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The Electric Car Charging Market in Latvia: A Qualitative Portrayal

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to understand the Latvian electric car owner's charging behavior, needs, and preferences in order to develop a marketing strategy for a new comer company to successfully market its services there.

Methodology: There is very little to no research about electric car charging and electric car owner behavior in Latvia. Hence, due to its exploratory qualities, the qualitative research method was chosen. The data collection method was chosen to be semi-structured interviews with electric car owners in Latvia. For data from the interviews to be analyzed, qualitative content analysis was applied.

Results: The research gave diverse insights about Latvian electric car owners, their charging behavior, needs and preferences:

- Most Latvian electric car owners bought an electric car because of the financial aspect, thus, when making such decisions, they do not only look at the short-term benefits, but also assess the long-term effects.
- Electric car owners in Latvia charge their cars either through a home socket, through a home wallbox, or with fast public chargers.
- During the research it was evident that the Latvian market is still relatively uneducated about electric car charging, which was concluded from the still-existent myths and unawareness of the risks involved with charging an EV through a home socket, as well as unawareness of the possibility to install a wallbox near an apartment building.
- Electric car owners, who did not have a charging station, said that they either did not have a possibility to install it, or did not have a need for such a device. However, most of them were willing to buy a charging station in the future if they moved to a house, drove longer distances daily, or bought an electric car with a bigger battery.

- Recommendations play a huge role in the Latvian EV owners' community.
- When it comes to choosing a specific charging station company, pricing is important for Latvian EV owners, as well as the flexibility of the company, customer-centric approach and all-in-one service.

Research limitations: The main limitation is related with the number of interviews that were conducted: 10. Although it is a qualitative research which values more the depth analysis than the quantity, it could still benefit of having more respondents. The search for interviewees, as well as the interviews themselves, were made in the English language. Some people might have not responded just because they were not confident in their English skills for an interview. For further research, it is suggested to approach people, as well as conduct the research in a language that the respondents are most comfortable with. It would be an opportunity to tap into a group that was not touched by this research.

Originality: As far as we know this is the first study intended to characterize the electric car charging market in Latvia.

Keywords: Electric car charging, Charging station, Latvian market, Marketing Strategy

