

A SECONDARY STUDY ON BRAND PERCEPTION & MARKET POSITIONING OF MAHINDRA IN THE INDIAN SUV SEGMENT

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Abstract : The Indian SUV segment has transformed dramatically in recent years, evolving from a niche utility category into the dominant force in the passenger vehicle market. Driven by rising aspirations, improved road infrastructure, and a preference for vehicles that offer both presence and practicality, SUVs now account for nearly two-thirds of all passenger vehicle sales in India. This secondary research study explores the brand perception and market positioning of Mahindra & Mahindra in this intensely competitive landscape.

Drawing on industry reports from SIAM, company disclosures including Mahindra's Integrated Annual Report (2023–24 and 2024–25), market intelligence from ICRA and J.D. Power, and analyses from publications such as Autocar India, the study examines how Mahindra has positioned itself as an authentic SUV specialist. The brand continues to leverage its strong heritage in rugged capability and road presence, which is truly epitomised by the Scorpio-N and Thar, while progressively incorporating modern design, advanced safety features, and technology through models like the XUV700 and XUV 3XO.

Findings suggest that Mahindra enjoys solid brand equity built on perceptions of durability, value, and suitability for Indian conditions. However, as feature parity increases across competitors and consumer expectations rise, challenges related to ownership experience, service quality, and consistent premium delivery have become more prominent. The study concludes that Mahindra's long-term leadership will depend on strengthening evidence-based communication, enhancing customer touchpoints, and maintaining a coherent portfolio narrative that balances its rugged roots with aspirational appeal.

Index Terms - Mahindra, Indian SUV market, brand positioning, brand perception, automotive branding, premiumisation, secondary research, consumer behaviour in emerging markets

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Indian Automobile Industry

The Indian automobile industry is one of the largest and fastest-evolving sectors in the country's economy. It contributes significantly to industrial output, employment generation, and technological advancement. Over the last decade, the industry has transitioned from being primarily utility-driven to a more consumer-centric market, with greater emphasis on design, safety, comfort, performance, and brand experience. Rising disposable incomes, rapid urbanisation, infrastructure development, and easier access to finance have collectively boosted vehicle ownership across various segments.

Among all passenger vehicle categories, the Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) segment has witnessed the most remarkable transformation and growth, emerging as the dominant force in the Indian automotive landscape.

Evolution and Growth of the SUV Segment in India

Originally conceived as rugged, utility-oriented vehicles suited for rough terrain and rural use, SUVs in India have evolved into aspirational, lifestyle, and family-oriented vehicles. Today's SUV buyers are largely urban and semi-urban consumers who seek a combination of commanding road presence, perceived safety, higher seating position, and modern features.

According to the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), utility vehicles (primarily SUVs) now account for nearly two-thirds of total passenger vehicle sales in FY 2024-25. This structural shift has been driven by changing consumer lifestyles, improving highway infrastructure, and manufacturers' ability to offer SUVs across multiple price points. The segment's sustained double-digit growth has made it the primary growth engine for most automotive players in India.

Importance of Brand Perception and Market Positioning in the Automotive Sector

In an industry where products are high-involvement purchases involving substantial financial commitment, brand perception plays a decisive role in shaping consumer choice. A strong brand helps reduce perceived risk, builds trust, and creates emotional connections that go beyond functional attributes such as engine performance or features.

Market positioning, on the other hand, determines how a brand is perceived relative to its competitors in the consumer's mind. In the increasingly crowded SUV segment — where product features are rapidly converging — clear and consistent positioning has become a critical source of competitive advantage. Brands that successfully own distinct territories such as “rugged capability,”

“premium technology,” “value-for-money,” or “lifestyle adventure” tend to achieve stronger customer loyalty and sustained market performance.

Research Problem and Rationale

Mahindra & Mahindra has long been recognised as one of the leading players in the Indian SUV market, built on a strong legacy of ruggedness, reliability, and suitability for Indian road conditions. However, the rapid entry of global competitors, rising consumer expectations, increasing feature parity, and the brand’s own journey toward premiumisation have created new challenges in maintaining a distinctive and favourable brand perception.

While Mahindra continues to enjoy strong demand for models such as the Scorpio-N, Thar, and XUV700, questions remain about how the brand is currently perceived in an era of heightened competition and evolving consumer preferences. This study is therefore timely and relevant as it examines Mahindra’s brand perception and market positioning through a secondary research lens.

Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To analyse Mahindra’s current brand positioning strategies in the Indian SUV segment.
2. To examine consumer perceptions of the Mahindra brand based on available secondary sources.
3. To identify the key factors influencing consumer preference for Mahindra SUVs.
4. To evaluate Mahindra’s competitive positioning vis-à-vis major SUV players in India.
5. To provide strategic recommendations for strengthening Mahindra’s brand perception and market positioning.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This research is limited to the Indian SUV market and focuses exclusively on Mahindra & Mahindra’s positioning and perception within it. The study relies entirely on secondary data sources, including industry reports (SIAM, ICRA), company annual reports and investor presentations, academic literature, and reputed business publications. No primary data through surveys or interviews was collected.

While this approach enables broad analysis and synthesis of existing knowledge, the findings are dependent on the quality and recency of published sources and may not fully capture very recent shifts in consumer sentiment.

Structure of the Paper

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows: Chapter 2 presents the literature review on brand perception and positioning. Chapter 3 provides a profile of Mahindra & Mahindra, while Chapter 4 offers a detailed overview of the Indian SUV industry. Chapter 5 explains the research methodology. Chapters 6 and 7 analyse Mahindra’s brand positioning and consumer perception, respectively. Chapter 8 discusses key findings and SWOT analysis, followed by strategic recommendations in Chapter 9. The paper concludes with a summary, contributions, limitations, and directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concepts of brand perception and market positioning are central to understanding consumer behaviour in high-involvement industries such as automobiles. This chapter synthesises established theoretical frameworks with insights from consumer behaviour and the evolving Indian SUV market, providing the conceptual foundation for analysing Mahindra’s positioning and perception.

Brand Perception

Brand perception encompasses the overall impressions, beliefs, and associations that consumers form about a brand based on their experiences, marketing communications, word-of-mouth, and other external influences (Keller, 2013). In high-involvement purchases like automobiles, brand perception significantly reduces perceived risk and shapes purchase decisions. Consumers evaluate brands on dimensions such as reliability, safety, performance, and social status, making perception a critical driver of preference and loyalty (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Brand Equity

Brand equity refers to the added value that a brand name provides to a product. Aaker (1991) defined brand equity as a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to the brand, its name, and symbols that add to or subtract from the value provided to a firm and its customers. His model includes five key dimensions: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary assets.

Complementing this, Keller’s (1993, 2013) Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model conceptualises equity from the consumer’s perspective. It organises brand knowledge into a pyramid with four levels: brand identity (salience), brand meaning (performance and imagery), brand responses (judgments and feelings), and brand resonance (the deepest level of relationship). Strong customer-based brand equity results in greater consumer preference, greater tolerance for price premiums, and greater resilience to competitive actions.

Brand Personality and Emotional Attachment

Brands often develop human-like personalities that consumers relate to. Aaker (1997) identified five dimensions of brand personality: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. The *ruggedness* dimension, characterised by traits

such as tough, outdoorsy, and durable, is particularly relevant for SUV brands, as it aligns with consumer desires for capability, adventure, and dependability in varied Indian road conditions.

Emotional attachment further strengthens brand relationships. When consumers form strong emotional bonds with a brand, they exhibit higher loyalty, willingness to forgive minor shortcomings, and positive word-of-mouth behaviour (Rodrigues et al., 2023). In the automobile sector, emotional connections often transcend functional attributes and become key differentiators.

Brand Positioning

Positioning is the act of designing a company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the minds of the target market (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Ries and Trout (2001) emphasised that positioning is not what is done to the product, but what is done to the mind of the prospect. Effective positioning requires clarity, consistency, and credible points of difference that are relevant to consumers. In competitive markets with increasing product parity, successful brands focus on owning specific meanings such as "authentic capability," "premium safety," or "lifestyle adventure."

Consumer Behaviour in the Automobile Industry

Purchasing an automobile is a complex, high-involvement decision involving extensive information search, evaluation of alternatives, and both rational and symbolic considerations (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In emerging markets like India, functional factors (price, fuel efficiency, durability) interact with aspirational and status-related motivations. Rising disposable incomes, urbanisation, and improved infrastructure have accelerated the shift towards vehicles that offer higher seating, perceived safety, and commanding presence.

