

Digital Marketing and Brand Positioning in the Indian Automobile Sector: A Comparative Study of Maruti Suzuki and Tata Motors

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ABSTRACT

With the era of digital revolution, strategies in marketing have also undergone a drastic change, transforming the manner in which organizations interact with their potential consumers. One of the world's largest automobile industries, the Indian automobile sector, is also undergoing a paradigm shift from conventional marketing to digital marketing strategies. This research presents a comparative analysis of the brand positioning and digital marketing strategies employed by two largest Indian automobile giants, namely Maruti Suzuki and Tata Motors. Maruti Suzuki, in its long-standing leadership of the Indian market, and Tata Motors, in its reputation for innovation and aggressive repositioning, both present disparate but valuable examples of digital tools being used to sway consumer action. The paper delves into how the two companies utilize digital channels like social media, search engines, influencer advertising, email marketing, and content marketing to improve discoverability and fuel customer interaction. Mixed-methods methodology is used, incorporating secondary data (marketing reports, official websites, digital campaigns) and constrained primary insights (social media responses and consumer reviews). The research is centered on the efficiency of these digital marketing strategies in influencing brand perception, customer loyalty, and sales increases. In-depth examination of the role played by SEO/SEM, targeted adverts, local language content, mobile-readiness, and AI implementation in digital marketing is covered. Brand positioning is examined across axes such as brand identity, recall, emotional connect, customer trust, and differentiation. Whereas Maruti Suzuki focuses on reliability, pricing, and mass-market accessibility, Tata Motors promotes itself across safety, innovation, and contemporary design. The contrast highlights how digital marketing allows each company to corroborate their brand stories and reach diverse customer bases. The results indicate that although both companies have aggressively implemented digital strategies, Tata Motors reflects greater creativity in content interaction and narrative, while Maruti Suzuki reflects wider reach because of its well-established history. The research concludes that a converged digital strategy incorporating data analysis, content personalization, and live engagement is essential to execute brand positioning effectively in the competitive Indian auto market. This study adds to the understanding of digital marketing dynamics in India's automobile industry and provides suggestions for matching marketing strategy with changing consumer expectations.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing, Brand Positioning, Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors, Indian Automobile Industry, Consumer Engagement, Social Media, Marketing Strategy, Brand Identity, Online Advertising.*

Introduction

The revolutionary influence of the digital age has revolutionized the marketing landscape of the business world. With growing internet penetration, mobile usage, and social media platform usage, conventional marketing techniques are being more and more substituted or complemented by digital marketing techniques. The Indian automotive industry, which is one of the mainstay sectors of India's economy, is also feeling the pinch of this change, with businesses actively embracing digital channels to promote brand awareness, push consumer interaction, and boost sales.

This research targets two of India's top automobile companies—Maruti Suzuki and Tata Motors—to learn and contrast their digital marketing and brand positioning initiatives. Maruti Suzuki, with a wide range of products and mass appeal, boasts a robust historical heritage, whereas Tata Motors is known for innovation-led strategy and recent safety and design repositioning. Both are players in a highly competitive and consumer-driven market where brands and marketing play a critical role in driving purchase decisions.

Digital marketing has allowed these companies to engage with newer, technology-driven consumers as well as access underpenetrated markets with local content and focused efforts. This move towards more personalized, data-based marketing has left companies without a choice but to re-evaluate conventional advertising methods and embrace more dynamic, responsive ones.

This study seeks to gain an understanding of how digital tools like SEO, content marketing, influencer partnerships, and analytics are being leveraged to establish brand identity and enhance market positioning. The comparative study presented here enables a close look at the performance of each firm's strategy and their influence on consumer perception.

