

A Study on the Differentiation of Purchasing Demand between China and Japan

-- A Case Study of Suzuki's Withdrawal from Chinese Market

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ABSTRACT

At the end of the 20th century, China has been the world's largest auto market. Many foreign auto giants entered the Chinese market and set up joint ventures with local Chinese companies. Suzuki is one of these companies. But Suzuki's sales have been declining since 2016. In the end, Suzuki sold all of its shares in China, meaning that Suzuki Motor was entirely out of the Chinese market. This essay uses the research methods of focus group, case study, and analysis. The following results were obtained. For the current situation of the automobile industry, from a macro point of view, the Chinese market is still in a state of great space. However, on the other hand, it is also subject to policy constraints, such as number rocking and number restriction. Looking at the development of car enterprises, there is still a big gap between Chinese car enterprises and foreign car enterprises. Throughout the decades of Suzuki's development history in China, the product line is too single, and the model update is slow, and there is no model that consumers like to see. There is no doubt that the wave of car electrification has swept the world and has become an irreversible trend. To solve the problem of Suzuki's losing market, Suzuki must vigorously develop new energy technologies. Because history has told Suzuki to stick to the traditional market, it is ineffective. The conclusions are significant for enterprises to position themselves well and negotiate with customers.

Keywords: *Suzuki, Chinese market, Japanese market, Negotiation*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

Since the car's birth in 1886, the automobile industry has developed rapidly. After entering the 20th century, it has become the primary tool for people to travel. As the country with the most extensive population base globally, China's rapid economic development after the reform and opening policy at the end of the 20th century has also made China the world's largest auto market. Many foreign auto giants entered the Chinese market and set up joint ventures with local Chinese companies. Jeep, Volkswagen, Mercedes-Benz, and Suzuki entered the Chinese market in 1993 as a joint venture with Changan Automobile, called Changan Suzuki. With decades of development, the sales and development of joint venture

car companies in China have been in a rapid growth trend and firmly occupy the mainstream position.

The existence of joint venture auto companies is essential to the Chinese auto market. Its role is to manufacture cars for the Chinese market and provide sufficient technical support for joint ventures to help China develop local automotive technology. The factories of China's joint venture car companies provide many jobs for the local area, which can provide the local government with generous tax revenue. At the same time, it can also enrich the diversity of competition in the Chinese auto market. While other joint venture brands are developing rapidly, the fundamental reason for Suzuki's sad delisting is that the concept of Suzuki Motors conflicts with the Chinese market. Suzuki Motor is a company known for producing compact cars. However, in recent years, the demand for medium and large sedans

or SUVs in the Chinese market has increased, and the space for compact models has been further reduced.

The Wall Street Journal pointed out in the report: The rapid development of the Chinese market will make it more and more challenging to sell weaker foreign brands. As local Chinese brands' technology and image have improved in recent years, domestic brands dominate budget sales. They are eroding the mid-price market that foreign brands once controlled. "Suzuki was too slow to meet customers' demands for model updates," said Jeff Cai, general manager of vehicle quality at JD Power China. "There was nothing new." models launched [1]. Ford Motor Company's sales in China fell by 25% in the first half of 2018 as the company strives to update its product line to keep up with the fast-growing market in China. European and Korean brands have also been losing market share. Fiat Chrysler Automobiles recently withdrew its Fiat brand from the Chinese market—just like Suzuki, an expert on compact cars.

According to Peter J. Buckley and Sierk A. Horn: Japanese Multinational Enterprises in China: Successful Adaptation of Marketing Strategies. Japanese Multinational Enterprises in China: Successful Adaptation of Marketing Strategies. This article lists and studies three Japanese brands that have achieved great success in China: Itô-Yôkadô, Shiseidô, and Toyota [2]. The article pointed out that Toyota's success in China is because Toyota chose to introduce multiple types of models to the Chinese market for consumers to decide freely and actively introduce models of different price points to seize the consumer market at different levels. For example, Toyota sells cheap cars such as Corolla in China to enter the competition of affordable cars and introduces the Lexus brand to seize the high-end consumer market.

In terms of operations, Toyota actively adopts localized marketing methods, which can reflect the needs of Chinese consumers and respond quickly and flexibly to changes in the market environment. Chinese consumers mainly collect information through the Internet.

