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A Study on Consumer Preference towards SUV Cars with Reference towards Coimbatore City

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ABSTRACT:

This study explores the growing consumer preference for Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs) in India, focusing on the Coimbatore region. The Indian automobile market, particularly the SUV segment, has witnessed significant growth in recent years, driven by changing consumer attitudes towards vehicles that offer enhanced safety, versatility, spaciousness, and design appeal. The research aims to understand the psychological, economic, and practical factors influencing consumer decisions when purchasing SUVs, with an emphasis on aspects such as performance, brand perception, fuel efficiency, safety features, and the social status associated with owning an SUV. The study will also analyse the most popular SUV models, regional preferences, and trends in consumer behaviour, identifying key attributes that attract consumers to this segment. Primary data will be collected through surveys, and observations, while secondary data will be sourced from published reports, journals, and online resources. The research is primarily focused on Coimbatore city, and the findings are intended to provide valuable insights for automobile manufacturers, marketers, and business strategists to align their products and strategies with evolving consumer demands. The study's scope is limited to SUVs, excluding other vehicle segments, and aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics shaping the SUV market in India.

1. INTRODUCTION

India's automobile industry is one of the fastest growing in the world and India is the world's third-largest Automobile market. Automobile industry plays a significant role in Indian economy and sport utility vehicles are one of the fastest growing segments in the industry. SUV or sport-Ute is an automotive classification. Often refers to a station wagon or estate car. It is an off-road vehicle. SUV have raised ground clearance and are known for their aggressive and ruggedness design and also known for their robustness, spaciousness, and versatility, have gained immense popularity among Indian consumers in recent year, it is a four-wheel drive (4wd) vehicle. Many SUVs are historically built on a light-truck chassis but operated as a family vehicle. SUV though designed to be used on rougher surfaces, most often used on city roads and highways.

Sport Utility Vehicle (SUVs) is major segment in automobile industry and known for their robustness, spaciousness, and versatility, have gained immense popularity among Indian consumers in recent years. History of SUVs cars can be traced back to the early 20th century when rugged, off-road vehicles were used primarily for military and industrial purposes. However, the modern concept of SUVs as we know them today emerged in the mid-20th century, and their popularity has evolved over time. The SUV market continued to evolve, with luxury SUVs becoming increasingly popular and many brands introducing smaller, more fuel-efficient models. Compact sized sports utility vehicles (SUVs) started to become more and more common in a market and their affordability is reason behind the success of SUVs. The Indian automotive market has experienced a shift in consumer preferences, with an increasing inclination towards SUVs. In future, SUVs will be one of the dominant car segments in India.

This study explores the reasons behind the increasing popularity of SUVs and the factors influencing consumer decisions. In recent years, SUVs have overtaken sedans and hatchbacks in sales, driven by their enhanced safety features, spacious interiors, high ground clearance, and versatile performance. Consumers often associate SUVs with status, adventure, and family convenience, making them a preferred choice across different demographics. Additionally, advancements in fuel efficiency, hybrid technology, and compact SUV models have made them more accessible to a broader audience. This study aims to analyse the psychological, economic, and practical factors that contribute to the preference for SUVs. It will examine consumer behaviour, market trends, and the role of brand perception in shaping purchasing decisions.

2. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study is to thoroughly investigate the growing consumer preference for SUVs over other types of vehicles such as sedans, MUVs, and XUVs. This research will dive into the various factors that drive the consumer preference, identifying key attributes and features of SUVs that attract consumers, such as design, performance, safety, and technology. Furthermore, the study aims to explore the current trends in the SUV market, focusing

on aspects like the most popular SUV models, their growth rates, and regional preferences, highlighting how different regions influence the demand for these vehicles. Additionally, the research will aim to identify the major competitors in the SUV industry. The study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing consumer choices and the dynamics of the SUV market.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To study demographic background of respondents
- To find most preferable segment of SUV car

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The increasing demand for Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs) in India, especially in urban areas like Coimbatore, highlights a shift in consumer preferences. Despite the growing popularity of SUVs, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding of the key factors that drive this trend. The problem is to identify and analyse the various factors influencing consumer decisions when purchasing SUVs, such as demographic influences, brand perception, safety features, fuel efficiency, and the social status associated with owning an SUV. This research seeks to address the gap in knowledge regarding these consumer preferences, and provide insights that can help automobile manufacturers and marketers better align their products with consumer expectations, ultimately driving more informed business strategies in the competitive SUV market.

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gupta and Sharma (2023)¹

Investigating the rising popularity of SUVs in India, this study identified affordability, contemporary style, and status as primary drivers of demand. Technological advancements enhancing performance, fuel efficiency, and safety features also contributed to consumer interest.

k. mallikarjuna reddy, j. mounika reddy (2022) ²

The automobile industry's potential for facilitating the mobility is enormous. Wheels of development across the globe would have to be powered by the industry. Industry across countries will have to meet challenges of new technologies, alternative fuels and affordability of automobiles by people at large through constructive co-operation. The earlier we are able to achieve this the better it would be for the world development. The Automobile industry across the world has great potential to trigger sustained employment, mobility, inter-sectorial industrial growth and thus conduce conditions for general economic and social well-being.

Khehra (2022)³

Focusing on consumers in Punjab, this research examined perceptions of major SUV brands. It highlighted that increased disposable income and lifestyle changes, influenced by social media, have led to a preference for higher-end SUVs priced between Rs. 12 and 30 lakhs.

6. ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION OF DATA

6.1 PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

Age group of the respondents

AGE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Below 25	65	41.4
25-35	43	24.4
35-45	22	14
45 years and above	27	17.2
TOTAL	157	100

(source: Primary data)

INTERPRETATION

¹ *International Journal of Marketing and Consumer Behaviour*, 8(2), 50-65.

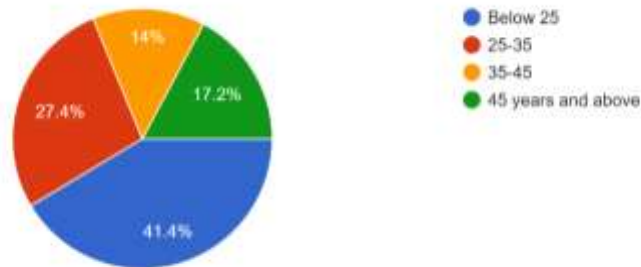
² *Journal of Automotive Research*, 35(1), 20-30.

³ *Indian Journal of Marketing*, 45(4), 130-140.

The age distribution shows that 41.4% of respondents are below 25, 24.4% are between 25-35 years, 14% are between 35-45 years, and 17.2% are 45 years and above. The majority of respondents are under 25 years old. The total sample size is 157 respondents.

AGE GROUP

154 RESPONSES



6.2 WEIGTHED AVERAGE

RESPONDENTS OPINION ON SUV FEATURES

No. of respondents	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Reasonable price	116	12	17	9	3	157
Good in mileage	72	58	19	6	2	157
Very comfortable For driving	67	31	54	4	1	157
Off-road capability	65	23	31	37	1	157
Better resale value	66	22	36	14	19	157
Affordable maintenance Cost	71	34	30	19	3	157
More safety features	72	44	27	11	3	157
Bold exterior Design	75	40	19	17	6	157

Table showing weighted average

No. of respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Dis agree	Strongly Dis agree	Total Weighted	Wighted average	rank
Reasonable price	116	12	17	9	3	700	4.46	I
Good in mileage	72	58	19	6	2	663	4.22	II
Very comfortable For driving	67	31	54	4	1	630	4.01	IV
Off-road capability	65	23	31	37	1	585	3.73	VI
Better resale value	66	22	36	14	19	573	3.65	VII
Affordable maintenance Cost	71	34	30	19	3	622	3.96	V

More safety features	72	44	27	11	3	642	4.09	II
Bold exterior Design	75	40	19	17	6	482	3.09	VIII

INTERPRETATION

The survey results show that respondents prioritize a reasonable price (4.46) and good mileage (4.22), with both features ranking highly in importance. Safety features (4.09) also rank highly, reflecting strong concern for security. Comfort for driving (4.01) and affordable maintenance costs (3.96) are also important but slightly less critical. Off-road capability (3.73) and better resale value (3.65) hold less weight, indicating they are of lower priority. Finally, bold exterior design (3.09) is the least important feature, with respondents giving it the lowest rating.

7. FINDINGS

7.1 PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

- 1) The majority (41.4%) of the respondents are below 25 years
- 2) The majority of respondents are male (51.6%).
- 3) The largest group of respondents consists of salaried persons (23.6%).
- 4) The highest percentage of respondents earn up to ₹30,000 per month (35%).
- 5) The most common family size among respondents is 3-4 members (49.7%).

7.2 WEIGHTED AVERAGE

1) The analysis reveals that the most important factor for respondents when choosing an SUV is its reasonable price, which has the highest weighted average of 4.46. This is followed by good mileage (4.22) and enhanced safety features (4.09), indicating that cost-effectiveness, fuel efficiency, and security are top priorities. Driving comfort (4.01) and affordable maintenance costs (3.96) are also significant considerations, reflecting the importance of long-term usability. Off-road capability (3.73) and better resale value (3.65) rank lower, suggesting they are less critical to buyers. The lowest-rated factor is bold exterior design (3.09), showing that aesthetics is less influential compared to performance and cost efficiency.

8. SUGGESTIONS

- 1) To enhance affordability by Consider introducing budget-friendly SUV models or flexible financing options, such as low EMIs or discounts, to attract younger buyers and those with mid-range budgets making SUVs more budget friendly to a wider audience.
- 2) To optimize Design for Urban Mobility and enhance maneuverability by introducing more compact SUV models, and integrating advanced parking assistance features could make SUVs more practical for urban consumers, given that majority of the respondents primarily drive in cities.

9. CONCLUSION

The study on consumer preferences towards SUVs highlights that these vehicles are more than just a mode of transportation—they represent a lifestyle choice that blends functionality, comfort, and style. SUVs continue to gain popularity across diverse consumer segments, driven by their versatility, safety, and performance. However, key concerns such as affordability, fuel efficiency, and maintenance costs remain significant factors influencing purchase decisions.

To align with evolving consumer expectations, manufacturers should focus on introducing budget-friendly models, enhancing fuel efficiency through hybrid and electric variants, and integrating advanced safety features. Additionally, optimizing SUVs for urban mobility and addressing maintenance concerns through cost-effective service packages.

By prioritizing affordability, safety, and sustainability, SUV manufacturers can strengthen their market position and cater to a broader consumer base, ensuring that their offerings meet both practical needs and lifestyle aspirations.

The evolution of SUVs hinges on continuous innovation and adaptability. As consumer expectations shift, automakers must find the right balance between affordability, performance, and sustainability. By integrating cutting-edge safety systems, fuel-efficient solutions, and intuitive designs, they can craft SUVs that go beyond mere functionality to elevate the driving experience. A strong focus on consumer needs will be key to ensuring that SUVs remain a go-to choice for drivers across generations.

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