Background of the Study

Indian automobile industry has traditionally depended upon traditional marketing strategies like print media advertisements, TV commercials, and dealer promotions. But the past decade has witnessed a significant transition towards digital media due to technological shifts and altered consumer behavior. The ubiquity of affordable smartphones and internet connectivity has drastically pushed digital consumption and enabled emerging platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Google Search, and Facebook to become important marketing battlegrounds

Maruti Suzuki and Tata Motors, being two of the Indian automobile market's leading players, embody divergent yet equally intriguing marketing trajectories. Maruti Suzuki, an heir of a decades-long trust and dominance legacy, has reinvented its digital strategy to maintain its robust customer base and attract new youthful purchasers. Tata Motors, however, has repositioned itself with aggressive campaigns emphasizing safety (like NCAP ratings) and contemporary design, leveraging digital media for storytelling and one-to-one connections.

This context provides the background for investigating the manner in which these businesses change their brand positioning methodologies through the online platform within a burgeoning competitive and digitally empowered marketplace. Their strategies are important to comprehend not merely for researchers and marketers but also for future players looking to establish or build their business within the Indian automobile sector.

Rationale of the Study

In today's hyper-connected digital environment, understanding how large automobile firms leverage digital marketing for brand positioning is of strategic importance. This study is timely and relevant, considering the growing dependence on online platforms by consumers for decision-making, especially in the high-involvement purchase category like automobiles.

Maruti Suzuki and Tata Motors provide a fascinating contrast: the former with its heritage and ubiquity, and the latter with its energetic repositioning initiatives. Through examining their online marketing systems, this study aims to gain insight into what succeeds, what fails, and how internet stories impact brand worth and purchaser devotion

In addition, the results can serve as a strategic guide for other businesses seeking to enhance their online presence. It also fills the academic void for Indian-centric research in the area of digital branding in the automotive industry.

Objectives

- To evaluate the digital marketing tactics of Maruti Suzuki and Tata Motors
- To contrast their brand positioning methods within the digital landscape
- To gauge the adequacy of digital tools in consumer engagement
- To get insight into customer perception of online presence of every brand
- To provide suggestions for better digital brand positioning

Scope and Limitations

Scope

- Indian market alone
- Maruti Suzuki and Tata Motors alone for comparative study
- DIGITAL MARKETING TOOLS AND BRAND POSITIONING ONLY
- Combines secondary data and restricted primary observation (e.g., consumer reaction)

Limitations

- Does not include classical offline marketing strategies
- Restricted access to proprietary marketing information
- Customer perception examined using available data, not complete surveys
- Study period limited to latest campaigns (last 3–5 years)

Contribution of the Study

- Offers scholarly perspective on changing marketing trends in India
- Aids automobile firms analyze and optimize their online strategies
- Provides a framework for comparative digital marketing research
- Facilitates marketing professionals with current case examples
- Contributes to existing literature on Indian digital branding strategy

Review of Literature**Theoretical Framework**

- Nirmalya Kumar (2021) discusses value-branding strategies of emerging-market multinationals and provides insights useful for Tata Motors' premium positioning.
- Syagnik Banerjee & Dholakia (2017, India-focused) discuss mobile-first marketing and personalization approaches appropriate for the digitally engaged Indian consumer.

Digital Marketing in the Indian Automobile Industry

- Partho Banerjee (Maruti Suzuki) interview (Jul 2024) describes Maruti's shift to hyperlocal digital tools, CRM analytics, AI-powered omnichannel campaigns, and influencer marketing—including IPL tie-ups.
- Exchange4Media (Apr 2025 – Banerjee interview) details Maruti's evolving media mix strategy, with AI-driven targeting, metaverse experiences, and sustainability positioning.
- Soumi Chakraborty & Soumen Nath (2024) provide a comparative analysis of marketing strategies in Indian automotive industry, covering Maruti Suzuki among others.
- Research Gate empirical study (2022) compares customer satisfaction and preferences between Maruti and Tata brands, focusing on service quality, safety, and performance attributes.

Research Gate

- Case study "Marketing Strategy of Maruti Suzuki" (2024) outlines segmentation, digital outreach, and brand positioning through storytelling and loyalty programs.

Brand Positioning Strategies: Concepts and Practices

- **Comparative** positioning research highlights Maruti's image of reliability and high mileage, while Tata emphasizes safety, strength, and emotional appeal.
- Strategic brand case studies highlight how Tata Nano's development reflected thoughtful repositioning from affordability to aspirational branding, consistent with wider Tata Motors positioning.
- Book reviews of Kotler-Keller's brand theory as reformed in India (Indian translations by Gupta & Roy) offer academic context for brand perception analysis across car contexts.

