration of women with a two - wheeled vehicle in India is still not a common sight. Riding two wheelers by women is more of a compulsion rather than choice. Physical inability to move around more easily, a traditional outlook in society - joint families are the conventional impediments that affect the purchase decision of two wheelers among Indian women. Initiatives have been taken by a few two-wheeler marketing companies to break the myth of an almost impossible task through innovative designs, targeting women riders too. A large market is untapped as indicated by surveys, while little is happening.

The global economic meltdown did not make the two-wheeler market stop growing due to a tremendous growth in the outskirts of cities like Chennai, where there is a huge population as there are a lot of IT companies, which have helped fuel the economic growth of the city exponentially and has also helped to push inflation sky-high in the last decade and over, which is an important factor as women find that the public transport system, even though arguably it is one of the finest in the country, still seems to be showing an imbalance in the supply-demand ratio, as there is an ever growing population and also an exodus of people from the rural areas who migrate to a category one city to fill the skilled labour shortage arising mostly as a result of India's IT boom.

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India is a dominant player in the world's two - wheeler sector: a good part of the vehicles sold are being purchased by Indian women, who can be broadly categorized into three categories:- namely working women, students, and homemakers. India's middle class is also increasing and manufacturers see that competition among two - wheeler marketers is focused on offering best mileage, which is considered as the major indicator and a reason to buy as it offers value for money; speed, comfort, and style, which are also the factors which attract women in the age group of 18-40 years.

## Literature Review

The customers or prospective users of any product are the best promoters for an organization; their good will and favorable word of mouth publicity reaches other's ears, making it easy for the organization to attract and serve more people; this in turn helps an organization to seek a favorable image among the public. Marketing professionals and researchers have emphasized customer satisfaction as a key reason for generating customer loyalty, which helps the organization to maintain its cash flow, and it also guarantees it a relatively stable future. It is a dream of every manufacturer to be concerned with customer repurchase intention, as most of the services depend on the continuity and thus focus on customer retention (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994).

A review of literature on overall customer satisfaction, particularly in relation to the automotive industry, revealed that two different concepts of customer satisfaction constructs exist. Transaction specific customer satisfaction conceptualized a one-time post purchase evaluation (Oliver, 1997); whereas, cumulative satisfaction refers to the overall evaluation after the product has been used for a period of time (Anderson et al., 1994). Cumulative construct of satisfaction is more relevant in the service sector.

In his research paper, Subramaniam (2016) stated that technology has facilitated information flow and is able to initiate mingling of culture and, thereby, cultural interaction and then cultural integration. Modern communication and transport technologies have created conditions for convergence of tastes and preferences of customers from different nations. Consumers have started experimenting and are fast adopting each other's views and are adopting newer habits, which were earlier considered taboo.

In their research paper on two wheeler riding patterns, Banu et al. (2013) observed that about 65% of the participants perceived that their riding style was safe and also that this perception was shared by their significant others. Slightly less than 10% of the participants reported that they were aware of their unsafe riding styles, and that the same perception was shared by their significant others. Interestingly, more than one-fifth of the sample reported a dissonance between their perception and that of others about their riding style. While a significant number of respondents reportedly perceived their riding as unsafe, these participants continued to hold the perception that they rode safely (21%). Surprisingly, 5-8% of the sample reported that they were aware of taking more risk than necessary on the road despite the fact that this was not commented upon by others.

Gender differences were not observed in this study in terms of sources of irritation and ways of expressing anger while riding and specific aggressive riding behaviours such as competition, performing road stunts, violation of traffic rules, drunken driving, to name a few. Driver aggression was slightly higher among males (38.5%) than females (32.9%) as reported in the study of Butters, Mann, Wickens, and Boase (2012).

Another study by Nesbit and Conger (2012) observed that aggressive drivers demonstrated a different pattern of affective experience, problematic cognitive tendencies, and subsequent negative outcomes in comparison to those reporting lower levels of aggression. Studies have pointed out the role of emotions as contributing to speeding as negative emotional states like experience of anger and sadness of mood were reported as a triggers for speeding.

