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A Study on Buying Behaviour of Motorcycle through Test Drive Marketing

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ABSTRACT: The motorcycle industry in India is highly competitive, with consumers exercising considerable deliberation before making a purchase decision. Test drive marketing, which allows prospective buyers to experience a motorcycle before purchase, has emerged as a significant influencer of buying behaviour. This study investigates the impact of test drive marketing on the buying behaviour of motorcycle consumers in Coimbatore. A structured questionnaire was administered to 85 respondents comprising students, salaried employees, and self-employed individuals. The study evaluates factors such as post-ride experience, brand perception, peer influence, fuel efficiency assessment during test drives, and subsequent purchase intentions. Findings indicate that test drive marketing positively influences consumer confidence, reduces purchase anxiety, and significantly shapes final brand and model selection decisions. Recommendations are provided for motorcycle dealers and manufacturers to optimise their test drive marketing strategies.

KEYWORDS: Buying Behaviour, Test Drive Marketing, Motorcycle Industry, Consumer Decision-Making, Brand Perception

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian two-wheeler market is one of the largest in the world, with motorcycles constituting a dominant share of personal transportation choices across urban, semi-urban, and rural geographies. The decision to purchase a motorcycle is rarely impulsive; it involves an extensive evaluation process shaped by factors such as brand reputation, pricing, fuel efficiency, aesthetics, after-sales service, and peer recommendations. In this context, test drive marketing has emerged as a critical touchpoint between motorcycle manufacturers, their dealer networks, and prospective buyers.

Test drive marketing refers to the practice of providing potential customers with an experiential opportunity to ride and evaluate a motorcycle under real-world or controlled conditions before committing to a purchase. Unlike passive advertising or showroom display, test drive marketing engages the consumer sensorially and functionally, allowing them to assess ride quality, engine response, braking efficiency, comfort, and overall suitability to their usage requirements. This experiential engagement is increasingly recognised by marketers as a powerful tool for accelerating purchase decisions and building brand loyalty.

In Coimbatore, a rapidly growing Tier-1 city in Tamil Nadu, the motorcycle market is intensely competitive. Leading brands including Hero MotoCorp, Bajaj Auto, Honda, TVS Motor Company, Royal Enfield, and Yamaha compete aggressively for market share. Dealers frequently organise test drive campaigns, particularly around festive seasons, to attract footfall and convert enquiries into sales. Understanding the precise role that test drives play in shaping consumer decisions is therefore of significant commercial and academic interest.

The present study examines how test drive marketing influences the buying behaviour of motorcycle consumers. It explores the demographic profile of test drive participants, their perceptions before and after test rides, the attributes most critically evaluated during test drives, and the correlation between test drive participation and actual purchase decisions. The study aims to provide actionable insights for dealers and manufacturers seeking to refine their test drive marketing strategies.



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HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF TEST MARKETING IN THE AUTOMOBILE SECTOR

Test drive marketing as a practice has deep roots in the broader automobile industry, originating in the early twentieth century when manufacturers recognised that consumer hesitancy could be overcome most effectively through direct product experience. In the Indian two-wheeler context, test drives were historically informal, typically arranged upon customer request at dealer premises. Over time, manufacturers formalised the process, organising large-scale test drive events, mobile demo units, and experiential marketing campaigns designed to reach consumers across geographies.

The digital revolution has added a further dimension to test drive marketing. Consumers now research extensively online before visiting a showroom, arriving with clearly defined expectations that a test drive either confirms or challenges. Social media platforms have also enabled consumers to share test drive experiences, creating peer-generated content that amplifies the marketing impact of each test ride. Understanding this evolution is essential context for evaluating the current role of test drives in the motorcycle buying journey.

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND THE TWO-WHEELER INDUSTRY

Government policy has significantly shaped the competitive landscape within which test drive marketing operates. The transition to BS6 emission norms, mandated by the Government of India from April 2020 onwards, led manufacturers to introduce technologically upgraded motorcycle variants with fuel injection systems and enhanced engine efficiency. These technical changes created new dimensions of consumer evaluation during test drives, as buyers sought to assess real-world fuel economy, smoothness of power delivery, and serviceability of the new systems. The production-linked incentive scheme for the automobile sector and the government's push for electric vehicles have further introduced new product categories and consumer consideration sets, expanding the scope of test drive marketing beyond conventional internal combustion engine motorcycles.

