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What's in a colour?

Once dominated by white cars, Indian roads are now bursting with a rainbow of colors, highlighting a dramatic shift in India's car-buying landscape. Explore the answer to why such a 360-degree shift.

What's in a colour? Probably a lot! And a clear shift in the preferences in colour choices in the automobile industry tells that.

A quick observation of Indian roads and parking lots gives a new and vibrant view into the automotive industry. Once dominated by white cars, the roads are now bursting with a rainbow of colours, from fiery oranges to deep blues, to vibrant reds to sparkling greys, highlighting a dramatic shift in India's car-buying landscape. There is a subliminal shift happening in car colour choices - Why such a 360-degree shift? Probably the answer lies in colour psychology.

For decades, the Indian car market was awash in a sea of white and silver, a testament to the prioritization of practicality over personality. These colours, long perceived as easier to maintain and resell, held a firm grip on the landscape. However, a vibrant and significant shift is underway. Indians, particularly the younger generation, are increasingly

captivated by brighter, bolder car colours, mirroring a global trend of self-expression and a celebration of individuality.

According to data published by Auto Car, the sales of non-white cars have been consistently increasing and have had an upward swing of about 4% increase in share of volume in the last 3 years. Apart from black, colours like grey, blue, and red are also steadily increasing in popularity. If we look at brand communication as well, most brands are increasingly adopting newer and unique shades as colours used in their advertising. Nexa Blue for NEXA cars, Sunlit Yellow for Harrier, Fearless Purple of Nexon, and Khaki for Exter are a few such examples.

So why are Indian consumers ditching White and Silver Cars?

Let's delve deeper into the factors driving this fascinating metamorphosis in consumer preference.

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1. **The End of Monotony: Embracing Individuality**

   The emergence of a new, confident India is vividly reflected in its evolving colour choices. Car buyers, no longer content with the traditional neutrality of white or silver, are harnessing colour as a powerful tool for self-expression. As Indians, especially the younger generations adopt a more global outlook, influenced by the pervasive reach of social media and evolving design trends, their colour preferences are transforming to mirror a more vibrant, dynamic, and individualistic lifestyle.

2. **The SUV Effect: Bold Colours for Bold Vehicles**

   The meteoric rise of the SUV segment stands as a key driver of this colour revolution. SUVs, with their imposing presence and inherent association with adventure and ruggedness, naturally lend themselves to bolder, more striking colours like red, blue, and even orange. These colours serve to amplify the SUV's personality, allowing it to stand out amidst the automotive crowd. OEMs are also capturing the evolving consumer desire and have been quick to capitalize on this trend, offering a more diverse and exciting range of colours specifically designed to complement the bold and adventurous aesthetic of SUVs. And given that SUVs currently enjoy the lion's share in overall sales volume, the impact of the trend can be seen more vividly.

3. **Beyond Practicality: Colour as an Emotional Statement**

   While practicality and the allure of a strong resale value remain important considerations, they are no longer the sole deciding factors for Indian car buyers. Car buyers, particularly those belonging to younger demographics, are increasingly prioritizing aesthetics and the emotional appeal of a vehicle. Colour plays a pivotal role in shaping the perception of a car, evoking feelings of sophistication, sportiness, elegance, or a combination thereof. This deeply personal and emotional connection with colour is driving buyers towards shades that resonate with their style, aspirations, and desire to project a unique image.

4. **The Psychology of Colour: Expression of self-image**

   Colour psychology, though often operating on a subconscious level, plays a subtle yet powerful role in shaping car colour preferences

While white is commonly associated with purity, peace, and cleanliness, it can also be perceived as too ubiquitous, bland, or even linked to taxis in the Indian context, thanks to the widespread presence of Uber/Ola cabs on the road. Black, on the other hand, exudes an aura of luxury, power, and sophistication, making it a perennial favorite for premium vehicles. Brighter, more vibrant colours like red and blue evoke feelings of energy, excitement, and individuality, holding a natural appeal for a younger, more expressive demographic seeking to stand out from the crowd. And as we are moving into the era of Gen Zs getting more financially independent, their vibrant and bold choice of colours will keep becoming increasingly evident.

5. The Influence of Design: Accentuating the Lines

Modern car designs, with their sharp, flowing lines and sculpted bodies, provide a more compelling and captivating canvas for bolder, more expressive colours. A trend that is being brought to prominence with the N-Lines/GT models by the OEMs. These colours serve to accentuate the carefully crafted design elements, creating a more visually impactful and dynamic look that turns heads and sparks conversations. OEMs, recognizing this synergistic relationship between colour and design, are increasingly using colour as a powerful design tool, offering dual-tone options, and contrasting accents to further enhance the vehicle's aesthetic appeal and cater to the evolving tastes of their customer base.

6. Children's Influence Brightens India's Car Palette

Children, naturally drawn to vibrant colours, are playing an increasingly influential role in shifting car colour preferences in India. Their inherent affinity for brighter shades, often expressed openly within families, can sway parents towards considering livelier car colours than they might have initially chosen. This influence is particularly significant in the Indian context, where decisions to select a car are often made collectively as a family. As the younger generation in India grows up surrounded by a wider array of colourful products and experiences, their acceptance of bolder colours is likely influencing their parents' attitudes towards car colours, leading to a gradual shift away from traditional white and silver.

7. The Changing Face of the Indian Car Buyer

The Indian car buyer is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by a younger generation with evolving aspirations and a desire for self-expression.

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This demographic shift is directly impacting car colour choices, moving away from the traditional dominance of white and silver towards a more vibrant and diverse palette. As younger consumers, more exposed to global trends and with increasing purchasing power, enter the market, they are opting for cars that reflect their personalities and preferences. This shift signifies a departure from the conservative automotive choices of previous generations, who prioritized practicality and resale value above all else.

A recent surge in women car buyers, particularly in the used car market, is also challenging traditional notions and impacting colour preferences. As more women gain financial independence and seek greater autonomy, they are choosing cars that reflect their styles and personalities, often opting for bolder colours that defy traditional norms. This growing demographic of car buyers is contributing to the increasing vibrancy on Indian roads, moving away from the monochromatic trends of the past towards a future where car colours are as diverse and dynamic as the people who drive them.

In short, can we say that 'The Future is Colourful'?

The Indian car market is undeniably in the midst of a colourful and exciting transformation. As consumers become more adventurous, expressive, and individualistic in their choices, the long-standing dominance of white and silver is being challenged and steadily eroded. The future belongs to a vibrant and diverse palette of colours, reflecting the dynamism, evolving aspirations, and celebration of individuality that characterizes the new Indian car buyer. This shift towards bolder, more expressive colours is not merely a fleeting trend but a fundamental and enduring change in consumer behaviour, driven by a potent desire for self-expression and a rejection of the mundane.

In conclusion, the Indian car market's shift towards a more vibrant palette signifies a deeper cultural change beyond mere aesthetics. It is a visual testament to a nation shedding its conservative automotive skin and embracing self-expression. As India's narrative continues to be rewritten by a younger, bolder generation, their colourful automotive choices will paint a more dynamic and individualistic landscape on the roads of tomorrow. This is not just a trend; it is a statement of a new India arriving in style!

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