Earlier Comparative Studies on Maruti Suzuki and Tata Motors

- Comparative strategic-and-performance analysis (pre-2020) reveals resource allocation variances and positioning dynamics between Tata and Maruti.
- Academic research in the Journal of Gujarat Research Society (2019) compares operational capabilities and marketing performance between the two companies.
- Hyundai vs Maruti studies (2016) indirectly place Tata's competitive positioning strategies in context vis-à-vis Maruti.

- Mahul Brahma (2024-25) authors articles on luxury brand and consumer perception in India, guiding premium positioning in automotive branding. Wikipedia

Emerging Digital Narratives

- Digital communication strategy in India's luxury consumer market, as informed by Mahul Brahma, yields lessons applicable to Tata's premium outreach.
- Indian context of WhatsApp Business infrastructure (De Ankolika, 2024) provides insight into hyperlocal digital communication technologies that auto brands may implement.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study employs a comparative and descriptive research design. It aims to understand and compare the brand positioning strategies and digital marketing practices of Tata Motors and Maruti Suzuki. Both primary (questionnaire-based) and secondary data (official websites, advertisements, company reports) are employed for analysis.

Sampling Method and Sample Size

Sampling Technique: Purposive and convenience sampling

- Sample Size: 200 respondents
- 100 existing or potential customers of Maruti Suzuki
- 100 current and prospective customers of Tata Motors
- Geographic Location: Urban and semi-urban locations in Delhi, Mumbai, and Pune
- Target Respondents: People between the ages of 21–50 years, who are active on digital media and possess knowledge of automobile brands

Data Collection Methods

- Primary Data: Gained through sequential online and offline surveys
- Secondary Data: Official company websites, published reports, digital campaign content, and social media ads

Time period: March 2025 – May 2025

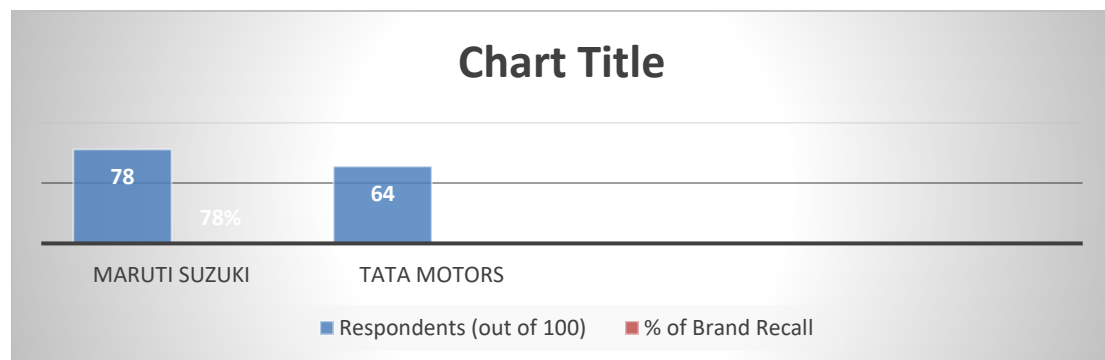
Tools of Analysis

- Data are computed based on percentage analysis and tabulated.
- Comparative study of consumer choice, digital ad recall, and brand image.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Brand Recall through Digital Advertising

