

# Driven by attitude

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**M**ANAGEMENT tomes declare that marketing is all about figuring out what the target consumers' needs are and then finding a way to fulfill those needs. Of course, this calls for developing an understanding of consumer attitudes. Car buyers are no different from other consumers, and their choice of a car is influenced by a variety of factors, based on which they can be divided into groups or clusters that share certain attitudes.

Project Beatle - the Business Line-Indica survey on buying a car - included a cluster analysis of the respondents to figure out the varying attitudes of car buyers and classify them into groups or clusters. Both behavioural and attitudinal data were used for this analysis. Six clusters of varying sizes emerged at the end of this exercise. While there are distinct differences between most clusters, the distinctions between others are very subtle.

## Utility first

Cluster size: 14 per cent

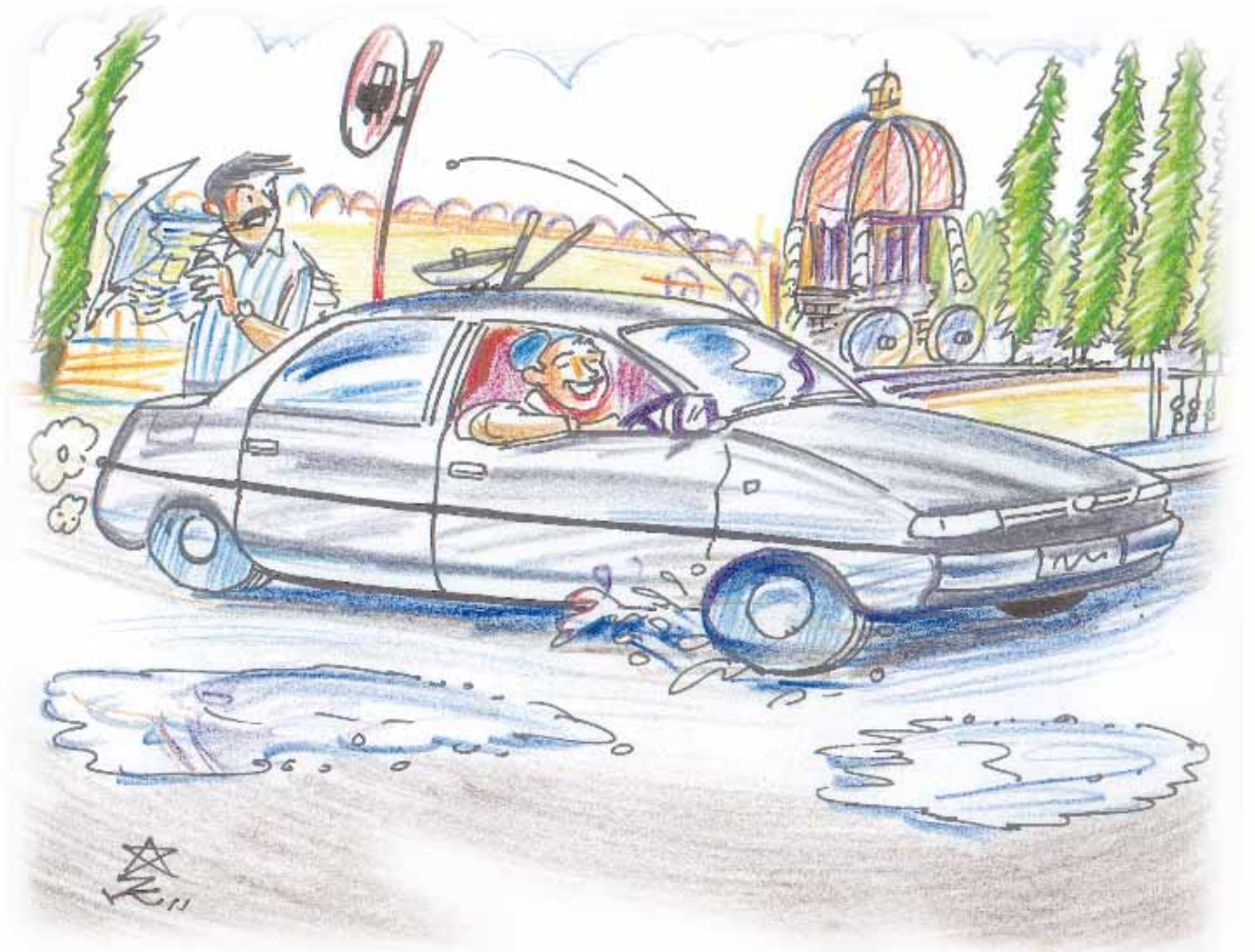
Parag Sharma is your typical utilitarian. And this is reflected in his attitude towards cars. For him a car is simply a means of transport, something that gets him from Point A to Point B quickly and efficiently. And it's efficiency, fuel efficiency to be precise, that concerns Parag the most. The greater the mileage that his car gives, the broader the smile on Parag's face. The availability of spare parts and good after-sales service are two other factors that make him happy.

