

Experiential Marketing as a Catalyst for Trust and Adoption in Emerging Electric Vehicle Markets

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Abstract

Sustainable mobility agendas center on the transition to electric vehicles (EVs); nevertheless, the proportion of current studies has mainly concentrated on the economic motive, insufficient trust, and low exposure to the EV technologies as the key factors that can drive the intention toward their adoption, yet, relatively little research has been conducted on the role of the experiential marketing as the means of achieving the goal of generating satisfaction and trust that can subsequently be converted into adoption intentions. To fill this gap, the current study will investigate the effects of experiential marketing on consumer satisfaction, brand trust and brand adoption intention of electric vehicles in India. The study utilises reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple regression methods using survey data gathered on 312 future car buyers with prior EV experience. The results show that experiential marketing greatly improves both satisfaction and trust, which positively impact adoption intention, and that the latter is more likely to predict the former. The research would add to the existing body of literature on experiential marketing and sustainable mobility by empirically elucidating the path of experience-trust-adoption in an emerging economy setup and providing managerial and policy implications.

Keywords: Experiential Marketing; Electric Vehicles; Consumer Satisfaction; Brand Trust; Adoption Intention; Sustainable Mobility.

Introduction

Electric vehicles (EVs) have become one of the key solutions to climate change, fossil fuel reliance, and improving air quality in cities (IEA, 2023; Hawkins et al., 2013). Policy incentives, subsidies, and infrastructure development programs have also been launched by governments of countries all over the world to encourage the use of EVs (Wang et al., 2018; Hardman et al., 2017). Although they have been undertaken, consumer acceptance of EVs is reasonably low compared with traditional internal combustion engine vehicles (Rezvani et al., 2015).

Recent studies indicate that EVs are not limited only by economic or infrastructural conditions to occur but also by psychological barriers including the perceived risk, distrust in technology, and uncertainty about their performance, battery life, and availability of charging facilities (Egbue and Long, 2012; Axsen et al., 2016; Jansson et al., 2017). The latter issues are especially relevant in emerging markets, where consumers are not directly exposed to EV technologies. Conventional marketing techniques with their focus on technical features or financial benefits do not always cover such experiential and emotional anxieties (Kotler et al., 2019).

Experiential marketing, with its focus on direct contact, emotional contact and sensory touch, holds a potential remedy to such obstacles (Schmitt, 1999; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Brakus et al., 2009). Test drives, showroom experiences, live demonstrations, and digital simulations enable consumers to experience EVs firsthand, which minimises uncertainty and increases confidence (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Homburg et al., 2017). Nevertheless, there is little empirical evidence that conducts an empirical study to determine the role of experiential marketing in forming EV adoption, particularly by employing simplistic, clear-cut statistical models. This paper addresses this requirement by conducting empirical research on the effects that experiential marketing has on consumer satisfaction, brand trust and adoption intention of electric vehicles within the Indian market.

Contribution and Research Gap

The analysis of available literature shows three gaps. To begin with, although the studies of EV adoption have significantly examined the different factors like cost, infrastructure, policy incentives, and environmental concern (Rezvani et al., 2015; Hardman et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2018), experiential marketing has received limited attention as a psychological and behavioural driver that would alleviate perceived risk and uncertainty (Schmitt, 1999; Brakus et al., 2009). Second, much of the research on experiential marketing has been conducted on high involvement, technology-intensive products, including electric vehicles, and has not been based on empirical research (Axsen et al., 2016). Third, much of the current EV research is based on complicated modelling methods, which could make it less accessible and of practical use to managers and policymakers (Kline, 2015).

This paper bridges these gaps by empirically investigating experiential marketing in the EV setting, illuminating the roles of satisfaction and trust in determining adoption intention, and using simple yet powerful statistical methods that improve interpretability. In this way, the study will be valuable to experiential marketing theory, EV adoption research, and management practice in emerging markets.