The Indian SUV Market and Branding Dynamics

The Indian passenger vehicle market has witnessed a structural transformation, with SUVs (utility vehicles) now accounting for approximately 65% of total sales in FY 2024-25, up significantly from previous years (Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers [SIAM], 2025). This growth reflects changing consumer preferences towards versatile, safe, and aspirational vehicles suited to Indian conditions.

Existing studies on Indian SUV branding highlight the importance of heritage, ruggedness, and value perception, particularly for domestic manufacturers. Mahindra has been frequently recognised for its strong association with authentic, capability-focused SUVs (e.g., Bolero, Scorpio, and Thar), while simultaneously moving towards premium features and technology (various industry analyses, 2024–2025). However, as feature parity among competitors (Hyundai, Kia, Tata, Toyota) increases, brand perception, ownership experience, and emotional resonance are becoming decisive factors.

Research Gap

While considerable literature exists on general brand equity models (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2013), brand personality (Aaker, 1997), and consumer behaviour in automobiles, there is limited consolidated academic research that specifically integrates these frameworks to evaluate the brand perception and market positioning of a major domestic player like Mahindra in India's rapidly evolving SUV segment. Most studies are either broad industry reports or focus on primary consumer surveys for individual models. This secondary research study addresses this gap by synthesising theoretical foundations with current market evidence to assess Mahindra's strategic positioning and consumer perception.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodological approach adopted in this study. Since the research aims to analyse Mahindra's brand perception and market positioning in the Indian SUV segment without collecting primary data, a secondary research methodology was employed. The study follows a descriptive and analytical design suitable for synthesising existing information into meaningful insights.

Research Design

The study adopts a **descriptive and analytical research design**. The descriptive component involves documenting the current state of the Indian SUV market, Mahindra's product portfolio, and reported consumer perceptions. The analytical component focuses on interpreting secondary data to evaluate brand positioning strategies, identify perception patterns, compare Mahindra with competitors, and derive strategic implications. The research is cross-sectional in nature, drawing primarily on recent data (2022–2025), while incorporating historical trends where relevant.

Nature of Data and Unit of Analysis

This research relies exclusively on **secondary data**. The primary units of analysis are:

- Brand level: Mahindra as an SUV brand in India
- Category level: The Indian SUV segment and its sub-segments
- Competitive level: Key rival SUV manufacturers (Tata, Hyundai, Kia, Toyota, etc.)
- Perception level: Consumer sentiment and brand associations reported in credible studies

Sources of Secondary Data

Data were collected from multiple credible and complementary sources:

- **Industry Reports:** Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) sales data and industry outlook reports.
- **Company Documents:** Mahindra & Mahindra's Integrated Annual Reports (2023–24 and 2024–25), investor presentations, earnings call transcripts, and official product communications.
- **Market Research and Consulting Reports:** ICRA, J.D. Power, Brand Finance, and other automotive intelligence platforms.
- **Reputed Publications:** Autocar India, Economic Times Auto, Business Standard, and other specialised automobile journals.
- **Academic Literature:** Peer-reviewed journals on branding, consumer behaviour, and automotive marketing.
- **Safety and Performance Data:** Global NCAP crash test ratings for Mahindra models.

Selection Criteria for Sources

To ensure reliability and academic rigour, sources were selected based on the following criteria:

- **Credibility:** Preference for established institutions, government-recognised bodies, and peer-reviewed publications.
- **Recency:** Priority given to data and reports from 2022 to 2025.
- **Relevance:** Direct connection to the Indian SUV market, Mahindra's strategy, or branding concepts.
- **Transparency:** Sources with clear methodology or data collection details were preferred.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected secondary data were analysed using the following techniques:

- **Thematic Analysis:** Qualitative synthesis to identify recurring themes in brand perception, such as ruggedness, safety, premiumisation, trust, and ownership experience.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Benchmarking Mahindra's positioning and performance against major competitors across portfolio, features, pricing, and perception dimensions.
- **Trend Analysis:** Examination of sales data, market share movements, and evolving consumer preferences over time.
- **SWOT Framework:** Structured evaluation of Mahindra's internal strengths and weaknesses alongside external opportunities and threats in the SUV segment.