James and Sudha (2017) used a multiple regression model to find the effects of shift work on the life of married employees. According to the authors, employees took up shift work and night shift to gain a luxurious life but were unable to fulfill their family and marital commitments. The study found that working in night shift affected the

marital relationship of the employees and lowered the marital life quality. The non-day shift not only affected the marital life of the employees, but also affected the growth of the employees' children; following their study, a lot of women in their face to face interviews opined that time was a factor which made them decide to buy a two wheeler to ease their burden to take the children to school.

In India, where family values are strong, a family member is often a major factor in aiding a customer's decision on whether to switch a brand, be it because of pricing, inconvenience, core service failure, service encounter failure, response to service failure, competition, ethical problems, or involuntary switching. Their influence as well as that of friends, who either recommend a brand or suggest otherwise, determines a buying decision.

Word of mouth influence is still a very strong factor in influencing purchase decisions and behavior, which means that word of mouth can lead to an appropriate decision making or also help the buyer to eliminate another brand by refraining from buying it because of the word of mouth reference, which has been supported as a reason in research (East, Hammond, & Wright, 2007 ; Sweeney, Soutar, & Mazzarol, 2014).

In the course of making a major buying decision, particularly if the family is in the process of a first time purchase of a two-wheeler (it is so in most cases), consumers may perceive many types of risks in buying and using any product, including a two-wheeler; some of the major risks will be explored by me in this paper:

- (i)** A functional risk is one when the product does not perform upto the desired expectation.
- (ii)** A financial risk is one where the customer feels that the product is not worth the price paid.
- (iii)** A physical risk is one when a product poses a danger or is a threat to the physical well - being or health of the user or others, which might hamper the buying decision.
- (iv)** A psychological risk is when the product affects the mental well-being of the user ; which could be a major influencer from a family member or friend, who may have experienced a flaw in the company's products and thus, creates a stigma in the minds of the potential buyers.
- (v)** A social risk occurs when a product results in embarrassment in front of others.
- (vi)** A time risk is the failure of the product which may result in an opportunity cost for finding another product, which needs to offer a similar level of satisfaction.

In this context, perceived risk varies with the amount of money at stake and the amount of attribute uncertainty along with consumer self-confidence. Consumers usually have the habit of developing a routine, which also includes a strong resistance to reduce uncertainty as India's roads in most cities, including Chennai, where this research is being undertaken, pose grave risks, including the risk of accidents happening along with other risk factors, such as decision avoidance, information gathering from friends, and a preference for national brand names and warranties. Marketers in India, and Chennai, in particular, must understand the factors that provoke a feeling of risk in consumers and provide appropriate information and give all the needed support to reduce perceived risks. India's huge lower income group and the middle class consumers are being increasingly targeted as companies race to get a bigger slice of the ever - growing piece of the two -wheeler pie.

Burden of population and complexities of public transport are becoming the prime reason for mounting demand of two wheelers among the urban middle class (Ghatak, 1984). India, being the second largest manufacturer of two wheelers in the world after China, uses the vehicle not for recreation purposes like developed countries, but mainly for day to day utility. As evidenced from a pilot study at Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu by Arumugasamy (2012), demand for two wheelers by the middle class is controlled by both economic and non-economic factors like price, income, price of substitute products, price of complementary goods, and also the taste of consumers: the study concluded that the marketing of two wheelers is determined by consumers in India.

However, a psychological revolution is happening, which started its evolution after originating from a few women who dared to challenge the conservative attitude which had been prevalent for a long time in a society which had henceforth been largely dominated by men and that riding a two wheeler by women was not very acceptable even as recently as two decades ago. The impact is yet to set in, and it is rather a challenge for marketing companies to convert the chance into choice in the future by preparing appropriate plans to target more women users and persuade them to use two wheelers as a convenient mode of transport.