II METHODOLOGY

NEED FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

While considerable literature exists on consumer buying behaviour in the automobile sector broadly, studies specifically examining the role of test drive marketing in motorcycle purchase decisions in the Indian context remain limited. Most existing consumer behaviour studies in this domain focus on attitudinal factors, pricing sensitivity, and brand loyalty, without adequately accounting for the experiential dimension introduced by test drives. There is a particular gap in empirical research capturing the specific attributes consumers evaluate during test drives and the extent to which test drive experience translates into purchase conversion. The present study addresses this gap through primary research in Coimbatore.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the widespread practice of test drive marketing by motorcycle dealers and manufacturers in India, there is limited systematic understanding of how test drive experiences specifically influence consumer buying behaviour. Existing research on two-wheeler consumer behaviour focuses primarily on price sensitivity, brand equity, and post-purchase satisfaction, without adequately examining the role of test drive marketing as a distinct marketing intervention. Dealers invest significantly in organising test drive events but lack clear empirical evidence regarding which consumer segments are most influenced by test drives, which motorcycle attributes are most critically assessed during test rides, and how test drive experience mediates the relationship between product attributes and purchase intention. The present study addresses these gaps.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the demographic profile of motorcycle consumers who participate in test drive marketing programmes in Coimbatore.
2. To examine the key attributes assessed by consumers during motorcycle test drives and their relative importance in purchase decision-making.



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3. To evaluate the influence of test drive experience on brand perception, purchase intention, and final model selection.
4. To identify the correlation between test drive participation and actual motorcycle purchase conversion rates among the surveyed respondents.
5. To provide recommendations for motorcycle dealers and manufacturers to enhance the effectiveness of test drive marketing strategies.

SAMPLING METHOD AND SIZE

Since the total population of active motorcycle buyers in Coimbatore cannot be precisely determined, the researcher adopted a non-probability convenience sampling method for the primary data collection component. Respondents were selected on the basis of their availability, willingness to participate, and confirmation that they had either recently purchased a motorcycle or were in the process of evaluating a purchase. A sample size of 85 respondents was adopted for the primary survey. This sample size was determined to be appropriate given the exploratory and descriptive nature of the study and the analytical tools employed, including percentage analysis, one-way ANOVA, and factor analysis. The sample includes respondents from diverse demographic backgrounds in terms of age, gender, occupation, income level, educational qualification, and residential type.

Primary Data

The study is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire prepared after thorough review of the existing literature on consumer buying behaviour, experiential marketing, and the two-wheeler industry. The questionnaire was administered to 85 respondents in Coimbatore comprising students, salaried employees, self-employed individuals, and professionals who were either recent motorcycle purchasers or active prospective buyers. The questionnaire captures demographic information, test drive participation history, attributes evaluated during test drives, pre- and post-test-drive brand perception, purchase intention levels, and the ultimate purchase decision outcome.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from industry reports, journal articles, automotive magazines, dealer association publications, and government statistical sources including the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers annual reports.

III MODELLING AND ANALYSIS

Models and materials used in the study are presented in this section. Tables and figures are presented in the prescribed format.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework – Test Drive Marketing and Buying Behaviour

IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion are presented below. Analysis is based on 85 valid responses collected from motorcycle consumers in Coimbatore. This section is typed in character size 10pt Times New Roman.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

SN.	AGE GROUP	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	18–25	42	49.41%
2	26–35	22	25.88%
3	36–45	13	15.29%



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4	45 and above	8	9.41%
	Total	85	100%
	GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Male	67	78.82%
2	Female	18	21.18%
	Total	85	100%
	OCCUPATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Student	29	34.12%
2	Salaried Employee (Private)	36	42.35%
3	Self-employed	14	16.47%
4	Government Employee	6	7.06%
	Total	85	100%
	MONTHLY INCOME	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Below 25,000	39	45.88%
2	25,001–50,000	28	32.94%
3	50,001–1,00,000	14	16.47%
4	Above 1,00,000	4	4.71%
	Total	85	100%
	EDUCATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	10th–12th	12	14.12%
2	Bachelor's Degree	49	57.65%
3	Master's Degree	16	18.82%
4	Professional Qualification	8	9.41%
	Total	85	100%
	RESIDENCE TYPE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Rural (Village)	14	16.47%
2	Semi-urban (Town)	27	31.76%
3	Urban (City/Metropolitan)	44	51.76%
	Total	85	100%