Review of Literature

Electric Vehicle Adoption

The literature on EV adoption indicates that the scope of influence is extensive and can include factors such as economic reasons, the lack of charging points, green consciousness, and governmental incentives (Rezvani et al., 2015; Hardman et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2018). Nevertheless, several studies highlight the decisive role of psychological variables in the early stages of market development, including perceived risk, uncertainty, and trust (Egbue and Long, 2012; Axsen et al., 2016; Jansson et al., 2017). Consumers feel that EVs are technologically complicated and dangerous because of the battery durability, maintenance, and resale value (Hackbarth and Madlener, 2016).

Experiential Marketing

Experiential marketing aims to establish meaningful and remarkable experiences that engage consumers' senses, feelings, thoughts, and actions (Schmitt, 1999; Pine and Gilmore, 1998). According to Brakus et al. (2009), the conceptualisation of brand experience is subjective

internal responses aroused by stimuli associated with the brand, which affect consumer attitudes and behaviours. Experiential marketing positively influences satisfaction, emotional attachment, trust, and loyalty, as shown by empirical studies in high-involvement purchasing situations (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Homburg et al., 2017).

Consumer Satisfaction

Consumer satisfaction is the general assessment of a product or service in terms of experiential results as compared to expectations (Oliver, 1999; Anderson et al., 1994). Satisfaction in the case of electric vehicles is not limited to functionality alone but also includes pre-purchase experiences, such as test drives, demonstrations, and interactions with sales representatives (Klaus and Maklan, 2013; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Favourable experiences raise satisfaction and make consumers more willing to adopt them.

Brand Trust

Brand trust can be described as the trust that consumers have in a brand's reliability, integrity, and competence (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). High-risk and technologically advanced purchases like electric vehicles are situations where trust is essential, and consumers should be confident in the brand to deliver reliable performance and after-sales services (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Homburg et al., 2017). Experience marketing can build trust by offering clear, genuine, and consistent experiences that confirm brand assertions and minimise information asymmetry.

Adoption intention

Adoption intention is an indicator of a willingness to use a new technology and is commonly considered a good predictor of real behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Venkatesh et al., 2012). Previous research has shown that the antecedents of adoption intention are mainly characterised by satisfaction and trust (particularly in low-technology marketplaces where uncertainty prevails) (Wang et al., 2018; Rezvani et al., 2015).

Development of Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Hypotheses Development

Experience marketing allows consumers to experience products directly by appealing to their senses and emotions, so they can make accurate judgments about performance and value (Schmitt, 1999; Brakus et al., 2009). This type of interaction is especially crucial in the case of electric vehicles (EVs) since consumer familiarity and perceived risk of technological advancement are low (Rezvani et al., 2015). Accordingly:

H1: Experiential marketing has a strong positive influence on consumer satisfaction in electric vehicles.

Brand trust is a form of consumer confidence in a brand's reliability and credibility, which is of paramount importance in high-involvement and technology-intensive purchases (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Erdem and Swait, 2004). First-hand experience is essential in allowing consumers to test brand claims.

H2: Experiential marketing has a significant impact on brand trust in electric vehicles.

One determinant of behavioural intention is consumer satisfaction, since satisfied consumers tend to develop positive attitudes toward adoption (Oliver, 1999; Ajzen, 1991).

H3: Consumer satisfaction has a positive influence on EV adoption intention.

Brand trust is a risk-mitigation tool used in adoption decisions when uncertainty and long-term commitment are present (Erdem & Swait, 2004).

H4: Brand trust has a positive and significant relationship with EV adoption intention.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

The paper, under the experiential marketing theory (Schmitt, 1999; Brakus et al., 2009), the relationship marketing theory (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) and the technology adoption literature (Ajzen, 1991; Venkatesh et al., 2012), suggests a conceptual model of how EV adoption intention could be influenced by experiential marketing according to satisfaction and trust.

The experiential marketing in the proposed framework is the key stimulus that dictates the internal verdicts that are satisfaction and trust in consumers, which subsequently influences the behavioural responses in the shape of adoption intention. Satisfaction implies evaluative perceptions formed as a result of the experience, and trust reduces perceived risk and uncertainty regarding EV technology.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study.

