



"Driving Decisions: Understanding THE Factors Influencing Car Brand Choice"

Barasha Bhuyan^{1*}, Dr. Parbin Sultana²

^{1*}Research Scholar, University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM)

²Professor, School of Technology and Management, University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM)

Citation: Barasha Bhuyan et al. (2024), "Driving Decisions: Understanding THE Factors Influencing Car Brand Choice", Educational Administration: Theory And Practice, 30(4), 4259-4262, Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i4.2182

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

In the modern automobile industry, brand significance is paramount, significantly influencing customers' choices when selecting a car brand. Given the intense competition in the automotive market, comprehending the determinants that sway consumers' preferences toward specific brands is essential. This research delves into the intricate array of factors shaping consumers' brand inclinations in the automotive sector. Through amalgamating insights gleaned from thorough literature review and empirical analysis, the objective of this paper is to offer practical recommendations for automotive companies to enhance their brand strategies and better align with consumer preferences.

Keywords: automobile, customer, brand, vehicles, industry, strategies.

1 Introduction:

The automotive industry encompasses a wide array of activities, including the design, manufacturing, marketing, and sales of motor vehicles such as cars, trucks, buses, and motorcycles. It consists of various segments, including passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, and electric vehicles, each with distinct market dynamics and trends. Competition within the automotive sector is fierce, with established manufacturers and emerging players vying for market share. Major companies compete across multiple dimensions, including product innovation, quality, pricing, and branding. Globalization has further intensified competition, expanding market reach beyond domestic borders to international markets.

In the automotive sector, choosing a brand is a pivotal aspect of consumer decision-making. Customers assess different brands according to factors like perceived quality, features, pricing, technological advancements, and more. Beyond merely being a product, a brand encapsulates a range of qualities, values, and associations that deeply resonate with consumers.

1.1 Importance of Factors Shaping Customers' Brand Preferences in the Automobile Industry.

The automotive industry is fiercely competitive, underscoring the importance for manufacturers and marketers to grasp the factors impacting brand preferences. This understanding not only guides customers in selecting a brand but also molds brand perceptions, nurtures loyalty, and maintains a competitive edge in the market. Thorough analysis of these factors enables companies to craft precise brand strategies tailored to their audience, setting them apart from rivals. Consequently, comprehending and adeptly addressing these elements is crucial for brands to allure and retain customers, ensuring success in the ever-evolving automotive landscape. In the dynamic automotive landscape, consumer preferences are shaped by a multitude of factors, ranging from performance and reliability to design aesthetics and technological innovation. Manufacturers must continuously innovate and adapt to meet evolving consumer demands, whether it's the shift towards electric vehicles, the integration of autonomous driving technologies, or the emphasis on sustainability and eco-friendliness.

Furthermore, the role of branding extends beyond the product itself; it encompasses the entire customer experience, from initial research and purchase to after-sales service and support. A strong brand not only instills trust and confidence in consumers but also fosters a sense of community and belonging among enthusiasts. Companies that excel in cultivating brand loyalty often leverage emotional connections and aspirational values to resonate with their target audience on a deeper level.

Moreover, the influence of external factors such as economic conditions, regulatory changes, and cultural trends cannot be overlooked. Global events and societal shifts can significantly impact consumer behavior and reshape market dynamics, requiring brands to remain agile and responsive to stay ahead of the curve.

In essence, the automotive industry is a complex ecosystem where brands must navigate a myriad of variables to thrive. By meticulously analyzing consumer preferences, staying abreast of industry trends, and delivering exceptional experiences, automotive companies can forge enduring relationships with their customers and secure a competitive advantage in the fiercely contested marketplace.

1.2 Some factors that sway customers towards selecting a particular brand include the following.

Reliability and Durability -Reliability and durability stand out as crucial elements sought by customers when considering a brand, as they prioritize low maintenance expenses and long-lasting dependability. Brands offering vehicles with higher reliability and durability are poised to attract a larger market share.

Product features and performance -The characteristics and performance of the vehicle significantly impact customers' decisions when choosing a brand. Brands that provide innovative features, advanced technology, safety measures, and superior performance are better positioned to attract and retain customers.

Pricing and Value for Money -Affordability and value for money stand as crucial factors for customers seeking economical options within a brand's pricing range. Brands that offer competitive prices across their range of models can secure a competitive advantage and retain more budget-conscious customers.

