AFFECTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATING EMOTIONAL INFLUENCES ON SUV CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between affect theory and communication as it relates to the purchasing behaviors of sport utility vehicle (SUV) consumers. SUVs are becoming more popular, and automakers are reportedly concentrating more on developing new SUV lines. SUVs' roomy cabins and tough exteriors draw potential consumers. SUVs appear larger than sedans and hatchbacks, their owners perceive themselves as belonging to the dominant class of people on the road, Lakshya Bahl (2022). This study intends to identify the emotional drivers of SUV consumer's buying behavior utilizing a quantitative technique for data collection. The samples for the study included 507 SUV owners from different areas of Tamil Nadu. To achieve the research goal, an online survey questionnaire was created using Google Forms, which included a variety of statements synchronized to the variables of affect theory. The replies were analyzed using complex statistical techniques and software, such as SPSS. Factor analysis was used to discover the underlying elements that impact SUV ownership. The design of the affective scale emphasizes the discovery of positive, negative, and neutral affective characteristics that serve as emotional triggers to impact customer views during the SUV purchase process which were derived from Silvan Tomkin's Affect theory. The study aims to reveal the complicated interplay between messaging, perception, and emotional reaction among SUV purchasers. The findings of this study hope to assist industry experts in developing communication methods that resonate with consumer emotions, establishing a stronger connection between companies and customers.

Keywords:

SUV, Consumers, Emotions, Affect theory, Buying Behaviour

1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding the complex interplay between psychology and communication in the ever-changing world of consumer behaviour is crucial, especially when it comes to sport utility vehicles (SUVs). SUVs are popular because of their practicality and adaptability. Customers like the roomy cabins, generous luggage capacity, and elevated seating that offers a commanding perspective of the road. Families, outdoor enthusiasts, and those looking for a useful and multifunctional vehicle find SUVs appealing because of these advantages. For many customers, the strong and intimidating appearance of SUVs adds to their feeling of protection and safety. Buyers who are concerned about safety will find the bigger size and higher driving position appealing as they can improve sight and provide the driver a sense of control while driving. SUVs are favoured by certain buyers because of their off-road potential. Even if not utilised for prolonged off-road activities, the impression of being able to handle a variety of terrains can be a powerful selling factor. Manufacturers frequently promote SUVs with features such as all-wheel drive and off-road modes. SUVs are frequently connected with a lifestyle statement. SUVs' attractiveness stems from their design, cosmetics, and general image. Consumers may select SUVs to represent their

individuality and to fit in with a more active and adventurous lifestyle. The higher driving position of SUVs is a significant element in consumer preferences. Consumers love the dominating perspective of the road, which adds to their sense of confidence and control when driving, Gupta (2023). The incorporation of modern technologies and connection elements in SUVs has become a crucial component. Consumers demand sophisticated entertainment systems, driver-assistance technology, and connection choices, adding to SUVs' overall attractiveness.

It is important to remember that customer preferences change over time, and the automobile industry evolves in response to technological breakthroughs, shifting cultural standards, and environmental concerns. This study conducts a thorough investigation aiming at unravelling the various variables that govern SUV customer purchasing behaviour. The convergence of communication and affect emotions offers a multifaceted lens through which to understand the emotional complexities that shape consumer decisions, as well as the significance of effective communication methods in influencing these emotional states.

This study investigates the emotional dynamics of SUV consumer's purchasing behaviour within the framework of affect theory, which holds that emotions are the primary drivers of human behaviour. The importance of affect on cognitive functions and decision-making is emphasised by affect theory, which makes it an interesting lens through which to study the complex world of consumer decisions.

American psychologist Silvan Tomkins (1911–1991) was a prominent figure who made important advances in our knowledge of affective processes and emotions. His affect theory, often known as the "Script Theory of Emotions," is a thorough theoretical framework that aims to clarify the origins, progression, and manifestation of human emotions. In the domains of emotional computing, psychology, and neuroscience, Tomkins' work is especially pertinent.