Figure 1 demonstrates the intended conceptual framework of the research. The model assumes experiential marketing to be an important antecedent of consumer satisfaction (H1) and brand trust (H2). The hypotheses are that both consumer satisfaction (H3) and brand trust (H4) have a positive effect on the adoption intention of electric vehicles. This is based on experiential marketing theory and relationship marketing theory, which place greater focus on experience-based considerations and trust establishment in determining adoption behaviours of high-involvement technologies like electric vehicles.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The current research uses a quantitative, descriptive research design to empirically test the hypothesised relationships between experiential marketing, consumer satisfaction, brand trust,

and electric vehicle (EV) adoption intention. The structured questionnaire method was used because it provides the opportunity to collect data methodically from a relatively large sample and to statistically analyse construct relationships (Malhotra, 2019). Quantitative research is suitable in this case, as the research objectives include measuring perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural intentions and analysing their interdependence using existing statistical methods. The research design is descriptive because it will enable the study to measure the current consumer perception toward experiential marketing and EV adoption without controlling any variables. This methodology is appropriate in the context of new technologies like electric vehicles, whereby it is crucial to understand consumer decisions and appraisals to develop theory and make managerial decisions.

Sample and Data Collection

The study population included the potential car buyers in urban India who were already exposed to electric cars. The number of valid answers gathered was 312. Respondents were selected based on their previous engagement with EVs, which encompassed test driving an electric car, visiting an EV at a dealership or exhibition, or having experienced EV-related information through online demonstrations or virtual tours. This filter was used to ensure that the respondents had experienced at least a basic experiential contact with EVs; hence, their ratings were informed and valuable.

This was achieved by using a convenience sampling method because of the accessibility and time constraints, which is typical in exploratory and new market research (Malhotra, 2019). Even though probability sampling can improve generalizability, convenience sampling is considered suitable when the study seeks to investigate the relationship among constructs rather than estimate population parameters. Since EVs in India are not very penetrative, there is a low possibility of getting a random and completely representative sample of the EV-experienced population. However, the sample size of 312 respondents is more than the minimum required for correlation and regression analysis and hence provides sufficient statistical power.

Measurement Scales

The 5-point Likert scales, with 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (strongly disagree), 3 (strongly disagree), and 4 (strongly disagree), were employed in the study to measure all constructs since it is an easy tool to use in marketing research and consumer behaviour because of its simplicity and reliability.

Ten items measuring sensory, emotional, and cognitive aspects of consumer experience were used to measure experiential marketing. The items were based on the literature on existing experiential marketing and brand experience (Schmitt, 1999; Brakus et al., 2009). The scale captures consumers' perceptions of how engaging, enjoyable, informative, and memorable their experiences with electric vehicles were.

Multi-item scales were used to gauge consumer satisfaction based on respondents' overall perceptions of their experience with electric vehicles, with the scale based on Oliver (1999). The items examined expectations of the EV experience and respondents' general satisfaction with the entire interaction. The measures of brand trust were based on items from relationship marketing literature, especially Morgan and Hunt (1994). The scale was used to measure respondents' confidence in the reliability, credibility, and dependability of EV brands.

The measure of intention to adopt was adapted from items that evaluated respondents' likelihood of thinking about, buying, or suggesting an electric vehicle in the future. These items reflect behavioural intention, which is generally identified as a strong predictor of actual adoption behaviour.

Data Analysis Tools

The statistical SPSS package was used to analyse the collected data. To guarantee rigour and clarity, a multi-step analytical approach was used. First, the basic characteristics of the sample were examined using descriptive statistics. Second, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency and reliability of measurement scales. Third, Pearson correlation analysis was done to investigate the strength and direction of the relationship between the study variables. Lastly, multiple regression was used to examine the relationship between consumer satisfaction, brand trust, and EV adoption intention (Hair et al., 2019).