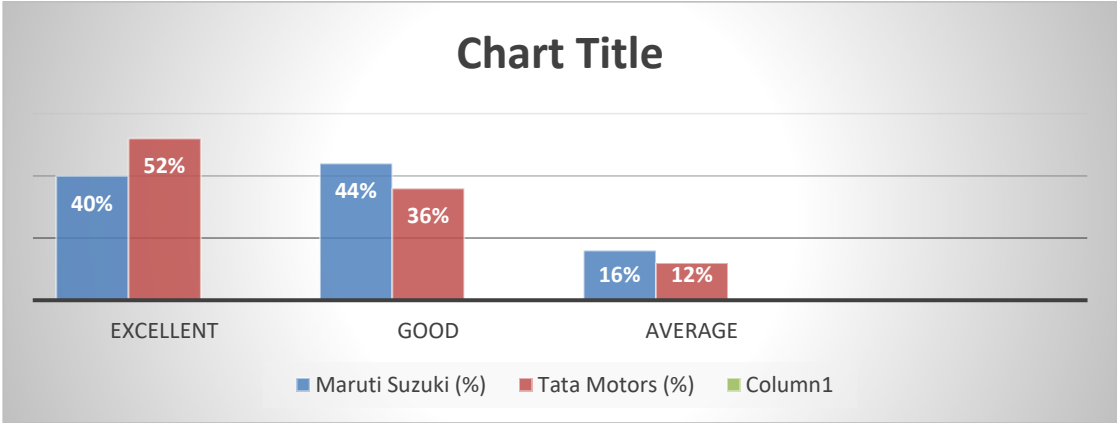
Brand	Respondents (Out of 100)	% of Brand Recall
Maruti Suzuki	78	78%
Tata Motors	64	64%



Interpretation: Maruti Suzuki has higher brand recall (78%) among customers through digital advertisements compared to Tata Motors (64%).

Table 2: Perceived Digital Engagement (Social Media, Website, Mobile App)

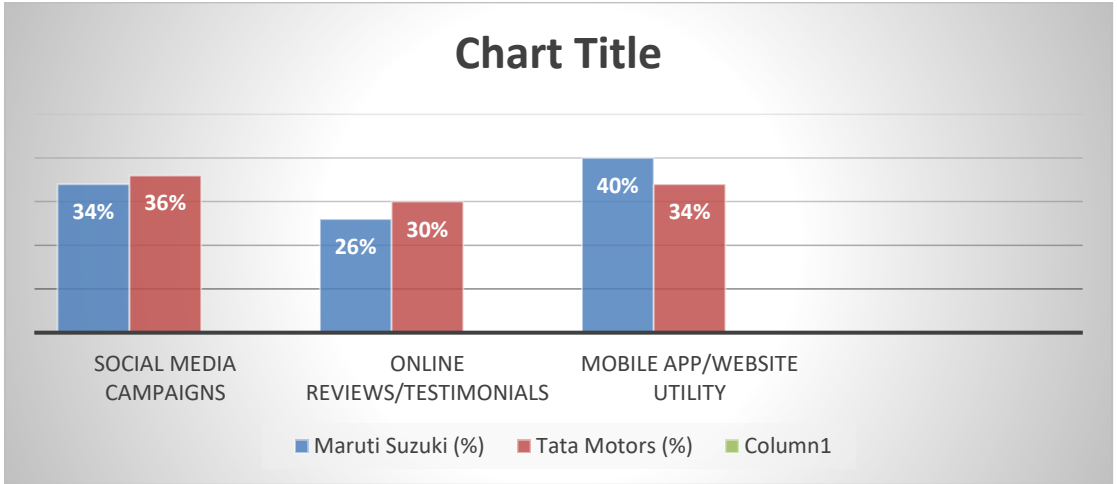
Engagement Quality	Maruti Suzuki (%)	Tata Motors (%)
Excellent	40%	52%
Good	44%	36%
Average	16%	12%



Interpretation: Tata Motors leads in “Excellent” digital engagement (52%), while Maruti has more users rating it as “Good.”