Tomkins proposed the existence of a set of innate, biologically based emotions known as "primary affects." According to Tomkins, these primary affects form the foundation for a wide range of emotional experiences. The affect theory identifies three primary types of affects, each comprising three components. The three main affect types are positive, negative, and neutral.

Table.1. Nine components associated with affect types

Positive Affects	Neutral Affects	Negative Affects
Enjoyment/ Joy Interest/ Excitement	Surprise/ Startle	Anger/Rage Disgust Dissmell Distress/Anguish Fear/Terror Shame/Humiliation

(Source: A Silvan Tomkin's Hand Book, 2020)

It's notable that Tomkins' affect theory emphasises the universality of these affective components across cultures and settings. These affect kinds and components give a framework for comprehending the wide range of emotional experiences that people have in response to different stimuli and situations. The idea advances our knowledge of human emotions and their effects on conduct and subjective well-being.

As SUVs continue to dominate the automobile industry, their appeal has expanded beyond utilitarian concerns to include utility and psychological components. Consumer choices are frequently deeply embedded in emotive reactions, therefore it is critical to understand the underlying elements that generate positive, negative, and neutral affective feelings during the purchase process.

This study emphasises the importance of emotions while also recognising the crucial function that affective emotional co plays in influencing and intensifying these feelings. The goal of this research is to develop a customised affective scale that measures the psychological triggers and emotional factors that affect SUV purchase decisions. The research's conclusions go beyond conventional market studies by giving business experts useful information. Through an awareness using dynamic interaction between Affect variables and Consumer behaviour, automotive stakeholders may improve the resonance of their strategies with customers and establish long-lasting brand ties.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Luciene Eberle et al. (2021) intended to explore the factors influencing the desire to acquire SUV autos. The study used a convenience sample of 237 people who intended to buy SUVs. The sample characterisation includes age, individual monthly income, number of automobiles, and SUV brands used as a reference. The age group with the largest consumption was 26 to 33 years old, comprising 30.4% of the sample. Customers with the greatest income reported between Rs 4,900.00 and Rs 9,000.00, accounting for 70.9% of the sample. Among the brands mentioned in the study, Kia Motors was the most popular, with 17.7% of responses. According to the survey, factors that influence consumers' intentions to buy SUVs include perceived quality, perceived innovation, brand awareness, and brand trust. However, the study's non-probabilistic sample and constrained breadth are its main drawbacks. Validated scales were employed in the study to gather data from participants, and structural equation modelling was utilised to analyse the data.

Khan (2021) seeks to discover how various factors in the car business relate to one another. Data for the study is gathered through questionnaires that respondents in the business complete out using a quantitative research methodology. The study finds that a number of factors, including price, fuel efficiency, after-sales care, attitude and perception, brand loyalty, and aesthetics, affect consumers' intentions to make purchases. In order to differentiate themselves from competitors and achieve stronger brand equity, the report advises firms to concentrate on developing novel strategies and offering competitive advantages. The research study examined the effects of fuel efficiency, brand loyalty, and aesthetics on consumers' inclinations to purchase Honda City vehicles. The study discovered that these variables had a considerable influence on customer purchasing intentions.

Specifically, the survey discovered that fuel efficiency, durability and repairability, after-sales services, price overview, and source of information utilised before purchasing the car are the most important considerations for customers. According to the brand's image, around 70% of buyers were loyal to the automobile. Furthermore, around 80% of buyers loved the product in terms of style, interior, and vehicle amenities, while approximately 85% were delighted with the car's fuel economy. As a result, it can be stated that brand loyalty, fuel efficiency, and aesthetics are major variables influencing consumer purchase intentions for the Honda City.