## Objectives of the Study

In today's globalized world, the dictum that a customer is God is widely prevalent in India. In the service sector, customer satisfaction depends almost entirely on friendly employees who also need to be helpful and knowledgeable, with a thorough understanding of the product they are trying to sell, besides being courteous and must also be able to offer fast service; in other words, service quality, good value, timeliness or prompt service, delivery and clarity, and accuracy of billing along with a competitive pricing strategy are all major influencers for a customer in making a buying decision. Globalization has made every customer feel that s/he must be served according to his or her unique and individual needs; so, every industry needs to provide customized solutions and offer a tailored service based on actual preferences rather than on generalized assumptions, which is that of a one size fits all.

The objectives of this research are :

- ↳ To know the post purchase evaluation of women in Chennai, India regarding the use of two wheelers.
- ↳ To identify the factors affecting the preference of two-wheeler purchase among women, who are based in Chennai, India.
- ↳ To examine the demographical factors and their behavioral disparity regarding two wheeler purchase by women living in Chennai, India.
- ↳ To test the intention of a prospective female customer in purchasing a two - wheeler.

## Research Methodology

The present research study is based on both primary and secondary data, which was obtained from a sample of 300 women from Chennai who participated in the study. Out of 300, 240 responses were found to be usable and valid. The women respondents were segmented into three categories in order to ascertain the validity of the research, and they were : working women, home makers, and students, who were in colleges or universities, belonging to the age group between 18-40 years of age, and living in Chennai, Tamil Nadu in India. The respondents were shortlisted by using a purposive sampling procedure. Primary data were collected from the respondents during June 07 to July 07, 2017. Three famous colleges and one university were considered for the student category, five major traffic intersections near bus stops, and five schools were identified to choose working-women and housewives in the order, as sample respondents, only after ascertaining if they were willing to participate in the survey, which was purely intended for academic purposes. The secondary data which is used in the study were collected from books, magazines, websites, periodicals, publications, newspapers clippings of national importance.

Data collected from both primary and secondary sources were analysed by using techniques like multiple regression frameworks, binary logistic regression models (logit, probit models), and other relevant tests have been applied at appropriate places by using the software STATA. The relationship between the dependent and

independent variable factors can be assumed as :

$$Y = a + bX(1) + cX(2) + dX(3) + eX(4)$$

where,

$X(1)$  = Functional value,

$X(2)$  = Social value,

$X(3)$  = Accessibility value,

$X(4)$  = Epistemic value,

$Y$  = Customer's purchase intention.

$a$  = constant and  $b, c, d, e$  are said to be the coefficients.

$Y$  is the dependent variable, whereas  $X(1), X(2), X(3), X(4)$  are independent variables.

$Y$  is the dichotomous qualitative variable, that is,  $Y = 1$  if the respondent is interested and 0, otherwise.

As the dependent variable is a binary variable, we cannot apply the OLS method to estimate the model. A logit model has been used to estimate the above model. Thus, the dependent variable is a binary taking a value of 1 for the interested respondents and 0, otherwise.

$P$  = Probability that the customer will purchase a two- wheeler.

## Data Analysis and Results

The results of the study are depicted in the Tables 1 - 8. Analysis of the collected data (Tables 1 - 8) clearly reveals that the major factor which helps in the purchase of a two wheeler among Indian women is functional value, which is followed by epistemic value of the purchase. Social value of the purchase is the third most important factor that influences the motivation of purchasing a two-wheeler.

Following a time-tested conventional practice followed by Indian women, negativity towards the social value of riding a two wheeler has been a lead factor, but that is slowly being broken with the advent of globalization and education, which has made women more independent and has made them think more progressively and practically, thus breaking the cultural barrier. One more aspect influencing the decision of such a purchase for women is the mounting number of accidents among two wheeler riders in and around the city of Chennai.

