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# Buckle Up: Promoting Seatbelt Usage Through Behavioral Science

*Promoting Seatbelt Usage Through Behavioral Science: A Roadmap for the Indian Automotive Industry*

Ipsos recently published an article titled **'Strapped In: Why Seatbelts are Non-Negotiable!'**, wherein we discussed the importance of seatbelt usage, the reasons behind low compliance in India, and recommendations to improve it. We also explored technological innovations and marketing strategies to promote seatbelt usage. This continues the previous article and delves into behavioral science principles to further enhance compliance.

Despite seatbelt usage being mandated by law, a significant number of people still fail to comply. This non-compliance is often due to a combination of cultural norms, perceived inconvenience, and a lack of stringent enforcement. While the legal framework is in place, behavioral factors play a crucial role in whether individuals choose to adhere to these safety measures. Understanding and

leveraging these behavioral principles is essential to drive higher compliance and ensure road safety.

At Ipsos, we utilize the **MAPPS framework—Motivation, Ability, Processing, Physical, Social**—which provides a comprehensive approach towards understanding and influencing driver behavior

By leveraging the above 5 principles, automotive manufacturers can significantly enhance seatbelt compliance among Indian drivers.

## **Motivation: Driving the desire to buckle up**

Motivation is a key driver in encouraging seatbelt usage. Social interventions and targeted advertising can play a pivotal role in motivating drivers.



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For instance, campaigns such as the 'Safe Roads' by OEMs in the past have successfully raised awareness about road safety. By highlighting the personal benefits of seatbelt usage, such as increased survival rates in accidents, and using emotive storytelling in advertisements, manufacturers can create a strong motivational push.

Moreover, public endorsements from influential figures, such as popular actors or sports personalities, can further amplify the message. For instance, Akshay Kumar's involvement in campaigns against tobacco consumption and for sanitary protection for women has successfully influenced behavior change by leveraging his popularity. Celebrities may participate in these campaigns for free as it enhances their social image and portrays them as responsible role models.

### **Ability: Simplifying Seatbelt Usage**

The next step is to enhance the ability of drivers to use seatbelts effortlessly. This involves addressing any discomfort or inconvenience associated with seatbelt usage. Automotive manufacturers can invest in ergonomic designs that ensure seatbelts are comfortable and easy to use. For instance, innovative seatbelt designs from OEMs that are adjustable and cushioned could help reduce the discomfort often reported by users. A variety in choice of color could be an added lure.

Educational campaigns demonstrating the ease of using seatbelts can also be effective. Simple, instructional videos shared on social media platforms can demystify the process and encourage more drivers to adopt this life-saving habit.

Seatbelt usage campaigns can be effectively run in large residential complexes, fuel pumps, malls, and airports. For instance, setting up interactive kiosks at fuel stations where drivers can pledge to wear seatbelts and receive a small reward, or running awareness drives in malls where seatbelt simulators demonstrate the importance of buckling up during an accident.

### **Processing: Learning Through Survivor Stories**

Processing is about helping drivers internalize the importance of seatbelt usage through real-life examples. The way information is presented, or 'framed,' can significantly impact decision-making. Framing seatbelt usage in a positive light, such as emphasizing the life-saving benefits and peace of mind it provides, can be more effective than focusing solely on the legal requirements or fatalities. By framing seatbelt usage as an act of care and responsibility, individuals may be more inclined to adopt the behavior.





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Marketing campaigns can use positive imagery and messages that associate seatbelt use with care for loved ones and responsible driving.

Survivor stories can be a powerful tool in this regard. Visual storytelling, such as sharing real-life stories of survivors wearing seatbelts, can emotionally engage the audience and drive the point home.

These narratives can be disseminated through various channels, including social media, television, and in-car infotainment systems, reinforcing the life-saving potential of seatbelts.

### **Physical: Integrating Seatbelt Reminders and Technological Innovations**

The concept of 'default options' revolves around making the desired behavior the easiest or default choice. Automakers can incorporate this principle by designing vehicles where seatbelts automatically engage when the car is started or cannot be driven without all passengers buckling up. This removes any effort required to use seatbelts and makes non-compliance a more conscious and deliberate choice, thereby reducing the likelihood of it happening. This approach has been successfully implemented by several manufacturers globally and could be a game-changer in the Indian context as well.

Helping programs for retrofitting older vehicles with modern seat belts can address barriers related to vehicle design, thereby enhancing the principle of ability.

Features such as voice reminders in the voices of family members can create a personalized reminder system. For example, a car that plays a recorded message from a loved one reminding the driver to buckle up can be highly effective.

### **Social: Cultivating a Seatbelt-Friendly Culture**

Finally, social factors could slowly and organically play a crucial role in shaping behavior.