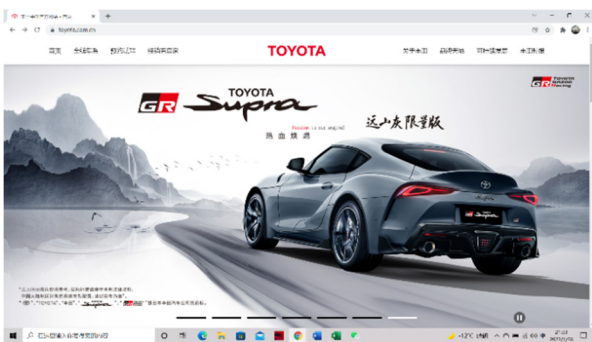


Figure 1 Toyota's website

Therefore, Toyota's website has become a key source of successful marketing communications. Toyota China's website usually displays their new products and corporate news, and consumers can easily compare different models and make reservations for services. This is in sharp contrast to Toyota's strategy in the Japanese market. Japanese consumers' information sources focus more on various media, including TV advertisements and magazine advertisements.

1.2 Literature review

In 2016, the sales champion Volkswagen Group sold 3.339 million Sedans in the Chinese market, accounting for 27.48% of Sedan's sales in the same year. In 2016, sport utility vehicles (SUVs) continued the rapid growth of the previous year, with cumulative sales exceeding 9 million vehicles reaching 9.047 million vehicles, setting a new record high with a year-on-year increase of 44.6%, a faster growth rate than the previous year. [3] The Wall Street Journal pointed out in the report: The rapid development of the Chinese market will make it more and more challenging to sell weaker foreign brands

1.3 Research gap

Most scholars mainly study the modern automobile industry, such as new energy vehicles. As the vice minister of science technology, Xiang was interviewed at the conference in 2021, which refers to the comprehensive marketization strategy of new energy vehicles under the prospect of carbon neutralization. The whole interview was published as research results in Hainan Journal. Their research topic described how to promote energy conservation and emission reduction in the whole life cycle and the industrial chain systematically and collaboratively. At present, it has become an international consensus to strive to achieve carbon neutralization. The carbon emission of road traffic with the automobile as the main body accounts for about 20% of the total. Some experts believe that the auto parts industry is an essential part. Thus, the Chotau consultant carried out the auto parts industry's investment analysis and prospect prediction report. There were 4-6 detailed subtitles and survey directions in each chapter. For instance, the sixth chapter mainly analyzes the development trend of the automobile audio industry. Experts refine the contents of the chapter from the perspective of audio market consumption, development strategy, and prospect. According to the progress of international trade, Aman and her team studied the evolution and development model of China-Japan Automobile Industry. They put forward the view that many countries and regions take the automobile industry as a leading pillar industry due to the particularity of the development of the automobile industry. Plenty of information is beyond our consideration when we understand the automotive industry. Through dozens of

research papers and reports, there are international automobile industry analyses, market development in different countries, and even the comparison and cooperation of trade between two countries. However, there are few research directions on the differences in purchase demand in the automobile industry in both China and Japan, two countries with more developed automobile industries.

1.4 Research framework

First, we will begin the process of Suzuki Motor Company's exit from the Chinese market. Suzuki's exit from the Chinese market is foreboding, and it is a gradual process. Through data analysis, we will show the whole process of Suzuki Motor company's declining sales until its final withdrawal from the Chinese market. Secondly, through the background analysis of Suzuki's withdrawal from the Chinese market, the reasons for this event are summarized. It includes the characteristics of Suzuki, the typical characteristics of Japanese auto brands, the characteristics of the Chinese auto market, and Chinese auto companies. The orientation of Chinese and Japanese people to buy cars is also one of the issues we pay attention to. We will analyze the conditions that guide people to buy Chinese or Japanese vehicles and explore what preferences make them make different choices. This selection process is between the car company and the customer. Finally, we will examine the implications of this incident. What can car companies do to win consumers' hearts and minds? How to use the characteristics of different types of customers to negotiate with them? What should brands be aware of when entering another country's market? Those are all the points we care about.

2 METHODS

2.1 PEST

PEST is the macroeconomic analysis method composed of four elements: politics, economy, society, and technology.

(1) Political elements include but are not limited to laws, government attitudes, government tax policies, government situation.

(2) Economic elements mainly include GDP, per capita GDP, inflation rate, unemployment rate, per capita disposable income.