All findings were triangulated across multiple sources to enhance validity and reduce source-specific bias.

KEY FINDINGS

This chapter synthesises the core insights drawn from secondary sources, including Mahindra's official reports, SIAM data, industry analyses, and market intelligence. The findings focus on Mahindra's market performance, brand positioning effectiveness, consumer perception patterns, and competitive standing in the Indian SUV segment.

Strong Sales Performance and Market Leadership

Mahindra & Mahindra has demonstrated robust growth in the SUV segment. In Calendar Year 2025, the company achieved a record **625,603 SUV wholesales**, marking a 23% year-on-year increase and crossing the 600,000-unit milestone for the first time. This performance has strengthened Mahindra's position as one of the leading SUV manufacturers in India by volume and revenue market share. Monthly peaks, such as 71,624 domestic SUV units sold in October 2025 (31% YoY growth), further highlight sustained consumer demand.

The company's focused SUV-centric strategy has enabled it to capitalise on the broader industry shift toward utility vehicles, which now account for nearly two-thirds of passenger vehicle sales in India.

Effective Portfolio Architecture

Mahindra's SUV portfolio is well-diversified across segments and successfully serves multiple consumer motivations:

- **Scorpio-N / Scorpio:** Remains the volume driver and flagship "Big Daddy of SUVs," consistently delivering 14,000–15,500 units per month. It effectively balances rugged capability with modern features and strong road presence.
- **Thar (including Thar Roxx):** Acts as a powerful lifestyle and adventure halo product, registering impressive growth and appealing to younger, urban buyers seeking individuality and off-road appeal.

- **XUV700:** Serves as the premium technology-oriented flagship, reinforcing Mahindra's move into the mid-to-upper SUV segments with strong emphasis on safety (5-star Global NCAP) and advanced features.
- **XUV 3XO:** Performs solidly in the compact SUV segment, supporting volume growth and attracting first-time buyers.
- **Bolero Series:** Continues to anchor the brand in rural and semi-urban markets through proven reliability and low ownership costs.

This portfolio approach allows Mahindra to maintain relevance across entry-level, mid-premium, and lifestyle-oriented segments.

Brand Positioning Effectiveness

Mahindra has successfully positioned itself as an **authentic SUV specialist** rooted in capability, commanding presence, and Indian road adaptability. Key positioning strengths include:

- Emphasis on ruggedness and durability without compromising modernity.
- Progressive premiumisation through improved design, technology, and safety features.
- Strong emotional connect via lifestyle imagery (Thar) and trust built on legacy.

Company communications and market response indicate that Mahindra is increasingly viewed as a confident, home-grown brand that delivers value, presence, and performance.

Consumer Perception Patterns

Secondary sources reveal that Mahindra enjoys a favourable perception on core attributes such as **durability, reliability, safety, value-for-money, and suitability for Indian conditions**. Newer models have enhanced perceptions of refinement, technology, and premium appeal among urban consumers.

Nevertheless, perception gaps remain. As the brand moves upscale, expectations regarding **after-sales service quality, consistent ownership experience, and delivery timelines** have intensified. In a market with rising feature parity, these experiential elements are becoming increasingly important differentiators.

Competitive Positioning

Mahindra differentiates itself through its singular focus on SUVs and authentic capability heritage as key areas where many multi-category competitors are comparatively weaker. The company has narrowed the gap with global brands in technology and safety while retaining an edge in ruggedness and road command. Strong demand leading to waiting periods for popular models further signals healthy brand pull.

Mahindra has established a strong and growing presence in the Indian SUV segment through focused strategy, a well-structured portfolio, and effective positioning around authenticity and capability.

While the brand benefits from positive consumer associations with trust and performance, sustaining leadership will require addressing evolving expectations around ownership experience and service excellence amid intensifying competition.

These findings form the foundation for the detailed discussion and strategic recommendations presented in the subsequent chapters.

BRAND POSITIONING ANALYSIS OF MAHINDRA IN THE INDIAN SUV SEGMENT

This chapter analyses how Mahindra & Mahindra has strategically positioned itself in the Indian SUV market. It examines the brand's intended positioning, the role of its product portfolio in reinforcing that positioning, key differentiators, and supporting proof points derived from secondary sources.