Manufacturers can lead by example, promoting seatbelt usage among their senior employees in digital campaigns. For instance, OEMs could jointly launch a campaign featuring their top executives always wearing seatbelts, setting a precedent for others to follow.

The principle of 'commitment' and consistency posits that people strive to be consistent with their commitments and past behaviors. Encouraging drivers to make a public or written commitment to always wear seatbelts can significantly boost compliance. This can be done through community pledges, social media campaigns, or even in-car reminders that display the driver's commitment each time they start the vehicle. Once a public commitment is made, individuals are more likely to adhere to the behavior to maintain a consistent self-image.

Immediate rewards can be more effective in changing behavior than long-term benefits. Implementing a system where drivers receive instant rewards for buckling up can encourage seatbelt usage.

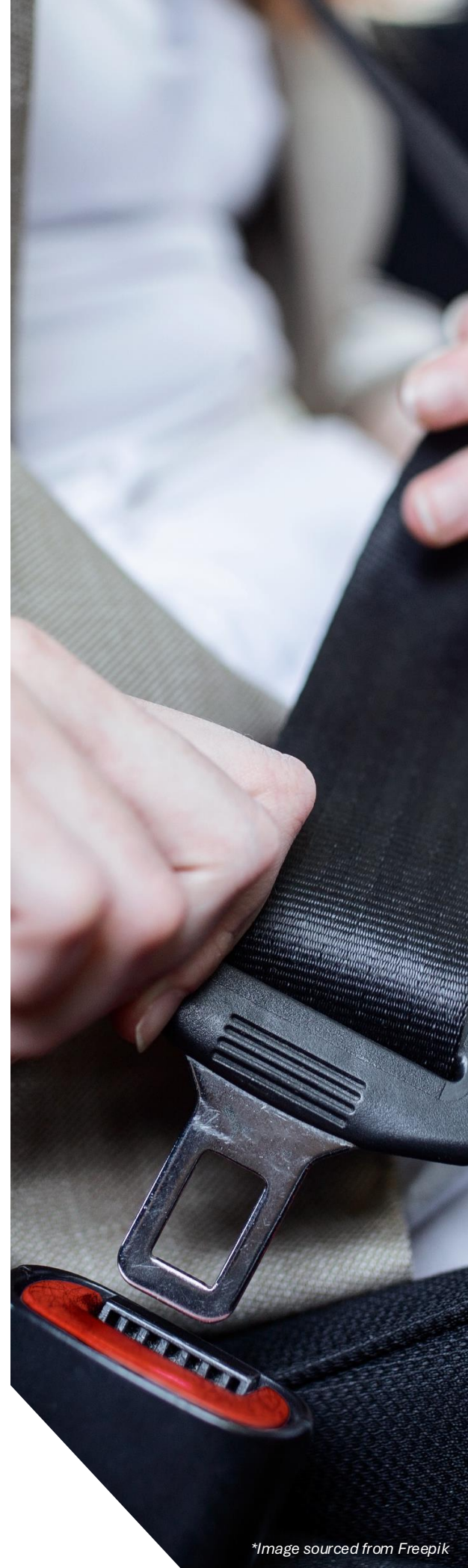
It's also crucial to portray non-compliance with seatbelt usage as uncool and socially unacceptable. This will encourage drivers to wear seatbelts because they would not want to come across as foolish or irresponsible. Campaigns can include messaging that associates not wearing a seatbelt with negative social perceptions.

Moreover, engaging young celebrities to endorse seatbelt usage can make it a trendy and socially accepted behavior and remove the stigma of it being seen as an uncool practice. A campaign featuring young icons like Virat Kohli or Alia Bhatt promoting seatbelts can influence the youth, making them more likely to adopt this practice.

Their influence on the younger demographic can motivate people to comply and drive significant behavior change, making seatbelts a fashionable and responsible choice.

Schools can incorporate programs that teach children about the life-saving capabilities of seatbelts. Educating children can lead them to nudge elders in their family to wear seatbelts and, also raise individuals who understand the importance of seatbelts and comply once they start driving.

As seen in this article, promoting seatbelt usage in India requires a multifaceted approach grounded in behavioral science. By addressing various aspects using behavioral science principles, automotive manufacturers can foster a culture of safety and significantly reduce road fatalities.



*\*Image sourced from Freepik*

A large responsibility of bringing on this change if taken up by the car manufacturers, can really have a great positive impact

The time is ripe for the Indian automotive industry to take the lead in this crucial endeavor, ensuring that every journey is a safe one.

Would you like to delve deeper into any specific aspect of the MAPPS framework or explore strategies for improving seat belt compliance?

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