(3) Social elements mainly include birth rate, death rate, social security, education level, happiness index, customs and culture, resident quality.

(4) Technical elements mainly include the national support policies for innovative technologies, the popularity and investment of the latest technologies in the

industry (such as 5G, artificial intelligence), enterprise technology R & D investment.

The above factors are the macro factors that enterprises or brands need to consider when entering a market. They are important determinants to determine the success of enterprise localization or development.

Through the PEST analysis method, the author will objectively analyze various factors when Suzuki Automobile enters the Chinese market, which determines whether Suzuki Automobile localization can succeed to a certain extent.

2.2 SWOT

SWOT is the Boston Analysis, also known as the Dauth Matrix. It consists of four elements: S-strengths, W- weaknesses, O-opportunities, and T- threats. In practice, we usually use SWOT to analyze the enterprise's internal and external situations.

If an enterprise is in such a state, it is suitable for enterprises/brands to make decisions to maximize investment and promote advantage amplification. If it is an enterprise in ST state, it is suitable for the enterprise/brand to consider a diversified layout strategy to deal with the threat. If it is an enterprise in WO state, it is suitable to consider making direction adjustments and meet new opportunities. If it is an enterprise in WT state, it is suitable for the enterprise to minimize the contraction strategy and seek new opportunities.

Through SWOT analysis, we can know the position of the enterprise in the comprehensive environment. It is convenient for the enterprise to make targeted decisions. Moreover, the author will deeply analyze the internal environment and external environment of Suzuki Automobile. Objectively evaluate its state-WT, and conclude that Suzuki should minimize the contraction strategy and seek new opportunities.

3. RESULTS

For the current situation of the automobile industry, from a macro point of view, the Chinese market is still in a state of great space. The number of cars is low, the per capita disposable income is growing, and people's consumption of cars will increase. However, on the other hand, it is also subject to policy constraints, such as car plate lottery system and the policy of traffic restrictions. Car sales will increase but will not increase sharply. Looking at the development of car enterprises, there is still a big gap between Chinese car enterprises and foreign car enterprises. First, the concentration of car enterprises is low. There are more than 80 Chinese car enterprises, 3 in the United States and 9 in Japan. Foreign countries take the style of large brands and more products, while China takes the style of small brands and fewer products. In addition, the asset scale of Toyota, GM, and

Ford is much larger than that of Chinese auto enterprises, about 33 times that of Geely. This leads to its high-profit level (except for Ford's poor performance in 2019). However, domestic automobile enterprises' R & D investment was still meager 18 years ago, about 1.8%.

In contrast, most foreign automobile enterprises were about 3%. Presumably, domestic automobile enterprises also survived to reduce costs, which also delayed product innovation ability. Geely's R & D investment was above 3% in 2019, and product innovation may be effective in the past two years. For domestic auto enterprises, in addition to developing their industries, there is also a trend of investment, and M & A. Geely and BAIC take shares in Daimler, holding a total of 15%. Chinese auto enterprises may move towards a new development direction, perhaps win-win cooperation, or selling horse meat as beefsteak. In short, it may break the existing deadlock.

The influence of Chinese brands in the world is far from enough. It is undoubtedly a better outcome for Chinese auto enterprises to gain a firm foothold at home and expand globalization. For foreign auto enterprises, the products are mature, and the brands are mature. But seizing the Chinese market is still a top priority. The first thing is to ensure the quality. [8]First, the rise of China's consumption power and consumption level will bring greater opportunities to the luxury industry. Second, China's automobile market is still not saturated. It may not be possible to develop targeted products suitable for Chinese consumers in response to China's environment and culture. The future development direction.

According to the China Automobile Industry Association statistics, since the second half of 2018, the sales volume of passenger cars has decreased compared with the same period of previous years. From January to February 2019, the sales volume of passenger cars continued the downward trend, and the sales volume of passenger cars in February was 1.22 million.

In 2018, SAIC Volkswagen and FAW Volkswagen ranked first in terms of sales volume, with a sales volume of 2.0651 million and 2.037 million respectively, and SAIC-GM ranked third with a sales volume of 1.9696 million. The sales volume of Geely holdings, a domestic auto enterprise, reached 150.08, an increase over last year, ranking fifth in sales volume. In 2018, the proportion of sales volume of the top ten car enterprises increased, reflecting that consumers pay more attention to head brands.

