

A Study of Brand Association and Perception of Toyota in Pune City

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Abstract: *This research project investigates how consumers in Pune perceive Toyota, aiming to uncover the key factors driving their brand association. By employing a mixed-methods approach encompassing quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the study seeks to gain comprehensive insights into the attitudes, sentiments, and preferences of Pune residents towards the Toyota brand. Through quantitative analysis, attributes such as quality, reliability, performance, price, and brand image will be quantified, while qualitative interviews will delve deeper into consumer experiences and emotions. By combining these approaches, the study aims to offer valuable insights for Toyota's marketing strategies and brand management, contributing to the broader understanding of branding and consumer behavior while addressing specific challenges and opportunities in the Pune market.*

Keywords: Toyota

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's fiercely competitive market landscape, a brand's success is no longer solely contingent on product quality and performance but is intricately tied to consumer perceptions and associations. Brand association, encompassing beliefs, attitudes, and emotional connections, profoundly influences consumer preferences, purchasing decisions, and brand loyalty. Particularly in diverse markets like Pune City, Maharashtra, where cultural, demographic, and regional dynamics shape consumer behavior, understanding these associations becomes paramount. Toyota, globally recognized for its innovation and reliability, faces varied branding challenges across different cities, including Pune, with its burgeoning automotive market. This research endeavors to probe the brand association of Toyota within Pune, unraveling local consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and sentiments. By identifying underlying factors shaping these associations, this study aims to offer actionable insights for Toyota and similar companies to adapt marketing strategies, refine product offerings, and enhance brand communication to resonate more effectively with Pune consumers. Furthermore, the findings contribute to a deeper understanding of branding and consumer behavior, bridging academic inquiry with practical implications for businesses navigating complex and diverse markets.

Objectives of the study

- To assess and understand the brand associations of Toyota among consumers in Pune city.
- To identify key factors influencing brand perception and loyalty.
- To compare Toyota's brand associations with competitors in the automotive industry in Pune.

Scope of the study

For any study to be conducted, its scope should be predefined. The scope of any study identifies the area of its usage and the areas where it can be of helpful for generating results or for providing any feedback. In the emerging knowledge based economy it has become necessary to know how much market power lies with the brand name. The study of brand association is essential in marketing planning. Customer needs and preferences keep changing where brands ultimately command customer's loyalty.

The realistic side of the problem is to know the acceptance level of the brand association towards the product. This study will help us to understand the brand association and what problems are being faced by the consumers, to which appropriate measures to be taken to solve the problems. The project has mainly been taken up to understand the brand

association, buying motives to ensure the Brand association and perception toward the Toyota apart from this, it is to understand the new opportunities in the market improvement of brand association and sales towards the products.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Rio, Vazquez and Iglesias (2001) explored the dimensions of brand image, focusing on the functions or value of the brand as perceived by consumers. Here, four categories of functions were identified: guarantee, personal identification, social identification and status. By the way of hypotheses, it had been proposed that these functions had a positive influence on the consumer’s willingness to advocate the brand, pay a price premium for it and accepted brand extensions. The results obtained confirm the convenience of analysing brand associations separately and enable ascertaining of the brand associations that were most relevant in order to attain certain consumer responses

Brand Equity and Brand Associations Brand associations are defined as "**anything that can be linked to the brand in the consumer's mind**" (Aaker & Keller, 1990, p. 28). Brand associations are utilized as a dimension to measure brand equity (Aaker, 1996). These associations can be based on thoughts, impressions, experiences, and opinions that consumers hold about a particular brand (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Brand associations act as a means of collecting information regarding a product to determine if brand differentiation or brand extension is necessary in order to achieve continued growth by a brand (Van Osselaer & Janiszewski, 2001). The higher the number of brand associations consumers have tied to a product the more it will be remembered by the consumer and loyalty for the brand is increased (Sasmita & Mohd Suki, 2015) Brand associations can be created by numerous sources in the minds of consumers.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employs a descriptive research design to understand consumer perceptions and brand associations with Toyota in Pune. Researchers will utilize a mixed-methods approach, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data.

Sampling:

The target population is all Toyota consumers, but the sample frame focuses on Pune residents who have interacted with Toyota products. The sample size is 50 individuals, considered sufficient to capture diverse consumer perspectives.

Data Collection:

Primary data will be collected through surveys or questionnaires administered directly to consumers.

Secondary data will be obtained from existing sources like reports, articles, and online information on Toyota's brand image.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative data from surveys will be analyzed using statistical tools like descriptive statistics and frequency distributions to identify patterns in consumer responses.