Moreover, the interesting indication of negative effect of social value in the choice of two wheelers as opined by the female students denotes a social revolution depicting individualism on the part of educated women - as students, being employed, and as home makers. Accessibility and epistemic value also show a relationship. It can

**Table 1. Logit Table : Total Studied Population**

	Coefficient	Std. Err.	t	$P >  t $
Constant	-.9407891	.2216857	-4.24	0.000
Social	.695824	.0172419	4.04	0.000
Functional	.0394688	.0083303	4.74	0.000
Accessibility	.0111414	.0061426	1.81	0.071
Epistemic value	.0047206	.0136224	0.35	0.729

**Table 2. Multicollinearity Between the Independent and the Dependant Variable**

	Motivation of Purchase	Functional Value	Social Value	Accessibility
Functional Value	0.5567			
Social Value	0.4858	0.5371		
Accessibility	0.2770	0.3230	0.0742	
Epistemic Value	0.3854	0.5276	0.3628	0.5691
Age of respondents	0.7368			
Family income	0.3937			

**Table 3. Logit Table - Homemakers**

	Coefficient	Std. Err.	t
Constant	-0.9376634	0.4396031	-2.13
Functional	0.0747826	0.0173865	4.30
Social	0.0717807	0.0429239	1.67
Accessibility	0.0125175	0.0127241	0.98
Epistemic Value	-0.0382846	0.028279	-1.35

**Table 4. Logit Table for Variable and Non - Variable Factors' Relationship (Students)**

	Coefficient	Std. Err.	t
Constant	1.10894	0.3214599	3.45
Epistemic Value	0.0134298	0.0210527	0.64
Functional Value	0.0018798	0.0122652	0.15
Accessibility	0.0041372	0.0100508	0.41
Social Value	-.0235667	0.0287201	-0.82

**Table 5. Logit Table for Dependent and Independent Variable Factors' Relationship (Working Women)**

	Coefficient	Std. Err.	t
Constant	0.9617412	0.3929048	2.45
Epistemic Value	0.0117655	0.0249408	0.47
Social Value	0.003359	0.0393969	0.09
Functional Value	0.0031658	0.0157902	0.20
Accessibility	0.013325	0.0125931	1.06



**Table 6. Validity of the Study**

	Observation	Parameters	"R-sq"
Homemakers	80	5	0.7560
Students	80	5	0.7600
Working women	80	5	0.8332

**Table 7. Opinion of the Respondents**

	Housewives		Students		Working Women	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Two wheelers are vehicles made for men.	96%	14%	24%	76%	58%	42%
Two wheelers are accident prone vehicles as compared to four wheelers.	83%	27%	17%	83%	63%	37%
Two wheelers must be light vehicles for easier handling by women.	53%	47%	78a%	22%	83%	17%
Training to ride two wheelers can help women to purchase them.	32%	68%	69%	21%	73%	27%
Buying a two wheeler has a low investment when compared to buying a four wheeler.	98%	2%	97%	3%	99%	1%

**Table 8. Differentiation of Independent Factors Affecting the Purchase Intention of Women**

Type of women	Preference of Factors to Purchase a Two Wheeler			
Home maker	Functional value	Social value	Accessibility	-Epistemic value
Student	Epistemic value	Functional value	-Accessibility	-Social value
Working women	Epistemic value	Social value	Functional value	Accessibility

be concluded that better accessibility can increase the epistemic value of a product. Family income of all the studied population does not show a good relationship with two-wheeler purchase motivation ; whereas, age shows a positive and strong correlation, indicating that the older they are, the less motivated they become in purchasing a two-wheeler due to reduced physical ability, usually caused by age.

## Discussion and Implications

In case of homemakers, epistemic value is negative because they do not have any curiosity as they depend fully on their husband's income to take care of the family and are ,therefore, willing to make the compromise more readily. Accessibility is less important to them because they have to spend maximum time inside their house; the vehicle is, in most cases, considered to be of use when they need to drop their children/child to a nearby school, when they are still young and bring them back after school. Functional value is not the most important factor for them as they give preference to the views of their husbands and fear of status of their acceptance in the society to try something new. Social value also is ,therefore, a more important factor for them; so for them, promotional slogans and messages should be designed by showing the image of the product and enhancing its capacity to influence their purchase. Training to ride a two-wheeler must be also given to further motivate their purchase decision as they may feel more comfortable and confident. As of now, there is no formal training given, and they learn and buy or buy and learn, sometimes with an accident to teach them the fine art of riding carefully, which can be avoided, with a clear training program.