According to the survey results of "automobile dealer inventory" released by the China Automobile Circulation Association, the inventory coefficient of automobile dealers reached the warning level in each month of 2018, reflecting the high automobile inventory of dealers and increased capital pressure.

As the automobile industry enters the stage of the stock competition, the city's traffic and licensing restrictions, the post-90s, and post-00s have become new market consumers, and automobile sales will face new challenges[9]. The main challenges automobile sales enterprises face are understanding the needs and preferences of new consumer groups, innovating and precision marketing, reaching customers effectively, and strengthening delicate operation and customer relationship maintenance.

3.1 Overall portrait of visitors to national automobile 4S stores

According to the statistical results of Aurora big data, 66.9% of the male visitors and 33.1% of the female users of automobile 4S stores in China. Regarding age distribution, visitors aged 26-35 accounted for 59.2%, those aged 16-25 accounted for 23.8%, and those aged 36-45 accounted for 11%.

According to the statistical results of Aurora big data, in terms of visitor app preference of automobile 4S store, palm reading ranked first with a preference index of 57.1. And iFLYTEK simultaneous interpretation ranked second with a preference index of 52, and the most beautiful weather ranked third with a preference index of 50.2.

3.2 Portraits of visitors to automobile 4S stores at different city levels

According to the statistical results of Aurora big data, the proportion of male visitors to 4S stores in first-tier cities is 71.4%, higher than that in new first-tier and second-tier cities. The proportion of male visitors to 4S stores in new first-tier cities is 67.8%, and that in second-tier cities is 67.2%. Regarding age distribution, the proportion of visitors over 35 years old in first-tier cities is higher than that in other cities.

According to the statistical results of Aurora big data, the app preferences of 4S store visitors at different city levels are slightly different. Regarding visitor app preference of 4S stores in first-tier cities, peanut subway ranked first with a preference index of 68.9, Moby bike ranked second with a preference index of 67.5, and Guangdong mobile phone business hall ranked third with a preference index of 66.8. In terms of visitor app preference of 4S stores in new first-tier cities. When the car comes, it ranks first with a preference index of 61.2. In terms of APP preferences of 4S store visitors in second-tier cities, Handheld Travel ranked first with a preference index of 58.3.

3.3 Portraits of visitors to 4S stores of different grades of cars

According to the statistical results of Aurora big data, the proportion of male visitors to luxury car 4S stores is 69.1%, and the proportion of male visitors to ordinary car 4S stores is 67.1%. In addition, the proportion of visitors aged 26-35 in luxury car 4S stores is 63%, and that in ordinary car 4S stores is 59.4%; The proportion of visitors aged 16-25 in ordinary car 4S stores is 23.7%, and that in luxury car 4S stores is 20.2%.

According to the statistical results of Aurora big data, the high-income level of luxury car 4S store visitors accounts for 15.6%, and the middle-income level accounts for 45.6%. The high income of visitors to ordinary 4S stores accounted for 12.5%, and the middle income accounted for 44.7%.

According to the statistical results of Aurora big data, the top three visitors' app preferences of luxury car 4S stores are contact management platform, business card omnipotent, automobile information platform, automobile home, and e-book platform. Financial management prefers China Merchants Bank and handheld life, and fresh e-commerce prefers box horse. Concerning visitor app preference of ordinary car 4S store, palm reading ranked first with a preference index of 57.9, iFLYTEK simultaneous interpretation ranked second with a preference index of 52.6, and the most beautiful weather ranked third with a third preference index of 50.7.

3.4 Portraits of visitors to 4S stores of different brands of cars

According to the statistical results of Aurora big data, male visitors accounted for 68.3% of the joint venture 4S store, slightly higher than the visitors to the independent 4S store. In terms of age distribution, visitors aged 26-35 in the joint venture 4S store accounted for 61.1%, higher than that of autonomous vehicles; The proportion of visitors aged 16-25 in the 4S store of self-owned cars accounted for 23.6%, higher than that of joint venture cars.

According to the statistical results of Aurora big data, high-income visitors accounted for 12%, and middle-income visitors accounted for 45.1%. The high-income level of visitors to the joint venture 4S store accounted for 13.4%, slightly higher than that of independent cars; Visitors at the middle-income level accounted for 45.4%, basically the same as autonomous vehicles.