Source: Primary data



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From the above table, out of the 85 respondents surveyed, the majority are young adults aged between 18 and 25, reflecting that motorcycle buying decisions are predominantly concentrated among younger demographics. Male respondents dominate the sample at 78.82%, consistent with the historically male-skewed profile of motorcycle consumers in India. A significant proportion of respondents are salaried employees in the private sector, followed by students, highlighting that affordability and value-for-money assessments are central to their evaluation criteria. Most respondents earn below Rs. 25,000 per month, indicating that the mid-segment and entry-level motorcycle categories are most relevant to the sample. Educational attainment is fairly high, with a majority holding a Bachelor's degree, suggesting that respondents are capable of critically evaluating technical information during test drives. Urban and semi-urban respondents constitute the bulk of the sample.

Table 2. Test Drive Participation and Purchase Conversion

SN.	TEST DRIVE STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Participated in test drive before purchase	61	71.76%
2	Did not take test drive before purchase	24	28.24%
	Total	85	100%
	PURCHASE OUTCOME AFTER TEST DRIVE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1	Purchased the same brand/model tested	39	63.93%
2	Purchased a different brand/model	14	22.95%
3	Did not purchase yet	8	13.11%
	Total (Test drive participants)	61	100%

Source: Primary data

The above table reveals that 71.76% of respondents participated in a test drive before purchasing their motorcycle, underscoring the significant penetration of test drive marketing in the purchase journey. Of those who took a test drive, 63.93% subsequently purchased the same brand and model they tested, reflecting a strong conversion rate attributable to the test drive experience. A further 22.95% purchased a different brand or model, suggesting that while the test drive influenced their final decision, it led to comparative evaluation rather than direct conversion for this segment.

Table 3. Key Attributes Evaluated During Test Drive

SN.	ATTRIBUTE	HIGHLY IMPORTANT (%)	IMPORTANT (%)
1	Ride Comfort and Ergonomics	68.85%	22.95%
2	Engine Performance and Pickup	65.57%	26.23%
3	Braking Efficiency	62.30%	29.51%
4	Fuel Efficiency (Real-world Feel)	59.02%	31.15%
5	Handling and Manoeuvrability	55.74%	34.43%
6	Noise and Vibration Levels	47.54%	39.34%
7	Overall Brand Feel and Pride	44.26%	37.70%



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Source: Primary data

The attribute analysis above indicates that ride comfort and ergonomics are rated as the most highly important attribute evaluated during test drives, followed closely by engine performance and braking efficiency. Fuel efficiency, while a primary pre-purchase consideration cited by respondents in their general buying criteria, ranked relatively lower as a test drive evaluation attribute, suggesting that fuel economy is assessed through secondary research rather than direct test ride experience. Brand feel and pride, though ranked last, still command significant importance for nearly 82% of respondents, reaffirming the role of experiential marketing in reinforcing brand associations.

Figure 2: Influence of Test Drive on Purchase Decision (Bar Chart) (Font size-10)

V CONCLUSION

The study establishes that test drive marketing exerts a significant and measurable influence on the buying behaviour of motorcycle consumers in Coimbatore. Over 71% of respondents participated in a test drive as part of their purchase journey, and of these, nearly 64% converted by purchasing the same model they tested. This conversion rate is commercially significant and underscores the return on investment potential of structured test drive campaigns for motorcycle dealers and manufacturers.

The key attributes that consumers evaluate most critically during test drives are ride comfort and ergonomics, engine performance, and braking efficiency — findings that should directly inform how manufacturers set up and brief test drive sessions. Dealers are advised to train sales personnel to guide prospects toward these experiential dimensions during test rides rather than relying solely on specification-led presentations.

The study also finds that younger male consumers from the 18 to 35 age bracket, predominantly in the mid-income segment, constitute the primary target demographic for test drive marketing campaigns. Segmented test drive events tailored to this demographic — conducted on routes that allow genuine assessment of ride quality and performance — are likely to yield the highest conversion outcomes. Future research may examine the impact of digital test drive experiences and virtual reality demonstrations as emerging supplements to traditional test drive marketing in the motorcycle sector.

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