

Research Project Information Sheet

An Evaluation of the Franchise Model in the Australian Automotive Industry

Ethics Approval Number: **S201409**

Research Team Contact Details

The research team consists of Chief Investigator Professor Lorelle Frazer (University of the Sunshine Coast), the Co-Investigator Dr. Wayne Graham, and the Student Investigator Adiba Fattah.

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Project Description

With the current debate surrounding the fairness of the Australian Franchising Code of Conduct (the Code), and the allegations of the Australian Automotive Dealers Association (AADA) against the abuse of power and control in favour of their franchisors, it is important to evaluate the suitability of the current franchising model in the context of the Australian automotive industry.

The purpose of this research project is to investigate the dynamics of franchising relationship between new car dealers and car manufacturers. In particular, we are looking at some of the aspects of this relationship, which relate to the levels of trust and control shared within the franchise system, the possible conflict as well as the balance of power between both parties. Moreover, this research project is also looking at the suitability of the current franchising regulatory framework in overseeing the Australian automotive industry.

If you are a dealer principal operating a car dealership which sells one or more car brands in one or multiple locations, you are invited to participate in this research project.

If you are a spare parts manager, a service manager, or a sales manager in a car dealership selling one or more car brands, you are invited to participate in this research project.

Participation

If you agree to participate in this research project, you will be asked to complete an interview with Adiba Fattah. The interview may be done in-person or by telephone at a mutually convenient time. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes and will ask questions such as:

1. How would you describe the relationship between car manufacturers and their dealers?
2. What do you think of the Australian Automotive Dealers Association (AADA) allegations against car manufacturers?
3. Do you believe that dealers experience different issues depending on- a) the size of their dealership? b) the location of their dealership (regional versus non regional)? c) the brand(s) they are selling?
4. Based on your experience, what main types of due diligence would you recommend a potential investor in a car dealership should undertake?

Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you are not required to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any point. If you do wish to withdraw from this project, please contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form). Your participation, or not, will not affect your relationship with the University of the Sunshine Coast.

Consent

You will be asked to provide written consent before participating in the research. This involves reading and signing the accompanying form. Consent is for the use of non-identifiable data in this research project.

Risks and Benefits

The benefits far outweigh the costs as there is no risk beyond day to day living for the participants involved in this research project. There is no guarantee that this research will benefit you personally. However, it is anticipated that this research project will benefit the franchise sector, new car dealers, car manufacturers, and the automotive industry in general by shedding light and providing an in-depth analysis of the franchising issues in this industry as well as the role played by the Code in regulating this business relationship.

Privacy, Confidentiality and Results

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per USC's Research Data Management policy. All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

If you permit, the interviews will be recorded. You will be given the opportunity to review responses prior to final inclusion. The recording will be transcribed by the interviewer herself and destroyed after transcription. The transcription of the data will be re-identifiable when stored. The storage of the transcription will be accessed by the research team only. A summary of findings of this research project will be provided to all participants. Non-identifiable results may be presented at external or internal conferences or meetings, or by publication. No name of an employee, the car dealership, the car manufacturer, yourself or logos will be invoked in any written or oral presentation of the research results.

Concerns or Complaints

If you have any concerns or complaints about the way this research project is being conducted you can raise them with the Chief Investigator (listed above). If you prefer an independent person, you may contact the Chair of the USC Human Research Ethics Committee: (c/- Office of Research, University of the Sunshine Coast, Maroochydore DC 4558; telephone (07) 5430 2823; email humanethics@usc.edu.au).

Please save the information above if you choose to participate.