Qualitative data from open-ended survey questions or interviews will undergo content and thematic analysis to uncover recurring themes and patterns in consumer perceptions about Toyota's brand

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. When you think of Toyota, which of the following words come to mind? (Multiple choice, select up to 5)

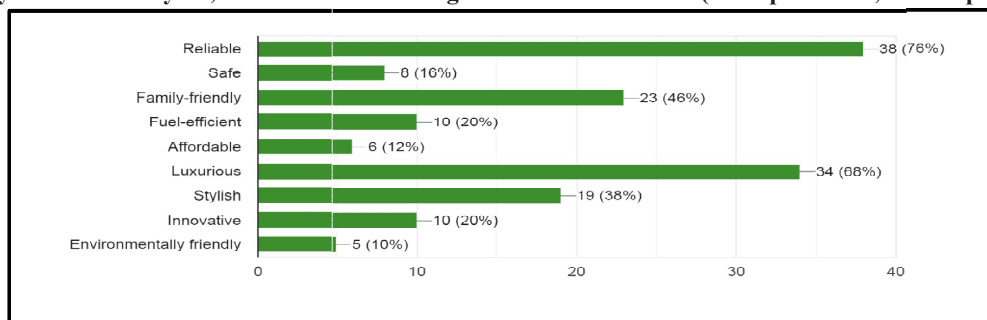


Table no.4.5 (Top-of-Mind Associations with Toyota Graph)

Based on the chart, it appears that people associate Toyota with being **reliable, luxurious, and affordable**. Other words associated with Toyota include **family-friendly, fuel-efficient, safe, and stylish**.

2. Which of the following words best describes Toyota's brand image to you?

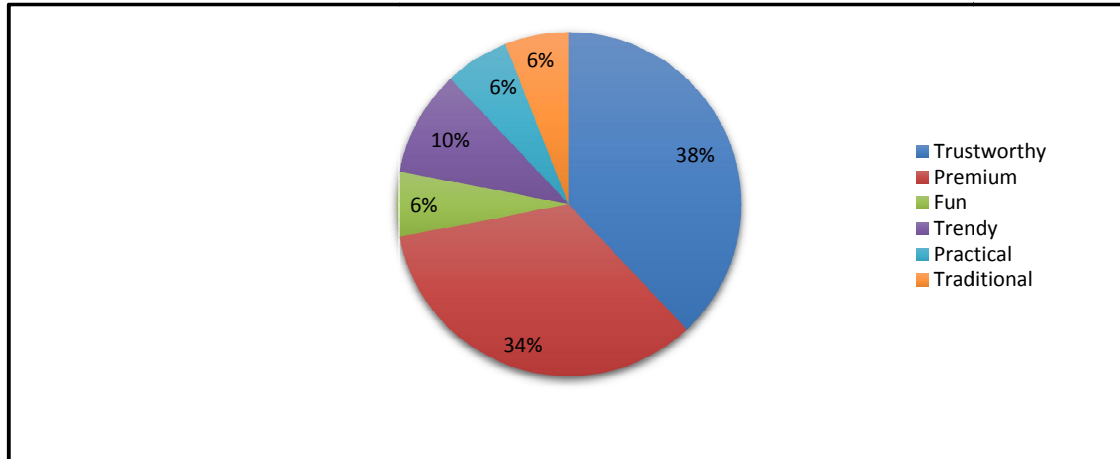


Fig no.4.6
(Perceived Brand Image: Descriptive Terms for Toyota Graph)

Based on the data, **trustworthiness and premium quality** are the two most common perceptions people have about the Toyota brand. This suggests that people associate Toyota with reliability, dependability, and potentially good value for the price.

3. Compared to other car brands in the same price range, how would you rate Toyota on the following attributes?

(Reliability, Safety, Value for money, After-sales service, Design and style)

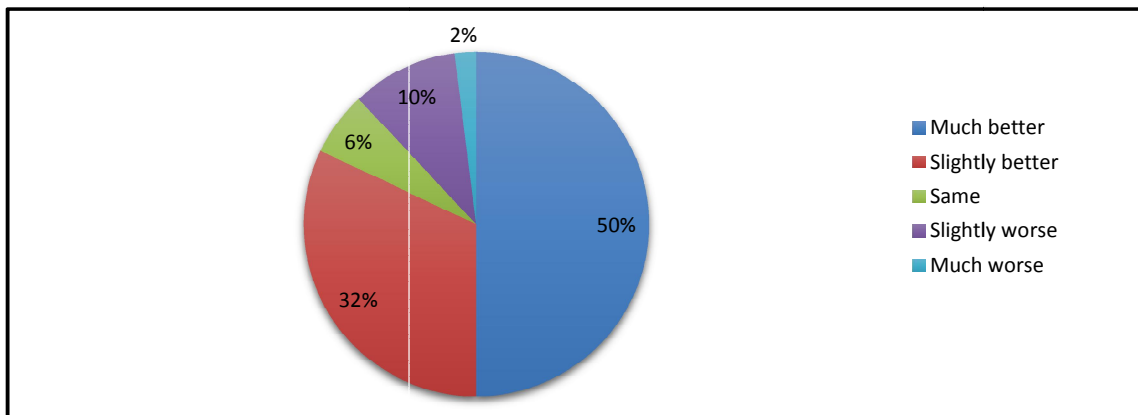


Fig no.4.7
(Attribute Ratings in Comparable Price Range Graph)

When comparing Toyota to other car brands in terms of some attributes, 50% of respondents perceived it as much better, while 32% considered it better. Additionally, 6% perceived it as about the same as other brands. very few consider slightly worse and much worse 10% and 2% respectively.