Results and Interpretation

Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the measurement scales that were used in the study was determined by reliability analysis. Alpha values above 0.70 are acceptable, indicating that the items measure the construct (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 1: Reliability Statistical Results

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Experiential Marketing	0.89
Consumer Satisfaction	0.86
Brand Trust	0.88
Adoption Intention	0.84

The findings show that all constructs have high internal consistency. The highest reliability value was found in experiential marketing ($\alpha = 0.89$), indicating that the items used to measure experiential dimensions have high consistency. There is also strong reliability for consumer satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.86$), brand trust ($\alpha = 0.88$), and intention to adopt ($\alpha = 0.84$). These results prove that the measurement scales are sound and can be further statistically analysed.

Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation analysis was done to identify the relations between experiential marketing (EM), consumer satisfaction (CS), brand trust (BT), and adoption intention (AI).

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

Variables	EM	CS	BT	AI
EM	1			
CS	0.62**	1		
BT	0.58**	0.64**	1	
AI	0.55**	0.61**	0.66**	1

*Note: ** $p < 0.01$*

Some significant insights can be drawn from the correlation results. Consumer satisfaction ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$) and brand trust ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$) have a strong, positive correlation with experiential marketing, which means that more intense experiential experiences lead to better evaluative and relational performance. Experiential marketing is also positively and significantly related to adoption intention ($r = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that experiential marketing indirectly influences the formation of behavioural intentions.

Adoption intention is also positively correlated with consumer satisfaction ($r = 0.61$) and brand trust ($r = 0.66$), but brand trust has the strongest relationship. This finding underscores the significance of trust in decision-making when adopting high-risk, technology-driven products like electric cars.

Regression Results

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the relative influence of consumer satisfaction and brand trust on EV adoption intention.

Table 3: Regression Results – Predictors of Adoption Intention

Predictor	β	t-value	p-value
Consumer Satisfaction	0.34	6.92	0.000
Brand Trust	0.41	8.11	0.000

The regression findings demonstrate that consumer satisfaction and brand trust affect the EV adoption intention statistically significantly and positively. Consumer satisfaction ($b = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$) has a positive effect on adoption intention, indicating that satisfied customers are more likely to consider adopting electric vehicles. Nonetheless, brand trust is the more robust predictor ($b = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that trust is the dominant factor to consider when making EV adoption decisions.

This observation holds true especially in the EV arena, where consumers experience doubt regarding the reliability of the technology, charging infrastructure, and the costs of owning the vehicle in the long term. Trust is a risk-avoiding factor that helps consumers build confidence in the brand as a brand that can perform consistently and be supportive.

Discussion

The empirical data provided in Table 2 (Correlation Matrix) and Table 3 (Regression Results) is quite strong evidence of the centrality of experiential marketing in influencing consumer reactions to electric cars. As indicated in Table 2, experiential marketing is significantly and positively related to consumer satisfaction ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$) and brand trust ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$). These results are empirical evidence to the experiential marketing theory, according to which direct, sensory, and emotional involvement with a product creates positive cognitive and affective assessments in consumers (Schmitt, 1999; Brakus et al., 2009). Experiential experiences in the EV setting, like test drives and live exhibitions, enable consumers to experience the vehicle firsthand and thus minimise ambiguity and increase evaluative confidence.

Additional information can be noted in the multiple regression analysis shown in Table 3 that indicates that consumer satisfaction ($b = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$) and brand trust ($b = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$)

have a significant effect on adoption intention of electric vehicles. Notably, brand trust has a greater influence on adoption intention than satisfaction, which implies that trust plays a decisive role in high-involvement and technologically complex buying decisions. This observation is consistent with technology adoption and signalling theories, which highlight risk-reduction, credibility, and reliability as key elements of adoption in cases of consumer uncertainty (Erdem and Swait, 2004; Wang et al., 2018).