In the second category, that is, in case of students, it is seen that social value and accessibility are least important because they do not think that it is important to maintain any social status and have a zeal to do things differently: but they fully depend on their guardians, so accessibility is negative. To them, epistemic value and functional value are much more important because they have the urge to ride a two-wheeler and are also fun loving, apart from being interested in experimentation. Functional value is also important because they have to travel a long distance from home to school/college and also to take part in tuition classes later in the evening. The promotional messages must be highlighted with the help of a female celebrity endorser who is modern and is an icon of style with a fair share of fan following, so that the advertising may become penetrative.

Now, the third category is working women. As they advance in society, accessibility and functional values are less important because they are already aware of the product, its features, and also know about the dealers/showrooms and their location. For them, epistemic and social values are important because they are much more curious about two-wheelers' prices, ROI (return on investment), EMI, etc. as the maximum of them invest of their own: since they are modern, they do not want social acceptance from others.

The data so obtained was analyzed using the software STATA, which significantly denotes the first factor affecting the decision of purchase of two wheelers by Indian women is highly influenced by functional value and epistemic value of the purchase. Social value of the purchase is the third most important factor that influences the motivation for purchasing two wheelers. It is important to understand that due to conventional practices, Indian women assume negativity towards the social value of driving two wheelers. Moreover, the interesting indication of negative effect of social value in the choice of two wheelers, as opined by the women students, denotes a social revolution depicting individualism. Epistemic value and accessibility also show a collinearity, which is a matter of concern from the marketing perspective. However, a psychological revolution is happening and has started its evolution, after originating from a few women, who dared to challenge the conservative attitude which had been prevalent for a long time in a society which had henceforth been largely dominated by men, and that riding a two wheeler by women was not very acceptable even as recent as two decades back. The impact is yet to set in, in a big way, and it is rather a challenge for marketing companies to convert the chance into choice in the future, by preparing appropriate plans to target more women users and persuade them to use two wheelers as a convenient mode of transport.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This research has shown that women in Chennai are very much advanced in their thoughts and social thinking, and that they are psychologically developed, whether they are consuming the product or not, they are curious but cautious. A change in lifestyle is also in the air as the students and working class people have started preferring two wheelers as a part of their life style to avoid the hustle and bustle of buses and trains during the peak hours as public transportation, even though widely available in Chennai, touted as the best in the country for decades, is still over-crowded and not women friendly yet.

## **Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research**

Advertisements should be designed, which will highlight the benefits and also show them the amount of money and time that they may save. Physical incapability among Indian women is also being identified as an impediment for smooth growth of two wheeler sales in women's category. As a traditional practice, they want to be driven rather than drive; so awareness must be generated in order to enhance their confidence by two-wheeler manufacturing companies to establish a new trend in the industry and woo more women to use their products,



rather than being traditionally men-centered. This is bound to be challenge for two-wheeler manufacturing companies to promote this as a socially acceptable phenomenon as they may need to break the cultural barrier.

If they can do so successfully, then there is a large untapped market left to be operated in the future. Promotional mix must be designed appropriately in such a way that it highlights the social value so that it will influence women to purchase two wheelers. The epistemic value can be increased by designing their products to be more comfortable, colorful, user-friendly, and also offer a variety of offerings for them to choose and add more features to it by being constantly aware of the changes which may be brought about by globalization.

This research was carried out only in one metropolitan city, which is Chennai in South India. Future researchers should be able to carry out a wider sample by testing the respondents from all over the city, or probably do a comparative study to compare the likelihood of women two wheeler riders from other nearby towns too, as it has now become common place among the young and educated mothers, mostly if they are home - makers, to ride a two wheeler to take their child/ children to school as it is both comfortable - they can leave home a lot later as they do not have to wait for buses as public transportation or also, they do not have to spend more money on the school's transport, which will also entail the children to leave homes early, depending on the routes chosen by the bus and the location of the homes of those parents in question.

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