The study by Dhanabalan Thangam (2018) investigates the variables that affect consumers' decisions to purchase automobiles. From the perspective of the client, the study addresses the significance of product quality, design, and usefulness. It also emphasises how important it is to determine a product's usefulness in order to satisfy and meet the demands of customers. The study highlights how important it is for companies to comprehend how elements like price, promotion, and shop design affect customer behaviour. A review of the literature and a hypothesis on how product quality and price affect customers' perceptions of value are also included in the article. The study's overall goal is to shed light on the variables influencing consumers' purchasing choices in the Indian car industry. Consumers consider a variety of elements while making purchasing decisions. These aspects include the product's quality, price, perceived value, utility, technical considerations, and brand. The product's quality is regarded as a key aspect in product success, as well as in competitive marketing completion. The product's price has a significant impact on how buyers perceive its worth. Customers' choices and evaluations shape their perceptions of value. Customers have expectations while acquiring and consuming things, and the more those expectations are met, the more value they will place on the products. Utility and technical concerns also play a vital role in client purchasing decisions. Brand and price are both marginal predictors that have a positive relationship with perceived value.

Sachin Sudan (2022) aims to find the elements that impact customers' purchasing intentions for SUV automobiles in the Indian automobile sector. The study consists of a literature review, an exploration model, a questionnaire, and data analysis. According to the research, brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, and brand preference are key variables influencing buy intention, however brand value has little effect on purchase intention. The study emphasises the relevance of brand development initiatives for vehicle firms in fostering client trust and confidence. The research on SUV vehicle businesses sought to uncover the factors that impact purchase intention and to provide brand building methods for the Indian automobile sector, with a focus on SUV automobiles. The The purpose of the study was to identify the brand-building tactics employed by automakers in relation to sports utility vehicles and to investigate the elements influencing consumers' intentions to acquire these cars. The study employed an empirical methodology that included a structured questionnaire given to 300 SUV owners. The data and statistics were analysed using structural equation modelling, and the findings were interpreted. Five elements were analysed in the suggested SUV purchasing intention model: brand awareness, brand association, preference, loyalty, and brand value. It is crucial to remember that additional elements, including as brand

image, price and quality, experience, perceived risks, perceived value, celebrity endorsements, and competitive advantage, may all have an impact on a buyer's desire to buy.

The work published by Aahasan Hasan (2020) states that a number of factors affect customer purchasing decisions in the car sector. These variables include cost, the vehicle's attributes, marketing, behavioural, psychographic, and demographic problems, prior auto service experiences, and the impact of friends and family. Before making a purchasing decision, consumers frequently take into account a number of surrounding factors, and experience helps identify the best option from the available options. In addition, poor automobile service leaves customers bitter, and a bad experience from the past casts a shadow when making judgements about purchases.

Marisa Toth (2009) examines the importance of self-concept in consumer behaviour. It comprises a literature review on self-concept and product image, as well as a core research using an online survey to assess the impact of self-concept on customer behaviour. The poll asks participants to describe the typical product owner and assess their view of the typical user across many categories. The thesis finishes with a discussion of the results and recommendations for further research. The study examined actual self by asking participants to define themselves as they are and to what extent they believe they possess the personal qualities provided in the survey. This was one of four aspects of self investigated, along with the ideal self, social self, and ideal-social self.

Denis Sefara (2015) investigates the socio-psychological variables that impact automobile preferences among undergraduate students. The study employed a questionnaire to assess participants' preferences for several automotive attributes, including as type, body, fuel type, size, performance, and brand. Participants were also asked to provide demographic information such as their gender, age, driving frequency, and car ownership. Personality and materialism were measured using translated versions of the Ten-Item Personality Questionnaire and the Material Values Scale, respectively. According to the survey, men favoured sports cars more than SUVs, while women chose SUVs more than sports cars. High-performance automobiles, including those from Audi, BMW, and Mercedes-Benz, were the favoured vehicles of those who value performance. These people's preferences and usage of cars were significantly influenced by their affective motives and materialistic ideals.