Suzuki has always taken "small car" as its development strategy, and its models cover micro and small size of cars. Since the launch of the first small SUV, Vitra, the young and fashionable appearance marks the transformation of Suzuki into a younger route. The performance of the new product market is not only

related to the product itself but also contain how to develop the channel. For the channel planning, the deputy general manager of Suzuki said: "we will start to reanalyses and improve the channel. What we need now is a competitive channel that can make the brand stronger".

Adjust the marketing system in many aspects - in 2016, Suzuki put forward the strategy of "stimulating young plan", which will focus on five aspects: brand, product, marketing, channel, and service. In terms of marketing, Suzuki will hold a series of activities. "We have started to do the car club now. From next month, we will hold music-themed activities to communicate with our consumers with music. The new visual system will make it younger and fashionable, which is also a change. We will make some modifications to all other models".[10]

Vitra will give full play to its product competitiveness - Suzuki Vitra is located in a small SUV, continuing Suzuki's tough style. The appearance adopts a lion roar front face, double banner air inlet grille, and chrome-plated material decoration, which is more fashionable and atmospheric. "At present, the sales volume of Vitra is about 4000 units a month. We are preparing to add two new 4WD models. Based on the professional requirements of SUVs, we want to set a benchmark in the small SUV market. Consumers may not fully recognize the product potential of Suzuki. What Vitra needs to do now is to sell its products through marketing give full play to Suzuki's competitiveness in the mini and small size car market. Suzuki's marketing skills or all aspects bring the product's advantages into full play.

In addition to these positive marketing strategies, Suzuki has been working hard in the market for many years by Alto models in China. Consumers have formed a low-end concept of the Suzuki brand. Brand experts said that Suzuki wants to break through this situation and is confused about its product positioning. The competition between the two models of swift Tianyu shows this problem. After the Tianyu SX4 was launched at a low water price of 79800 yuan, compared with the price of 81800 yuan for the swift 1.5L model, the more attractive SX4 has a price advantage of 2000 yuan. This price makes Tianyu SX4 "strangle" Swift's sales space. "The pricing of SX4 premium model gives consumers who have initially been prepared to buy swift a new choice, resulting in a sharp decline in speedy sales. If the price of swift continues to decline, it is bound to affect the sales of the new Alto.[11]

4. DISCUSSION

Suzuki has a wealth of experience in the manufacture of minicars. This is due to the local consumption environment in Japan, with narrow roads, lack of resources, and every inch of money. K-Car is also a

unique model in the Japanese market. Among them, Suzuki has the largest sales volume. The innate environment has created the unique brand development idea of the Suzuki brand. The products have regional characteristics and also have great limitations. Throughout the decades of Suzuki's development history in China, the product line is too single, and the model update is slow, and there is no model that consumers like to see. In the early days of reform and opening up, the boutique car strategy contributed to the "marriage" between Suzuki and the Chinese market, and the early life was very good. After entering the 21st century, the Chinese market is developing rapidly. Consumers no longer have a strong demand for small cars. Bigger, more spacious, more luxurious, and smarter are the core of promoting product upgrades.

After China's delisting, Suzuki concentrated on developing the Indian market. But even if India is Suzuki's current main market, Suzuki's sales are not satisfactory. In the Indian automotive market, SUVs (multi-purpose sports vehicles) are the most popular among Indian consumers, with a market share of about 30% or more. The fundamental reason is that Suzuki has not caught up with the trend of generations. Nowadays, there are two major trends in the choice of cars in the world—electric and SUV.

There is no doubt that the wave of car electrification has swept the world and has become an irreversible trend. The California region of the United States and the Chinese market are the most significant driving forces. In addition, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Japan have also clearly announced the timetable for the ban on the sale of internal combustion engine vehicles." Many traditional car companies have launched pure electric models, such as Honda, Mazda, and Volvo. These car companies have also clearly stated the deadline for producing fuel vehicles. However, Suzuki's exploration in the electric vehicle market is still basically at a blank stage. In order to solve the problem of Suzuki's losing market, Suzuki must vigorously develop new energy technologies. Because history has told Suzuki to stick to the traditional market, it is ineffective. Data shows that by the end of 2019, the global cumulative sales of electric passenger vehicles has exceeded 7 million, while traditional hybrid passenger vehicles were used almost twice that year. It took time to break the 7 million mark. As of the end of 2019, China's cumulative sales of electric passenger vehicles reached 3.66 million, accounting for 48% of the global total, ranking first in the world. The countries ranked 2-10 are The United States, Germany, Norway, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Canada, Japan, and Sweden. These leading markets actively promote the local promotion of electric vehicles by adopting automobile regulations, fiscal and tax incentives, charging infrastructure construction, and consumer-oriented publicity and promotion activities.

