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Four capable cars that never picked up consistent sales by Sahil Wadhwa

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There are some distinguished car models in the country today that have been appreciated for their features and elegance. But call it their ill-luck, very few consumers or only a handful of true enthusiasts want to drive these home. The celebrated list includes Fiat Linea sedan, Ford Fiesta, Skoda Fabia and Fiat Punto hatchback. These vehicles have technically forward engines, utterly astounding looks and extremely good drivability and to top it, a great fan following in the country. But that does not seem to be enough to boost their sales. Hereâ€™s a look at whatâ€™s wrong with these valued models and some changes that can improve their performance:

Fiat Linea Sedan

It was launched in the year 2009 and got the kind of acclaim that none of the other Fiat sedans have been able to garner in India till date. The factors that worked in its favour were its solid build, bold appearance, some leading features inside the cozy cabin and, not to forget, the matchless Italian engineering under the bonnet. With the launch of the New Linea 2012, some shortcomings were also taken care of. However, the after-sales service, limited dealership network and alliance with Tata Motors have affected it negatively. These flaws have not only hit sales badly, but also the image of Fiat in India. The average sale per month since January 2012 has been 383 units; while last month, i.e. in May 2012, it recorded a sale of 287 units. To regain its lost pride, Fiat has now decided to go for standalone dealerships in India, which will certainly show results.

Ford Fiesta

The 2011 all-new Ford Fiesta was welcomed whole-heartedly, as it boasts of futuristic features such as advanced voice-command and cruise controls along with athletic kinetic design language and some optimum safety elements. But when its price was announced, there was sheer disappointment for Ford enthusiasts. The price part was way high for the segment. Currently, its competitors like Hyundai Verna are leading with great numbers. Its limited after-sales service points also hurt the business. However, the company recently started expanding its network aggressively in the country. Meanwhile, a cheaper variant of Fiesta has come out along with the effectual AT version, which is desperately needed and will surely work for the better in coming times. For Ford Fiesta, the average sale each month has accounted for 187 units since January 2012. Moreover, in May it sold 257 units.

Skoda Fabia

The full-sized Czech hatch has everything from fantastic choices of petrol/diesel engine in various displacements to optimum luxury inside its feature-filled cabin and real premium looks to exceptional manoeuvrability. So what does it lack? To some extent, it has questionable mileage and to a major extent, Skodaâ€™s shoddy service along with high-maintenance costs is to blame. Although the company has a â€˜Skoda Shieldâ€™ that carries a 4-year maintenance, roadside assistance and extended warranty, but the service still lacks dependability. Here the high-pricing is also a concern, which could have been rectified/brought down with launch of the â€˜Scoutâ€™ variant, but in vain. The sales are getting sluggish every passing month. A better example in this category is Honda Jazz, which was re-launched with a price-cut and enjoys towering salesâ€”from mere 535 units in March, it recorded nearly 1948 units in May, a marvellous jump. Between January â€™12 and May â€™12, it sold a total of 3491 units, averaging 698 units each month, whereas 304 units were sold last month.

Fiat Punto hatchback

It is an incredible power-train that performs way ahead in the segment, has amazing and non-edgy exterior designing along with civilized interiors that can make any car feel small. However, it never scaled the sales-heights it deserved, although it has always been neighboursâ€™ envy and ownersâ€™ pride. In the past 15 years, Fiat has launched only 5 models namely Uno, Siena, Palio, Linea and Punto. The hatchbacks Uno, Palio and Punto were one-of-its kind at the point when they arrived, and actually took the market by a storm. For instance, Fiat Uno sold nearly 3 Lakh units. But the shoddy after-sales service and strictly limited number of trims in each segment has led to Puntoâ€™s depriving sales numbers. In May â€™12, there were 715 Puntos sold, which averages to sales of 1062 Puntos each month if calculated since January 2012. At this juncture, the launch of an Indianised version of Fiat Panda can be a better option, which will add variety to consumer choice. So, Punto will take-on Hyundai i20 and Skoda Fabia, whereas Panda will rival Maruti Swift and Ford Figo.

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