And at a time when most consumers are highly brand conscious, Parag simply couldn't care about the brand of the car he drives. His evaluation of his 'wheels' is purely functional. And nor is his choice of car a social statement. In fact, he has no desire to own the swankiest

car among his friends, and neither is he the type to change his car every two or three years.

The latest gizmos and gadgets just do not interest him. So you're unlikely to find the latest CD player or mobile phone holder or electronic horn in his car. And you'll probably find him driving himself in a small car, and possibly a second-hand one at that. Perhaps the only vanity he allows himself is the belief that he 'knows cars'. Parag is one person who just does not seem to believe in the adage 'What you drive is who you are'. For him it's more like 'I drive because I need to!'

A majority of this cluster, 60 per cent, comes from New Delhi. Also, among all the clusters the largest proportion of small car owners fall here. The proportion which owns a second-hand car is also the highest in this cluster.



## A 'class' apart

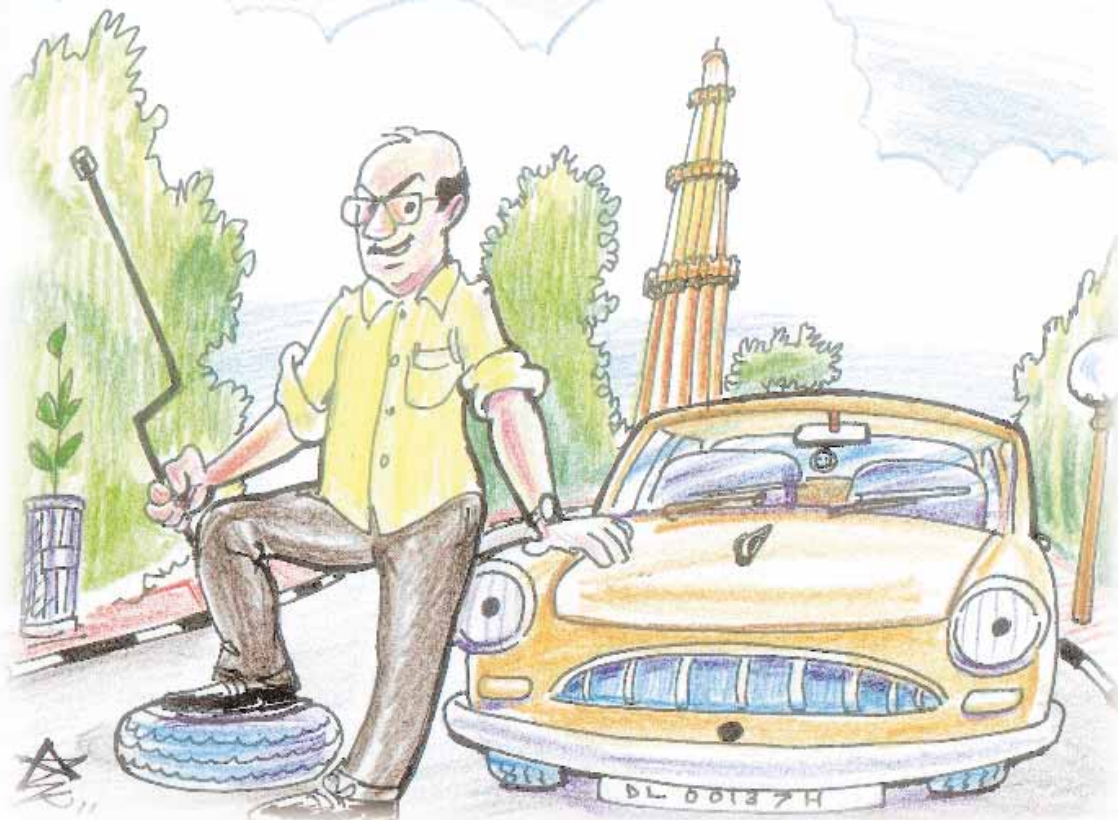
Cluster size: 24 per cent

Ramesh Kumar is the exact opposite of Parag Sharma, at least when it comes to cars. He loves zipping around town in his brand new Korean-made car, and jazzing it up with all those latest imported gadgets.

In fact, for him his car is an extension of his self, an indication of his status, an announcement to the world that he has 'arrived'. So he'd rather buy himself a second-hand Accent or Lancer than a brand new Maruti 800. In fact, Ramesh

believes that he 'needs' a car to fit in with what he fancies to be a 'racy' lifestyle. And, he's full of pride that he has the 'best' car in his social circle, and would be heartbroken if he knew that his 'best friend' Naresh was going to buy an even 'better' car. Ramesh firmly believes that 'you are what you drive'.

The South accounts for a major part of this cluster, with 33 per cent coming from Chennai, and 25 per cent each from Hyderabad and Bangalore. This segment also has the highest proportion of 'new' brands such as Santro and Indica.





### Best is must

Cluster size: 17 per cent

Radha Madhavan is in her late 20s and runs her own little HR consultancy. She's a firm believer in the theory that 'the car you drive tells the world what sort of a person you are'. And like Ramesh Kumar, she loves adding the latest gizmos to her car; her latest acquisition is this absolutely cool music system. And as far as she is concerned, she has to own the 'best' car among her peers.

But hold on before you condemn her as a complete show-off; she is

