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Fleet strategy shifts from cost control to value creation

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In an exclusive AgroSpectrum interview, Suvajit Karmakar, Country Managing Director, India & Asia Sub-Regional Director, Ayvens, explains why data, powertrain diversification and flexible fleet strategies will redefine mobility as a driver of resilience, sustainability and business growth

Mobility is no longer a back-end function measured simply by kilometres travelled or fuel consumed; it is increasingly becoming a strategic variable shaping cost, resilience, sustainability and workforce productivity. In a business environment marked by volatile energy prices, evolving regulations and shifting employee expectations, the real challenge lies in building mobility systems that can adapt rather than merely endure. The future, therefore, belongs not to the lowest-cost fleet, but to the smartest oneâ??where data, technology and strategic planning continuously reshape decisions. Telematics, predictive analytics, powertrain diversification and flexible fleet models are transforming vehicles from depreciating assets into sources of operational intelligence. For sectors such as agriculture and agrochemicals, where mobility remains integral to reaching dispersed markets and supporting field teams, this transition carries particular strategic significance.

In this exclusive AgroSpectrum interview, **Suvajit Karmakar, Country Managing Director, India & Asia Sub-Regional Director, Ayvens**, examines how organisations can move beyond conventional fleet management towards a more integrated approach that balances Total Mobility Cost, employee experience, sustainability and business agility. His central argument is compelling: the next generation of successful mobility programmes will emerge when fleet management is treated not as an operational necessity, but as a strategic lever for long-term business value.

Fuel prices have become one of the most unpredictable variables impacting business mobility costs. How should organisations rethink their fleet and mobility strategies in an era where fuel volatility is becoming a structural reality?

With the increasing concerns related to oil availability and price volatility, organisations must start evaluating their car and mobility policies. The strongest hedge against fuel volatility is reducing dependence on fossil fuels by switching to more cost-efficient and sustainable options. Right from evaluating their current fleet mix to using vehicle data via telematics to optimise usage, companies can redefine the way they run their business operations. Transitioning from internal combustion engine

(ICE) vehicles to a low emission fleet mix of Hybrids, CNGs and BEVs can not only bring down the reliance on fossil fuels but also make the fuel bills lighter. Moreover, adopting a portfolio approach instead of a single-fuel strategy helps with diversification, thereby reducing exposure to a single energy source.

Using Telematics solutions, one of the world's largest agrochemical companies with extensive rural coverage, optimised their territory coverage and travel efficiency for field-sales and technical teams depending heavily on vehicle mobility. In short, selecting the most appropriate vehicle, diversified energy sources, electrification, and data-driven fleet management are becoming business resilience strategies rather than merely sustainability initiatives.

Beyond fuel costs, what fleet management strategies can organisations adopt to improve overall fleet efficiency and optimise Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)?

Many organisations still measure success using only the capital deployed for vehicle purchase and fuel expenditure. A better metric is: Total Mobility Cost (TMC) = actual depreciation from usage + Fuel/Energy + Maintenance + Downtime + Insurance + Driver Productivity + Carbon Cost

This often reveals that a vehicle with a higher acquisition cost may have substantially lower lifecycle costs. Fuel is just one component of Total Cost of Ownership. Organisations can unlock greater value by:

Using the Fleet Rightsizing approach - optimal number and type of vehicles, removing underutilised or redundant vehicle as well as eliminating inefficient vehicles from the fleet - organisations can substantially improve efficiency and bring down their overall mobility spends.

Its not only choosing the right vehicle, itâ??s also about choosing the right tenure and KMS for the replacing the fleet. An older fleet can be much costlier to run compared to replacing it. With a leased car you can have better and more accurate visibility on the total cost of ownership as you just pay a fixed monthly lease rental for usage, and everything is managed by the leasing Ayvens. Â

From a fleet management perspective, it will be prudent for companies to rely on vehicle data that gives them insight on vehicle health as well as predictive maintenance. Strategies like these will go a long way in maximising uptime, especially if the business relies heavily on employee mobility or goods movement.

The biggest TCO gains donâ??t come from one leverâ??they come from optimising the entire fleet ecosystem. Our team at Ayvens works closely with clients to help them with their fleet management strategy and its implementation.

Digitalisation is transforming fleet management through telematics, connected vehicles, AI and predictive analytics. Which technologies are delivering the most measurable gains in fleet efficiency, driver safety and cost optimisation today?

Telematics and connected vehicle technologies are currently delivering the most immediate and measurable gains. Real-time tracking, route optimisation, and driver behaviour analytics directly improve fuel efficiency, safety, and utilisation. The real value of digitalisation lies in turning real-time data into real-time decisions. We foresee the growing adoption of predictive analytics, which will help fleet managers anticipate maintenance needs and reduce downtimeâ??moving fleet management practices from being reactive to more proactive. Moreover, you have the option to pre-configure your safety criteria such as max speed, max kms per drive/per day, night-driving restrictions, etc., you can restrict high-risk usage of the vehicle and improve the safety of your staff.

As sustainability goals become increasingly linked to business performance, how are organisations balancing cost efficiency, employee mobility needs and emissions reduction objectives?