The greater predictive ability of trust shown in Table 3 can be attributed to the individual nature of the electric vehicle market. In contrast to traditional cars, EVs are a fairly new technology for most consumers and can raise long-term questions about battery capacity, the availability of charging stations, car serviceability, and marketability. In this kind of setting, satisfaction based on experiential experiences is not only required but also insufficient; consumers need to gain confidence in the brand's ability to perform consistently and provide after-sales services. This explanation aligns with relationship marketing theory, which characterises trust as one of the pillars in the formation of lasting consumer-brand relationships, especially when perceived risk and information asymmetry exist (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Homburg et al., 2017).

Further, the findings indicate that experiential marketing programs that only emphasise sensory attraction or emotional stimulation are not as effective as those programs that directly convey transparency and trustworthiness. Since the role of experiential marketing in shaping both satisfaction and trust is considerable (Table 2), the strategic importance of this tool lies in combining emotional appeal with trustworthy information related to warranties, service networks, and charging solutions. This type of transparency, which is based on experience, helps consumers to check brand claims by directly engaging in the process, which builds trust and raises the intention to adopt it (Brakus et al., 2009; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

In general, the results in Table 2 and Table 3 support the proposed conceptual framework, as they indicate that experiential marketing has an indirect effect on EV adoption intention via satisfaction and trust, and that trust is a more powerful tool. This empirical study builds upon previous experiential marketing studies in the area of sustainable mobility and supports the thesis that experience-based strategies are especially helpful in speeding up the adoption of a new technology in developing markets (Rezvani et al., 2015; Axsen et al., 2016).

Managerial Implications

The empirical results of this research have practical implications to managers, marketers, dealership operators, and policymakers of the electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem. The findings affirm that experiential marketing is an important influencer of consumer satisfaction, brand trust, and intention to adopt, making it imperative to replace information-based, product-oriented communication with experience-based engagement plans. In emerging markets, this shift is inherent, as EV adoption can be limited by infrastructure as well as psychological factors, including uncertainty, risk perception, and distrust.

Reposition the tool of strategic adoption: Experiential marketing should be considered a strategic mechanism rather than a tactical promotional activity. The positive correlation between experiential marketing and consumer satisfaction ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$; Table 2) proves that experiential marketing is a strong driver of consumer attitudes toward EVs (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt, 1999; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). Extended test drives, experiential

showrooms, and live demonstrations should be priorities for managers so consumers can test EV performance in real-life settings.

Use first-hand experience to suppress doubt and risk perception: Since EVs are a disruptive technology, traditional informational advertisements oriented toward specifications and cost-effectiveness are not always adequate. Field exercises help consumers understand driving comfort, acceleration, noise, regenerative braking, and charging habits, and reduce anxiety about usability and performance (Brakus et al., 2009; Klaus and Maklan, 2013).

Use digital experiential tools to reach more people: Physical experiences, like virtual reality (VR) test drives, augmented reality (AR) vehicle walkthroughs and interactive configurators can be supplemented by digital experiences, especially in markets where there is limited dealership coverage. The similarity of physical and online touchpoints will make experiential marketing a component of the EV customer journey (Verhoef et al., 2021).

Value brand trust as a strategic asset: The results show that experiential marketing is highly rated for increasing brand trust ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$; Table 2) and exerts greater influence on adoption intention ($b = 0.41$) than on consumer satisfaction ($b = 0.34$; Table 3). Trust plays a major role in risk reduction in high-risk, technology-based markets (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Erdem & Swait, 2004). Experience touchpoints associated with managers should allow them to communicate information transparently on battery life, warranties, charging infrastructure, resale values and after-sales support.

Make sure that there is consistency between marketing assertions and reality: Any section of the advertised performance that deviates from the real-world experience can easily undermine trust and subdue adoption intentions. Managers should ensure that marketing, product, and service functions are aligned so that experiential promises are supported by real performance and service levels (Homburg et al., 2017).