Intended Brand Positioning

Mahindra has clearly positioned itself as an **authentic SUV specialist** with deep roots in capability, ruggedness, and suitability for Indian conditions. The company's overarching "Rise" philosophy, as "Together We Rise", which underpins its brand narrative, emphasises empowerment, progress, and resilience. In the automotive business, this translates into a focused commitment to SUV leadership through engineering excellence, customer obsession, and progressive premiumisation (Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd., 2024).

Mahindra's positioning centres on three core pillars:

- **Authentic Capability:** Body-on-frame construction, proven off-road ability, and durability.
- **Commanding Road Presence:** Bold design language that conveys confidence and dominance.
- **Evolving Premiumisation:** Blending traditional ruggedness with modern technology, safety, comfort, and refinement.

A working positioning statement for Mahindra in the Indian SUV context can be articulated as: **"For Indian consumers seeking authentic SUV capability with contemporary features, Mahindra delivers rugged, reliable, and increasingly premium vehicles backed by decades of SUV expertise and a commitment to customer-centric innovation."**

Portfolio-Led Positioning Architecture

Mahindra's product portfolio is strategically designed to reinforce the master brand while addressing diverse consumer segments. Each model plays a distinct role:

- **Scorpio-N and Scorpio:** Serve as the core flagship and category authority. Positioned as the “Big Daddy of SUVs,” they emphasise unmissable road presence, power, and authentic toughness. These models anchor Mahindra’s heritage positioning.
- **Thar (including Thar Roxx):** Acts as the lifestyle and adventure halo product. It builds emotional connection and brand desirability by appealing to younger buyers and enthusiasts seeking individuality, freedom, and off-road capability.
- **XUV700:** Functions as the modern premium flagship. It strengthens Mahindra’s upward movement into the mid-premium segment through advanced technology, superior safety ratings (5-star Global NCAP), and family-oriented comfort features.
- **XUV 3XO:** Targets the high-growth compact SUV segment. It supports volume growth and attracts first-time SUV buyers by offering feature-rich experiences at accessible price points.
- **Bolero and Bolero Neo:** Maintain the brand’s strong foundation in rural and semi-urban markets through simplicity, reliability, and low cost of ownership.

This portfolio creates a clear ladder of aspiration from entry-level utility to lifestyle and premium offerings while consistently reinforcing the overarching “authentic SUV” identity.

Key Differentiation Strategies

Mahindra differentiates itself from competitors through several strategic levers:

- **Heritage of Authenticity:** Unlike many crossover-focused competitors, Mahindra maintains genuine body-on-frame SUVs with strong off-road credentials.
- **Presence and Dominance:** Bold, muscular design language that delivers commanding road presence as a recurring theme in product communication.
- **Balanced Premiumisation:** The brand is successfully moving upscale without abandoning its rugged roots, a delicate balance that many domestic manufacturers struggle to achieve.
- **Customer-Centric Focus:** Emphasis on “SUV Leadership through Customer Obsession” as stated in official strategy documents.

Positioning Proof Points

Several indicators validate the effectiveness of Mahindra’s positioning:

- Consistent leadership claims in the revenue market share within the SUV segment.
- Strong sales momentum and creation of waiting periods for popular models (especially Scorpio-N and Thar variants).
- Multiple 5-star Global NCAP safety ratings, enhancing credibility in the safety-conscious market.
- Positive industry commentary on the brand’s ability to blend capability with modernity (Autocar India, 2024–2025 reports).

Positioning Challenges and Tensions

While Mahindra’s positioning is strong, certain tensions require ongoing management:

- Balancing rugged authenticity with rising premium expectations.
- Maintaining portfolio coherence across diverse models and price points.
- Ensuring that elevated brand promises (leadership, customer obsession) are consistently delivered through ownership experience.

Overall, Mahindra has established a clear, differentiated, and credible positioning as one of India’s most authentic and capable SUV brands. Its portfolio strategy effectively supports this positioning while enabling participation across multiple growth segments.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key findings and brand positioning analysis presented in the previous chapters, this chapter offers actionable strategic recommendations for Mahindra & Mahindra to strengthen its brand perception and consolidate its market leadership in the Indian SUV segment. The recommendations focus on converting current strengths into sustainable competitive advantages while addressing emerging challenges.