Brand Image and Lifestyle Compatibility- Brand image and alignment with lifestyle preferences resonate with customers' identities, aspirations, and personal values, thereby shaping brand preferences and fostering brand loyalty over time.

Peer Influence and Social Trends Peer influence and social trends influence brand selections by mirroring cultural standards, social standing, and group affiliations.

1.3 Review of Literature

This review offers insight into the vast body of literature exploring the determinants that sway customers towards selecting a specific brand.

Ramya & Bharathi (2016)- The research aimed to identify the different elements impacting consumer preferences for automobile brands, focusing particularly on Maruti Suzuki in Coimbatore City. Conducted through empirical methods, the study utilized quota sampling, involving 460 respondents. Results indicated that factors like mileage, maintenance, and pricing significantly influence customers' brand selection.

Thangam.et.al (2018)- The study examined the diverse factors affecting consumers' car purchasing decisions within the Indian Automobile Industry, focusing on Tamil Nadu. Employing an explanatory survey method, the research is descriptive in its approach. It involved 547 respondents from Tamil Nadu, with Maruti Suzuki as the observed brand and Maruti Suzuki customers as the analytical unit. Convenient sampling was utilized for data collection. Results revealed that crucial determinants influencing purchase decisions include the car brand, price, design, quality, utility, and technical aspects.

Phuong.et.al (2020)- The study focused on elucidating the factors shaping the car purchasing intentions among Vietnamese consumers. Employing quantitative methods, models, and hypothesis testing, data were gathered through surveys. The sample consisted of 242 prospective car buyers in Ho Chi Minh City. The research identified seven key factors influencing purchase intentions. Foremost among these factors is the car brand, with quality and safety closely following. Conversely, technology, resale value, performance, and social culture were deemed less significant by consumers in their car selection process.

1.4 Objective of the study

To identify the key factors driving customers to choose a particular car brand.

1.5 Research Methodology-

The researcher has implemented the subsequent methodology in accordance with the study's objective.

Type of Research – Descriptive research was conducted as part of the study.

Area of the Study- The research was conducted within the confines of Kamrup Metro.

Sampling Design: The study employed a descriptive research approach within Kamrup (Metro) district of Assam. The target population comprises individuals in Kamrup(M) who own at least one four-wheeler car from Maruti Suzuki, Honda, Hyundai, Tata, or K.I.A brands. Primary data collection utilized a two-stage sampling method. Firstly, wards in Kamrup district were randomly chosen, followed by the purposive sampling of respondents from selected wards in proportion to the population size of each block, considering variations in block populations. Out of the 61 wards in Kamrup(M) district, 40%, or 24 wards, were randomly selected for the study.

Sample Size : The sample size comprises of 400 cutomers selected randomly from the selected wards and who has at least one four wheeler car of any one brand of Maruti Sujuki, Honda, Huyndai, TATA, and K.I.A

Sources of Data - Information has been gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was acquired through a structured questionnaire tailored for individuals residing in Kamrup(M) who own at least one four-wheeler from brands such as Maruti Suzuki, Honda, Hyundai, Tata, Mahindra, Ford, Renault, Toyota, or K.I.A. Secondary data was gathered from various sources including books, journals, websites, and other relevant materials.

1.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

2 Objective of the study

To identify the key factors driving customers to choose a particular car brand.

The objective is to examine the primary factors influencing customers' brand selection. To determine the most crucial factors in brand selection, the mean scores of fifteen different factors across various brands were computed, resulting in the creation of the subsequent tables.

Table: 2.a

SL NO	Factors	Ranking Score
1	Brand Image	3.5
2	Model	3.3
3	Price	3.9
4	Speed	4.4
5	Mileage/Fuel efficiency	4.4
6	Colour	2.9
7	Car Class	8.2
8	Expenses on services	4.4
9	Advertising	4.2
10	Previous experience with the brand	7.9
11	Resale Value	4.2
12	Interior Design & Features	4.0
13	Availability of post sales services	3.9
14	Comfort	3.1
15	Technical superiority	3.4

(Rank Score range is 1 to 15 as 1 is most important and 15 is least important)

Interpretation- Analysis of Table 2.2 a suggests that the color of the car, with a ranking score of 2.9, emerges as the foremost consideration for customers when selecting a brand. Following closely, comfort of the car ranks second, while the model of the brand, scoring 3.3, secures the third spot in customer preferences. Technical superiority, with a ranking score of 3.4, also holds significance in brand selection. Moreover, brand image, priced, and availability of post-sales services, each with a ranking score of 3.9, play crucial roles in customers' decisions. Interior design and features, with a score of 4.0, are further highlighted as influential factors. Advertising and resale value, both scoring 4.2, stand out as significant considerations for customers. Meanwhile, factors like car speed, mileage/fuel efficiency, and service expenses, all ranking at 4.4, carry substantial weight in brand selection. Conversely, customers' previous experiences with a brand, ranked at 7.9, hold less sway over their decisions, marking it as the least influential factor. Car class is identified as the least significant factor in customers' brand selection decisions.