Suzuki can solve the current dilemma only by embracing the future in the rapid growth of electric vehicles [4].

SUV as a trend of car selection is nothing new. Before 2000, the global mainstream models were ordinary RVs and MPV models, but suddenly many SUV models appeared. Therefore the focus of the global market suddenly became SUVs. The most classic was the Porsche Cayenne. The market is not optimistic about this SUV, but it has become Porsche's turnaround. Therefore, various manufacturers hope to boost SUVs sales, and even Lamborghini plans to launch the first SUV. This shows the importance of SUVs to the automotive market. In the European and American markets, SUVs are so popular because, in addition to carrying a large amount of luggage, they also have a particular off-road capability, which is not possible with RV and MPV models. The popularity in the Asian market is because most of the national roads in Asia are not well developed, so it is difficult for the same RV model to drive on such road conditions. Hence, the best choice for residents is also an SUV. At present, the popularity of mainstream car companies to launch SUV models is far greater than that of cars. However, Suzuki is still sticking to the small car market and is far less aggressive in developing and launching SUVs than its competitors. This is highly detrimental to the company's future development. Suzuki was forced to withdraw from China because it had too few choices of SUV models, and the replacement was extremely slow. This has led to the lack of attractiveness of Suzuki cars for consumers when they buy new cars. Looking at it now, Suzuki has encountered the same problem in the Indian market. Therefore, increasing investment is extremely important for the research and development of SUVs.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Findings

For the current situation of the automobile industry, from a macro point of view, the Chinese market is still in a state of great space. The number of cars is low, the per capita disposable income is growing, and people's consumption of cars will increase. However, on the other hand, it is also subject to policy constraints, such as number rocking and number restriction. Car sales will increase, but will not increase sharply. Looking at the development of car enterprises, there is still a big gap between Chinese car enterprises and foreign car enterprises. First, the concentration of car enterprises is low. In addition, the asset scale of Toyota, GM, and Ford is much larger than that of Chinese auto enterprises, about 33 times that of Geely. This leads to its high-profit level (except for Ford's poor performance in 2019). In short, it may break the existing deadlock. The influence of Chinese brands in the world is far from enough. It is undoubtedly a better outcome for Chinese auto

enterprises to gain a firm foothold at home and expand globalization. For foreign auto enterprises, the products are mature, and the brands are mature. But seizing the Chinese market is still a top priority (but the first thing is to ensure the quality. Ford's poor quality is also one of the reasons for his sharp decline in sales). First, the rise of China's consumption power and consumption level will bring greater opportunities to the luxury industry. Second, China's automobile market is still not saturated. It may not be possible to develop targeted products suitable for Chinese consumers in response to China's environment and culture. The future development direction. Consumers' preference for the independent market includes the following points: First, brand awareness. Second, the store is close and convenient. Third, the formal degree of door decoration. [6]Throughout the decades of Suzuki's development history in China, the product line is too single, and the model update is slow, and there is no model that consumers like to see. In 2020, the production and sales of new energy vehicles will reach 1.366 million and 1.367 million respectively, up 7.5 percent and 10.9 percent respectively. [7] There is no doubt that the wave of car electrification has swept the world and has become an irreversible trend. In order to solve the problem of Suzuki's losing market, Suzuki must vigorously develop new energy technologies. Because history has told Suzuki to stick to the traditional market, it is ineffective.

5.2 Significance

As the automobile industry enters the stage of the stock competition, the city's traffic and licensing restrictions, the post-90s, and post-00s have become new market consumers, and automobile sales will face new challenges. The main challenges automobile sales enterprises face are understanding the needs and preferences of new consumer groups, how to innovate and precision marketing, how to effectively reach customers, and how to strengthen refined operation and customer relationship maintenance. It has promoted the development of the automobile industry and Suzuki Company.

5.3 Limitation and future study

First, this paper mainly uses second-hand data and lacks first-hand data. A questionnaire survey will solve the future. Secondly, related literature is seldom used in this paper, and more literature materials will be added and cited. Finally, the analysis of the problems in this paper is not deep enough. These issues need further analysis.

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