The influence of affect on consumer behavior and decision-making is covered by Nancy et al. (2018). A meta-analysis of several researches on the subject is included in the report, and Pearson's r is used to gauge how strongly affect influences a consumer's reaction. The study makes the strategic application of comprehending the influence of emotion on consumer behaviour possible in order to improve customer experience. The interaction between emotion and cognitive processing as it relates to decision-making is covered in the paper. A list of additional noteworthy works on the subject and a chart illustrating the effect framework's overall influence are also included in the study. The report's key aspects include the characteristics of emotion and contextual factors that have the greatest influence, the distinction between low and high cognitive complexity tasks, and the impact of personal relevance on judgement within the representativeness construct.

Joel B. Cohen (2008) emphasises how our emotional responses to people, organisations, or things often impact how we feel about them overall. This study discusses two hypotheses: unequal memory accessibility and mood as information. The former is more likely to occur when someone is thinking deeply and substantively, whereas the later is more likely to occur during cognitive processing, which is commonly done in low participation settings. The study also highlights how challenging it is to look into how affect management influences information processing since it requires individuals to identify temporary cues associated with activities that affect their mood. The paper concludes with the important recommendation that future research focus on understanding the sorts of issues feelings are intended to address. This might lead to significant advances in the field.

2.1 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To develop a scale of measure to identify the affective emotional factors that influenced the SUV consumers.

3. METHODOLOGY

Surveys were used in the study as part of the quantitative research approach. A sample of 507 SUV owners were selected from different regions of Tamil Nadu, and they were given Google forms including questions about their demographic information and remarks on the psychological elements of being an SUV owner. A 5-point Likert scale (5 Strongly Agree, 4 Agree, 3 Neutral, 2 Disagree, 1 Strongly Disagree) was utilized to rate the responses.

4. RESULTS

Table 3.1.1 explains the demographic distribution of samples in which the male respondents are higher in number compared to female who owns SUV's. The respondents of age group 24-29 and 30-35 were in equal numbers followed by the age groups of 18-23 and Above 35 which falls subsequently. The Fig.1 and Fig.2 denote the normal distribution of the demographic data of the respondents. A distribution may take the form of a normal distribution, or it may be skewed in a positive or negative direction. A normal distribution is often referred to as a bell curve due to its symmetrical shape. While outliers may exist, representing extremely high or low values, they are relatively similar in magnitude and the majority of the data is evenly distributed around a central point, Baker (2023). Hence the Age of the respondents is likely to be normally distributed whereas the gender of the respondents is skewed as the number of male respondents is extremely higher in numbers.

Table.2. Demographic Details

Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-23	85	16.8	16.8	16.8
	24-29	177	34.9	34.9	51.7
	30-35	177	34.9	34.9	86.6

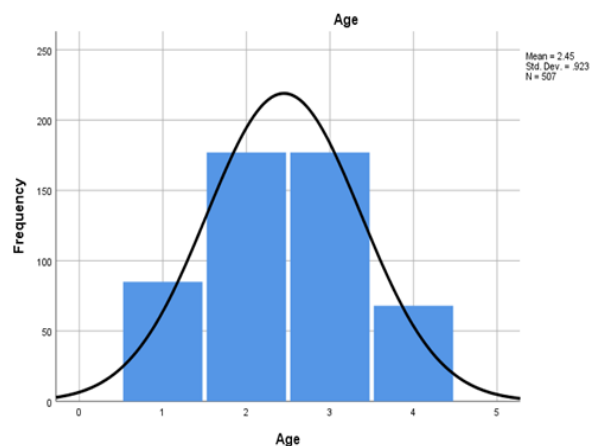|					
	Above 35	68	13.4	13.4	100.0
	Total	507	100.0	100.0	
Gender					
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Valid Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Valid	Male	417	82.2	82.2	82.2
	Female	90	17.8	17.8	100.0
	Total	507	100.0	100.0	

