

Niche users make Amby evergreen roadi

Rajesh Chandramouli | TNN

Chennai: This is a car which will never die. The relic on Indian roads, Ambassador is getting a fresh lease of life in the troubled times in the auto industry. "Our biggest buyer is the government. Roughly 40% of our sales come from them. Inflation really has no impact on our sales. Our's is a steady market and contrary to perception we are growing now," Amar Singh Rathore, national sales manager, Ambassador, said.

"The beauty of the car that we make is, it just does not have any maintenance issues. The government had shown interest to other manufacturers, but now they are coming back to us," he said and added that the diesel versions were "30% cheaper to maintain" while the petrol ones "does not require any maintenance".

It is precisely for this reason, the government is giving fresh orders to HM. "Last month we got an order from J&K police department for 400 cars. The Delhi government has placed a fresh order for 50 cars, while we have been shortlisted by BSNL," Rathore said.

HM sells some 1,000 cars a month, of which 250 are fitted with petrol engines, 100 with CNG while the rest is diesel. "We will increase our monthly sales numbers by 50% to 1,500 cars soon."

Besides, taxi operators in the south are preferring the Amby over other cars. "Our cars can do 300 km every day on rugged Indian roads, with absolutely no maintenance. It has been proven. Taxi operators are making a comeback to Ambassador. Our cars give 16 km to a litre of diesel.

If an operator drives 185 km a day with the new Amby he will save Rs 5,000 month over the old Amby. Which is why we are launching a scheme in Tamil Nadu today wherein you drive in any Amby in any condition, with RTO endorsement for scrapping it, we waive Rs 35,000 on the new Amby.

This will boost sales in TN from the present 100 cars or so to over 250 cars. A similar scheme will be launched in Kerala tomorrow and it is already operational in Bengal," Rathore said. Truly, never say die. Atleast to this Ambassador. rajesh.c@timesgroup.com

Auto sales lose steam in June

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Yamini Pan

New Delhi: Domestic car sales is heading for a slowdown, hit by high interest rates and inflation, which have dampened consumer sentiment and reduced footfalls. June saw single-digit sales growth at 6.1%, quite a dip from 17% growth in April and 14% in May.

According to figures released by SIAM, car sales in June stood at 99,738 units against 94,002 units in the same month last year. While market leader Maruti Suzuki registered only 2.4% growth, Tata Motors' sales fell 5.4%. However, Hyundai India beat the trend and showed a 34% growth in sales, boosted by its i10 compact.

Car sales are up 12.8% in the April-June quarter, helped by the good offtake in the first two months. June saw motorcycle sales grow in single-digit 8.2% at 4.73 lakh units against 4.37 lakh units in the same month last year.

The acceleration was led by Hero Honda which registered a 16.5% growth in sales even as Bajaj Auto and TVS Motors saw numbers shrinking.

Bike sales in Q1 have grown 7.9%, though most of it is attributed to a low base. Scooter sales failed to keep the momentum and fell 2.1% at 89,809 units from 91,759 units in the same month last year.



SPEED BREAKER

Growth in car and bike sales slowed down to single digit in June, thanks to high interest rates, inflation and tight retail finance

Segment	June'07	June'08	% Change
Cars	94,002	99,738	6.1
Bikes	437,776	473,899	8.2
Scooters	91,759	89,809	-2.1
Commercial vehicles	35,518	40,324	13.5
3-wheelers	31,161	29,804	-4.3
Total sales	751,979	801,605	6.5

Source: SIAM

While leader Honda Motorcycle and Scooter managed to eke out growth, TVS Motors suffered a reversal in numbers. Overall, the automobile industry managed

a growth of 6.5% in June at 8. lakh units. If rates and inflation continue to remain high for some more months, the situation could worsen, analysts said.