Combine emotional involvement and functional assurance: Although trust can better predict adoption intention, consumer satisfaction is also a major factor ($b = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$; Table 3). Experiences created by managers should contain emotional appeal (attractive showroom design and sustainability stories) along with practical reassurance (performance, charging logistics and cost of ownership) (Oliver, 1999; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001).

Empower the dealerships and frontline workers: Frontline interactions are important because experiential marketing influences satisfaction as well as trust. They should educate dealership staff in technical knowledge, empathetic communication, and consultative selling to guide customers through the experiential learning process (Homburg et al., 2017).

Continue consumer experience after the point of purchase: Experiential marketing should be maintained even during purchase, delivery, and after purchase. Onboarding, community engagement programs and post-sale services can strengthen trust and satisfaction, creating long-term loyalty and referrals. Integrate the aspect of experience in the public policy measures: Experience-based programs like trials with public EVs, demonstrations in communities, and educating people can be included in the set of financial incentives and infrastructure development by policymakers to make electric mobility acceptable to society (Rezvani et al., 2015). Experience can be important in expediting the process of transitioning to sustainable mobility (Geels, 2012; White et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This research paper empirically proves experiential marketing to be a critical determinant of consumer satisfaction, brand trust and adoption intention in the electric vehicle market. Based on primary data and the use of simple and powerful statistical tools, the results indicate that experiential marketing can help increase satisfaction and trust, with trust being the more predictive factor of adoption intention. These findings underscore the need to manage psychological obstacles, e.g. perceived risk and uncertainty, by utilising direct and meaningful consumer experiences to address these barriers as opposed to using informational or incentive-based methods.

By applying the theory of experiential marketing to the concept of sustainable mobility, this study will enrich the literature on experiential marketing and electric vehicle adoption, especially in the environment of the new market. The work also provides useful advice to managers and policymakers focusing on experience-based approaches that involve emotional involvement and transparency, reliability and after-sales guarantees. All in all, the results indicate that well-planned experiential marketing programs could become a crucial factor in fast-tracking the process of moving towards sustainable mobility, as they would help to build trust, satisfaction, and long-term consumer loyalty.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite the theoretical and practical contributions, the current study has some limitations that can be identified, which also give guidance to future study. To begin with, the research design adopted a cross-sectional study design, which describes consumer attitudes and intentions at a given time. Although this is an appropriate method to study the relationship between constructs, it does not allow making causal conclusions. Future studies may use longitudinal designs to examine longitudinal shifts in consumer satisfaction, trust, and intention to adopt electric vehicles, especially as consumers gain more experience with electric vehicles.

Second, the research used convenience sampling and targeted consumers in India who lived in urban areas and were previously exposed to electric cars. Even though this sampling method is suitable for an exploratory study of emerging markets, it might not support generalizability to rural consumers or other national settings. Future research should use probability-based sampling methods, and respondents should represent different geographic areas and diversity in socio-economic status to improve external validity.

Third, no objective measures were obtained; thus, self-reported measures may be subject to common method bias and social desirability effects. Even though it was done with the help of established scales and statistical rigour, future studies might include objective behavioural data, such as actual purchase behaviour, dealership records, or experimental designs with real-time experience interventions, to further verify the results.

Fourth, experiential marketing, consumer satisfaction, and brand trust were the target variables and predictors of electric vehicle adoption intention in the present study. Although these variables are considered a significant part of adoption behaviour, other factors that may have been influential, such as perceived cost, availability of charging infrastructure, environmental concerns, social influence, and technological preparedness, were not mentioned directly. These

variables can be incorporated into the conceptual framework of EV adoption in future studies to form a holistic insight into the issue.

Lastly, the research did not test moderating variables, including age, income, environmental awareness, or past experience with technology, which could moderate the effect of experiential marketing on satisfaction, trust, and adoption intention. Future studies would investigate such moderating factors or examine the effectiveness of experiential marketing across various consumer groups and cultures. On the whole, considering these shortcomings will contribute to the development of the body of knowledge on the role of experience-based approaches in facilitating sustainable mobility shifts in emerging and developed marketplaces.

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