Reinforce Brand Credibility Through Proof-Based Communication

Mahindra should intensify its use of evidence-based storytelling to strengthen consumer trust.

- Highlight independent validations such as 5-star Global NCAP ratings across multiple models more prominently in marketing campaigns.
- Develop transparent communication around real-world performance (ruggedness on Indian roads, long-term durability, and safety data).
- Create dedicated content series showcasing owner stories, especially in challenging terrains and daily usage scenarios, to reinforce the “authentic SUV” positioning.

This approach will help bridge the gap between aspirational positioning and consumer perception.

Elevate the Ownership Experience

As Mahindra moves into the premium space, ownership experience has become a critical differentiator. The following initiatives are recommended:

- **Service Excellence Programme:** Standardise and digitise service processes with clear timelines, transparent pricing, and proactive post-sale engagement.
- **Customer Community Building:** Expand the Thar community model to other popular line-ups (Scorpio-N and XUV700) through branded off-road events, ownership clubs, and digital platforms.
- **Feedback Integration System:** Implement a robust, real-time feedback mechanism that visibly demonstrates how customer inputs lead to product and service improvements.

Improving ownership satisfaction will convert satisfied customers into brand advocates and strengthen long-term loyalty.

Optimise Portfolio and Brand Architecture

To avoid dilution of brand equity, Mahindra should:

- Clearly define and communicate the distinct role of each model within the portfolio (e.g., Thar as lifestyle halo, Scorpio-N as capability flagship, XUV700 as premium family offering).
- Maintain consistency in the master brand narrative as “Authentic Capability with Modern Confidence”, pushing across all models and communication channels.
- Accelerate premiumisation selectively while protecting the core rugged DNA that differentiates Mahindra from crossover-focused competitors.

Strengthen Demand and Purchase Journey Management

High demand has created waiting periods that can either build excitement or cause frustration. Recommendations include:

- Implement proactive and transparent communication regarding delivery timelines through personalised updates and realistic expectations setting.
- Offer value-added engagement during the waiting period (virtual configurators, factory tours, accessory previews, and community access).
- Align dealership teams through structured training to ensure a consistent brand experience from enquiry to delivery.

Implementation Roadmap

Short-term (0–6 months): Focus on safety storytelling, service process standardisation, and transparent delivery communication.

Medium-term (6–18 months): Launch expanded owner communities, refine portfolio messaging, and introduce measurable customer experience KPIs.

Long-term (18+ months): Deepen emotional branding, explore sustainable mobility narratives (especially for future electric SUVs), and build a stronger premium identity while retaining core authenticity.

Measurement and Evaluation Framework

To track the effectiveness of these strategies, Mahindra should monitor the following metrics:

- Brand perception scores (trust, premium appeal, safety)
- Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) and Net Promoter Score (NPS)
- Repeat purchase and referral rates
- Share of voice and sentiment analysis in digital and traditional media

- Revenue market share and model-wise contribution

Regular tracking will enable timely course correction and demonstrate ROI on branding initiatives.

Mahindra is well-positioned to maintain and extend its leadership in the Indian SUV segment. By focusing on proof-based credibility, superior ownership experience, and coherent portfolio management, the company can transform its strong product pull into deeper emotional connections and long-term brand equity. Success will depend on consistent execution across marketing, product development, sales, and after-sales functions.

The next chapter will summarise the overall findings and suggest directions for future research.

CONCLUSION

This secondary research study examined the brand perception and market positioning of Mahindra in the rapidly growing Indian SUV segment. The findings reveal that Mahindra has successfully established itself as a strong and authentic SUV specialist, leveraging its heritage of ruggedness, commanding road presence, and progressive premiumisation across a well-structured portfolio comprising models like the Scorpio-N, Thar, and XUV700. While the brand enjoys positive consumer associations with durability, safety, value, and capability, rising expectations around ownership experience and service quality present key areas for improvement in an increasingly competitive and feature-parity market. Overall, Mahindra is well-positioned to sustain its leadership by reinforcing evidence-based communication, enhancing customer experience, and maintaining a coherent brand narrative that balances its rugged roots with modern aspirations. This study contributes to the understanding of domestic brand strategies in India's evolving automotive landscape and provides a foundation for future research, particularly through primary data on consumer perceptions and the impact of electric SUVs.

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