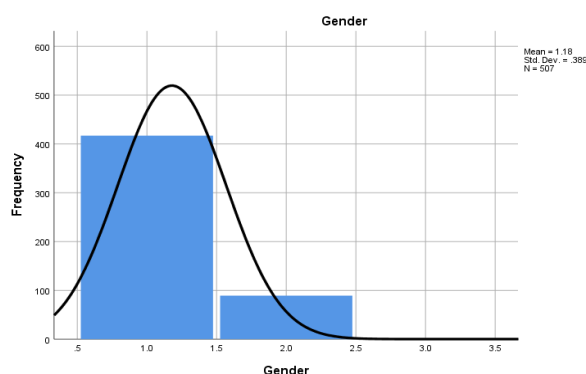Fig.1. normal distribution of Age

Fig.2. Normal distribution of Gender

Mahindra is the most highly owned brand among all the firms featured in the questionnaire, followed by Tata Motors and KIA, according on the replies chosen by the samples. The brands included in the questionnaire and the numbers of replies that the samples reported are shown in Table.3.

Table.3. Brand Distribution

Brand	No. of Responses
Mahindra	158
Tata Motors	73
KIA	57
Toyota	41
Maruti Suzuki/ Nexa	36
Skoda Auto	31

Hyundai	20
Morris Garage (MG)	18
Volks Wagen	18
Nissan	13
Citroen	12
Honda	09
Jeep	07
Renault	05
Force Motors	02
Izuzu	01
Others	06
Total	**507**

There appears to be a greater preference for sub-4-meter compact SUVs. The samples then picked large SUVs (those that seat more than six people) and midsize SUVs. The data findings for the kind of SUV favoured by respondents are provided below.

Table.4. Type of SUV

Brand	No. of Responses
Sub 4 Meter Compact SUV	181
Mid-Size SUV	176
Large Size SUV	136
Adventure / Pickup Utility	09
Luxury SUV	05
Total	**507**

Most of the samples own Red SUVs. The next most popular colours for automobiles in the tests were black and white. The data findings for the colour of SUV selected by respondents are provided below.

Table.5. (Choice of Colour)

Brand	No. of Responses
Red	171
Black	144
White/Silver	113
Grey	38
Blue	33
Others	09
Total	**507**

To acquire the research objective of constructing a scale of measure to identify the affective emotional factors that influenced the SUV consumers', a major axis factor analysis was used in an attempt to categorise the existing factors influencing SUV owners who were affectively emotional.

Table.6. (KMO and Bartlett's Test)

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.844
Bartlett's Test	Approximate	8092.458

of Sphericity	Chi-Square	
	Dif	190
	Significance	.000

According to Nurul A'in Ahmad Latif et al. (2019), the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test is used to assess how well the data is suitable for factor analysis and evaluates the suitability of the sampling for each variable. Accepted KMO values are more than or equal to 0.50. As a result, after carefully examining and eliminating any values that were less than 0.5, the confirmatory factor analysis was able to identify three factors that were related to the samples' responses.

Table.7. Factors Distribution

Factor 1 – Positive Affect	
I feel my holiday trip is complete with my SUV's drive experience	.828
I feel using my SUV in all road conditions is easier	.775
I feel unique in the public when I drove in my SUV	.745
I treat my SUV as my pet	.741
I feel safe with my SUV with its safety features	.686
I feel luxurious when I travel in my SUV	.823
I feel the features provided in my SUV are purposive and practical in real life	.733
Factor 2 – Neutral Affect	
I compare my SUV to a living being	.784
I feel the colour of my SUV stands out of the crowd	.737
I feel proud when my SUV is gazed in public	.650
My SUV is my status symbol	.854
I don't wish to upgrade to another model/ brand	.573
There are similar models to my SUV in other brands	.889
Factor 3 – Negative Affect	
I feel confident when I drive my SUV even at higher speeds	.825
I feel dominant while driving the SUV from a high stance seating position	.754
My SUV insists me to carryout adventurous activities	.712
I don't like someone damages my SUV	.679
I feel my SUV looks aggressive when parked near a smaller car	.841
[I tease others who have a smaller car than my SUV	.776
I feel the colour of my SUV adds more ruggedness to its design	.744

The instrument's items were divided into three categories, which provides context for Silvan Tomkin's Affect Theory's nine variables. The first element is classified as Positive Affect (Enjoyment/Joy and Interest/Excitement), the second as Neutral Affect (Surprise/Startle), and the third as Negative Affect (Anger/Rage, Disgust, Dissmell, Distress/Anguish, Fear/Terror and Shame/Humiliation).