3 Findings :

Based on the analysis and interpretation of the data , the findings from demograph objective can be drawn as follows:

To identify the key factors driving customers to choose a particular car brand

- The study indicates that the color of a car holds significant sway over customers when choosing a brand. Additionally, factors like comfort, variety of models, and technological advancements are also key considerations in the decision-making process of purchasing a specific car brand.
- The research also reveals that customers consider brand image when selecting a specific brand.
- Other factors such as pricing, availability of after-sales services, interior design and features, resale value, speed, mileage, and fuel efficiency also play a significant role in customers' brand selection process.
- Previous experiences with the brand appear to carry less weight in influencing brand selection.
- The study also indicates that car class is of minimal importance to customers when choosing a specific brand.

4 Suggestions

- During the field survey conducted among customers in selected wards of Kamrup Metro, it was discovered that car colour significantly influences the selection of a particular brand. However, the absence of a desired colour in a showroom can sometimes lead customers to postpone their purchasing decisions. In such

instances, dealers can gather feedback from customers and conduct surveys to discern specific colour preferences for models within a brand. This approach can assist dealers in stocking the most favoured colours as per customer preference.

- Understanding brand image in the automotive industry is a multifaceted process. Customers need to grasp the core values and mission of a brand to truly comprehend its brand image.
- Dealers should also furnish comprehensive details about the brand, including its origins, sustainability efforts, and performance in both domestic and international markets.
- Customers should thoroughly assess the range of models available from various brands and select the one that aligns with their requirements, expectations, and budgetary limitations.
- Customers also require regular updates on the latest innovations and technological advancements across various brands entering the market. This information aids them in making purchase decisions that best align with their preferences and needs.
- Seeking feedback from friends, family members, and trusted advisors who have experience with particular car brands can offer valuable perspectives and recommendations. Leveraging personal networks and tapping into word-of-mouth referrals can enhance confidence in the decision-making process and ensure a satisfying purchase experience. Engaging with online communities, forums, and social media groups dedicated to automotive enthusiasts can offer valuable insights shared by consumers.

5 Conclusion

Customer decisions in choosing a particular car brand are shaped by a multitude of factors tailored to their individual requirements and tastes. Elements such as color, brand reputation, comfort, and model variety significantly influence their purchasing choices. Through meticulous assessment of these factors and their alignment with personal preferences and needs, customers can make well-informed decisions, leading to heightened satisfaction and optimal experiences with their chosen car brand. This intricate interplay underscores the dynamic nature of consumer behavior within the automotive market, underscoring the significance of comprehending and catering to diverse customer needs to sustain competitiveness and foster brand triumph.

In conclusion, the intricate interplay of factors influencing consumer decisions in the automotive market underscores the dynamic and multifaceted nature of buyer behavior. By recognizing and addressing diverse customer needs, car brands can not only maintain competitiveness but also drive long-term success. Moreover, fostering an understanding of the evolving preferences and expectations of consumers is paramount for brands to remain relevant and resilient in an ever-changing market landscape. Ultimately, a customer-centric approach that prioritizes satisfaction and personalized experiences is key to securing loyalty and achieving sustained growth in the automotive industry.

References

1. Ramya,K.,& Bharathi,K.Ckk. (2016) .FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CONSUMER PREFERENCE FOR AUTOMOBILE BRANDS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO MARUTI-SUZUKI IN COIMBATORE CITY.*TLJ'S Research Journal of Social Science & Management*.
2. Thangam, D.,Subha,K.,Shanthi,R., &Sathish,A. (2018). FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMERS' CAR PURCHASING DECISION IN INDIAN AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY.*International Journal of Mechanical Engineering and Technology*. 9 (10).53-63.
3. Phuong,H.L.C.,Anh, L.H.,Rashid,A.A.Ab. (2020) Factors Influencing Car Purchasing Intention: A Study among Vietnamese Consumers. *Journal of the Society of Automotive Engineers Malaysia*.4 (2).229-252