Organisations today are no longer treating cost efficiency, employee experience and sustainability as separate prioritiesâ??they are increasingly integrating them into one decision framework. The most effective mobility strategies today are those that align cost, experience, and sustainabilityâ??not trade them off. For example, offering employees access to hybrids or EVs can improve driving experience while reducing both emissions and running costs. More and more organisations in the Agriculture and AgroChem sectors are improving vehicle utilization and reducing operating costs through centralized fleet governance and leasing programs to get better reach to growers through mobile agronomy teams as well as provide an enhanced employee experience while achieving their ESG goals via standardized vehicle policies and mobility benefits.

Beyond vehicle utilisation, what opportunities do organisations often overlook when seeking to improve fleet productivity, optimise Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) and enhance employee mobility?

Some commonly overlooked areas include:

Business strategy â?? Modern fleet and mobility programmes are increasingly measured not only by cost but also by employee convenience, flexibility, and wellbeing. Many companies still expecting their field staff to use public transport or use of their personal vehicles for business use. However, providing a leased business car is the cheapest way to provide mobility for the field staff. Moreover, this helps in better cost management, more efficient fleet management, improved productivity, uninterrupted business continuity and helps with employee retention, attracting new talent, employee motivation.

Journey and demand optimisation â?? Examining the business need for journeys, consolidating journeys, improving route planning and matching vehicle type to trip requirements can significantly improve productivity and reduce costs.

Data-driven fleet management â?? Many organisations under-utilise telematics, connected vehicle data, and predictive analytics. This can improve maintenance planning, reduce downtime, optimise replacement cycles, and provide better visibility into operating costs.

Driver behaviour and safety programs â?? One of our strategic trainings specially organised for business car lease clients, which is Defensive Driver Training Program, coachesâ?? drivers on fuel-efficient and safe driving, can help clients reduce fuel consumption, accident rates, maintenance costs, and insurance expenses, all of which contribute directly to lower TCO

Asset lifecycle and procurement optimisation â?? Reviewing acquisition methods â?? whether to lease a new car or pre-leased car, replacement timing and end of contract strategies â?? whether to extend the contract to ensure optimal usage of the vehicle or upgrade to a new vehicle, can generate substantial savings beyond what utilisation improvements alone can achieve.

Using the vehicle for companyâ??s branding- a vehicle with you brand on it is free visibility of your brand wherever the vehicle moves.

With multiple powertrain technologies emerging, how should organisations evaluate and plan their transition towards electrified and sustainable mobility solutions?

With multiple technologies evolving simultaneously, organisations should avoid making a single, long-term bet. Instead, the focus should be on a phased and diversified transition strategy. The future of mobility is not one technologyâ??itâ??s the right mix of technologies applied intelligently. At Ayvens, we guide clients towards a balanced mixâ??EVs for predictable urban use cases, hybrids for efficiency without disruption, and CNG for high-utilisation fleets. The emphasis is on â??fit-for-purposeâ? adoption rather than blanket transitions.

Economic uncertainty, evolving regulations and changing workforce expectations continue to reshape mobility needs. What role does flexible fleet management and mobility planning play in helping organisations navigate these shifts?

In an environment shaped by economic uncertainty, regulatory changes, and evolving workforce expectations, flexibility is becoming critical. Flexible fleet managementâ??through leasing models, scalable fleet sizes, and adaptable policiesâ??allows organisations to respond quickly to changing business needs. In uncertain times, flexibility is not just an advantageâ??it is a necessity for fleet resilience. We see flexibility as a key enabler of both resilience and cost control. In fact to take care of these uncertainties, we are working on products & services that will help our clients switch their fleet management solutions basis their changing business dynamics as well as their strategic and operational priorities.

Looking ahead, what will differentiate successful fleet and mobility programmes: cost management alone, or the ability to leverage data, technology and strategic fleet planning?

While cost efficiency will remain important, the real differentiator will be the ability to continuously adapt using data, technology, and strategic planning. The future will belong not to the lowest-cost fleets, but to the smartest and most adaptive ones. Organisations that leverage analytics, automation, and integrated fleet strategies will outperform those relying solely on static cost optimisation.

As mobility continues to evolve, how can organisations transform fleet management from an operational necessity into a strategic lever for cost efficiency, sustainability and business growth?

As mobility evolves, organisations need to move beyond viewing fleet management as a back-end operational function and start treating it as a core strategic capability and investment. The organisations that will lead in the next phase of mobility are those that treat fleet management not as an operational necessity, but as a strategic lever for efficiency, sustainability, and

growth. This transformation begins with taking a holistic approachâ??integrating powertrain strategy, digitalization and mobility policies into one cohesive framework. Instead of focusing only on cost control, organisations need to optimise across multiple dimensions: cost efficiency, sustainability, employee experience, and business agility.

At Ayvens, we see this shift happening through three key enablers. First, data-driven decision-making, where telematics and analytics provide real-time insights to continuously optimise fleet performance. Second, strategic powertrain diversification, ensuring the right mix of EVs, hybrids, and CNG vehicles aligned to actual usage. And third, flexible fleet models, which allow organisations to scale and adapt quickly in response to changing business needs. When these elements come together, fleet management moves from being a cost centre to a value driverâ??reducing operating expenses, supporting ESG goals, and enabling more efficient, agile operations.

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