Table.8. Correlations

		Positive Affect	Neutral Affect	Negative Affect
Positive Affect	Pearson Correlation	1	.793**	.431**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	507	504	506
Neutral Affect	Pearson Correlation	.793**	1	.650**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	504	504	504
Negative Affect	Pearson Correlation	.431**	.650**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	506	504	506

Investigating the correlation between emotional influences and SUV consumer buying behaviour, this research employs Pearson correlation analysis to unveil the nuanced connections between affective factors and the decision-making processes, providing a comprehensive framework for evaluating the emotional dimensions shaping customer choices in the SUV market. The Pearson coefficient shows correlation, not causation. Pearson coefficients range from +1 to -1, with +1 representing a positive correlation, -1 representing a negative correlation, and 0 representing no relationship, Samuels (2014). Hence the above values denote that the three components were positively correlated to each other.

The Cronbach alpha test was used to assess the reliability of the construct, and the findings were significant for all three components.

Table.9. Reliability Test

Factors	Cronbach Alpha Value
F1- Positive Affect	0.868
F2- Neutral Affect	0.705
F3- Negative Affect	0.800

It is advised that findings with indices greater than 0.70 be considered noteworthy. Malhotra & associates (2012).

5. DISCUSSION

This study sheds light on the complex relationship between communication, affect, and Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) consumer behaviour, laying the groundwork for the creation of a specialised emotional scale. This study, which synthesizes ideas from several research disciplines, emphasises the complex character of SUV purchase choices, recognising the dynamic interaction of emotional, psychological, and linguistic variables.

Emotions not only influence customer decisions but also serve as a link between communication tactics and psychological reactions. This synthesis highlights the automobile industry's paradigm change, which has moved beyond utilitarian concerns to include emotional and experience components.

In the context of SUVs, where lifestyle and individuality are important, brand marketing becomes vital. This study emphasises

the need to understand how communication channels, message methods, and sensory aspects affect SUV customer emotions.

Psychological components, such as expanded self-concept and cultural influences, contribute to a better understanding of how SUVs become symbolic extensions of consumer identities. By investigating the relationship between cultural values and SUV choices, this study emphasises the need to adjust communication and marketing tactics to different cultural situations.

The study also emphasises how rare it is to find specialised emotional scales in the automobile industry, particularly for SUVs. Given the distinctiveness of this market niche, the study intends to close this gap by incorporating psychological and communication viewpoints into the creation of an emotional scale. Along with emotional factors, the scale aims to identify marketing tactics, communication channels, and psychological triggers unique to SUV customer behaviour.

It is becoming increasingly necessary to include these trends into the emotional scale as the car sector changes in response to environmental concerns and technological improvements. The study highlights the necessity for an up-to-date comprehension of how digital communication, environmental messaging, and technology shape SUV customer choices.

In summary, the application of affect theory to the study of SUV consumer behaviour deepens our comprehension of the emotional aspects involved and highlights the significance of recognising and utilising these affective components in both scholarly and professional settings. Going ahead, this research proposes that consumer studies should keep investigating emotions in order to develop a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between affect and decision-making in the ever-changing automobile industry.

6. CONCLUSION

To conclude, this study offers a thorough summary of the body of knowledge that currently exists at the nexus of affective variables communication, and SUV consumer behaviour. The study provides the foundation for a strong and context-specific affective scale that can be a useful tool for researchers, industry practitioners, and marketers who want to better understand the emotional subtleties that influence SUV purchase decisions. It does this by synthesising insights from various research streams. The proposed study aims to connect theoretical models with real-world applications, adding to the current discourse in the fields of academia and business.

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