different. For starters she very firmly believes that the family must have more than one car. She also believes in a comfortable driving experience. So her car will probably have an air-conditioner and comfortable seats. Other things that matter to her are a good pick-up -



for that extra zip - and easy manoeuvrability.

This cluster too is predominant in the South, especially Chennai (34 per cent) and Hyderabad (25 per cent). Those who fall in this segment are also relatively younger. The segment also has the highest proportion of self-employed professionals, and also a relatively higher proportion, 22 per cent, of women decision makers.

### Comfort at what cost?

Cluster size: 15 per cent

Srinivas Rao is just over forty, and is the General Manager of his company. Like many other senior executives he prefers to be driven around in his Zen. However, he does drive himself occasionally. So, what he looks for is driving comfort and a car that is easy to manoeuvre.

The cost of the car matters too - he would have liked to have bought an Astra or an Ikon, but settled for a Zen - as does the availability of a diesel version.

This cluster too is predominantly a Southern phenomenon, with 39 per cent in Bangalore and 28 per

cent in Hyderabad. The people who fall in this cluster are also slightly older and in the middle to senior rung of the corporate ladder. Almost 35 per cent of this group drive a mid-sized car; the highest proportion across the segments.

### Brand-conscious?

Cluster size: 13 per cent

For Dheeraj Jain a car is a functional product, something that transports him around in comfort. He does not believe that a car is a status symbol. Nor does he think that a car is a personal statement. But seeing that he drives a Honda City, you couldn't be faulted for thinking that he is much more brand-conscious than he admits to being. But perhaps this has something to do with the fact that Dheeraj is a successful stock broker who buys top-of-the-line products without really thinking about the message the purchase sends out to others.

Over 60 per cent of those in this cluster are from Mumbai. A good number of the people in this cluster drive luxury and mid-sized cars.



### For that look...

Cluster size: 17 per cent

Rina Sharma runs a boutique that sells expensive designer outfits. She is a firm believer in appearances. As far as she is concerned

the car she drives is a personal statement, an indication of her social status. So the looks of her car matter.

The larger and flashier the car the better. And as for things such as mileage, reliability and so on - Rina just couldn't care.

This segment has the highest proportion of businesspeople and also a large proportion of women in it. It is primarily found in Delhi. The highest proportion across segments drives a luxury car. ■

Please note:  
All the characters in this article are fictitious.