4. When considering buying a car, how do you perceive Toyota compared to other brands like Mahindra, Tata, Maruti Suzuki?

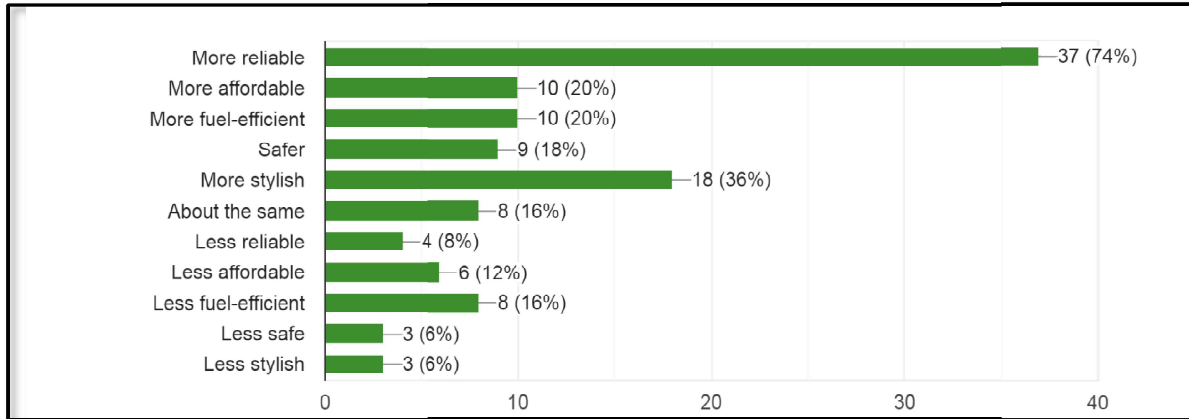


Fig no.4.9

(Automotive Brand Perception Graph)

Based on the data, **reliability** is the top attribute associated with Toyota compared to other brands, with **74%** of respondents considering it **more reliable**. **Style** is the second mostcommon perception, with **36%** of respondents considering Toyota **more stylish** than other brands.

V. FINDINGS

Toyota is primarily associated with attributes such as reliability, affordability, family-friendliness, fuel efficiency, safety, and style, reflecting its diverse appeal and positive brand image among consumers.

The majority of respondents perceive Toyota's brand image as trustworthy and synonymous with premium quality, indicating its reputation as a reliable and dependable brand offering good value for money.

Compared to competitors in the same price range, Toyota is rated as much better or better in terms of reliability, safety, value for money, after-sales service, and design and style, showcasing its strong competitive position in the automotive market.

When compared to rival brands like Mahindra, Tata, and Maruti Suzuki, Toyota is perceived as more reliable and stylish, illustrating successful differentiation in key consumer-relevant attributes.

Reliability emerges as the top attribute associated with Toyota compared to other brands, followed by style, emphasizing its reputation for producing dependable vehicles while meeting consumer preferences for stylish designs.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research illuminates Toyota's strong brand association and positive perception among consumers in Pune, Maharashtra. The findings underscore Toyota's attributes of reliability, affordability, family-friendliness, fuel efficiency, safety, and style, reinforcing its diverse appeal and positive image in the local market. Moreover, respondents perceive Toyota as synonymous with trustworthy and premium quality, positioning it favorably against competitors in terms of reliability, safety, value for money, after-sales service, and design and style. This indicates Toyota's robust competitive position and successful differentiation in key consumer-relevant attributes compared to rival brands like Mahindra, Tata, and Maruti Suzuki. With reliability and style standing out as top attributes, these insights offer actionable guidance for Toyota's marketing strategies and brand management efforts, facilitating better alignment with consumer needs and preferences in Pune while contributing to broader understandings of branding and consumer behavior in varied market contexts.

Suggestions:

Capitalize on the strong associations of reliability, affordability, and style by incorporating these attributes into marketing campaigns and brand messaging. Highlighting these strengths can reinforce positive brand perceptions and resonate with consumers in Pune.

Given the perception of trustworthiness and premium quality, Toyota should emphasize its value proposition in terms of providing reliable, high-quality vehicles at competitive prices. Emphasizing the value for money proposition can further strengthen the brand's appeal among consumers.

Despite positive ratings, Toyota should continue to focus on enhancing its offerings, particularly in after-sales service and design. Investing in customer service training and incorporating customer feedback into product design can help maintain and improve customer satisfaction levels.

To maintain its competitive edge against rival brands like Mahindra, Tata, and Maruti Suzuki, Toyota should highlight its unique attributes such as reliability and style. Developing targeted marketing strategies that emphasize these distinctive features can help differentiate Toyota from competitors in the Pune market.

Given the increasing importance of sustainability, Toyota should consider promoting its eco-friendly initiatives and fuel-efficient vehicles. Emphasizing its commitment to environmental responsibility can resonate with environmentally conscious consumers and further enhance the brand's reputation in Pune.

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