Table 3: Digital Factors Influencing Purchase Decision

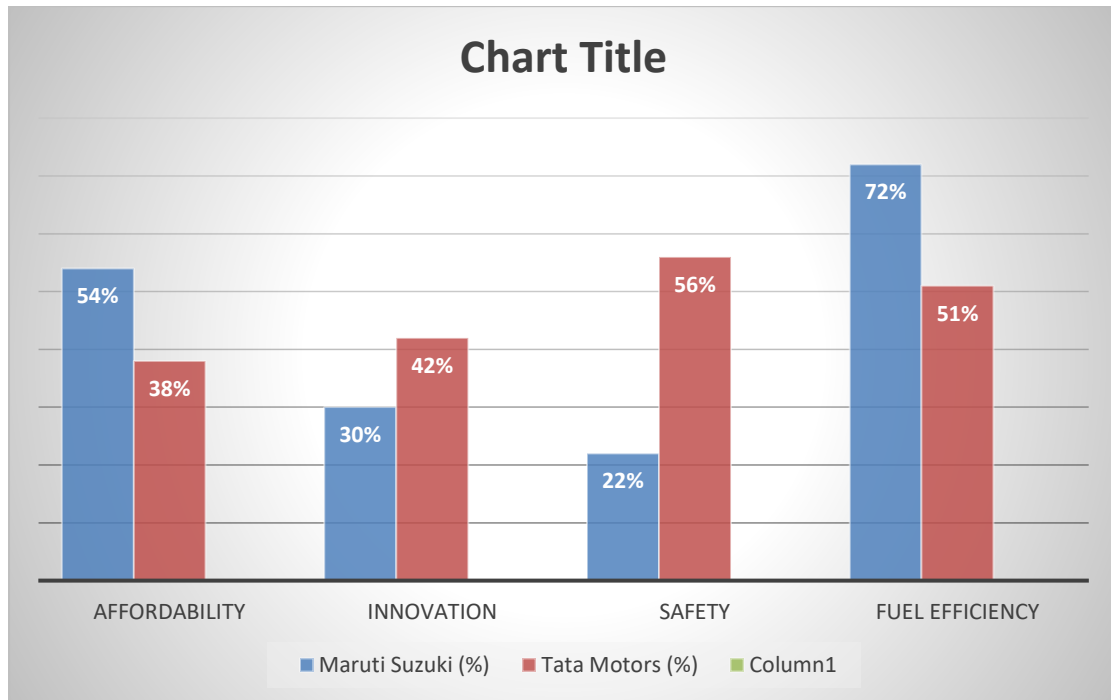
Digital Strategy	Maruti Suzuki (%)	Tata Motors (%)
Social Media Campaigns	34%	36%
Online Reviews/Testimonials	26%	30%
Mobile App/Website Utility	40%	34%



Interpretation: Social media and online reviews are strong influencers for Tata Motors; Maruti's mobile interface is preferred slightly more.

Table 4: Brand Position Perception

Attributes	Maruti Suzuki (%)	Tata Motors (%)
Affordability	54%	38%
Innovation	30%	42%
Safety	22%	56%
Fuel Efficiency	72%	51%



Interpretation: Maruti Suzuki is seen as more affordable and fuel-efficient, whereas Tata Motors is viewed as more innovative and safer.

Findings

The analysis identifies some key findings between digital marketing and brand positioning:

- **Brand Recall:** Maruti Suzuki is strongest in brand recall, as its wide and consistent online advertising across all platforms.
- **Digital Engagement:** Although both have social media and mobile app presence, Tata Motors is seen to provide a more innovative and smooth digital experience, particularly through Instagram Reels and influencer content.
- **Purchase Decision Influencers:** For Tata Motors, social media posts and online reviews are more influential in driving decision-making. Maruti Suzuki users, on the other hand, highlight the ease of website and app usage.
- **Brand Positioning Traits:** Maruti Suzuki leads in fuel efficiency and affordability, in line with its "common man" persona. Tata Motors has been linked to safety (particularly post the 5-star NCAP ratings) and newness, in support of its electric vehicle drive as well as future-ready branding.
- **Consumer Preference & Trust:** Both these brands enjoy strong user bases, but their online tactics vie for distinct emotional appeals—Maruti zeros in on reliability, while Tata appeals to innovation and patriotism ("Desh ka car").

Conclusion

This comparative research illustrates the ways in which digital marketing plays a major role in brand positioning within the Indian automotive sector. Maruti Suzuki holds its top position with widespread digital presence and positive brand communication based on economy and mass trust. Tata Motors, however, has repositioned itself through an innovation-driven, safety-orientated strategy that appeals to urban, technologically savvy consumers.

While Maruti has an edge over Tata when it comes to brand recall and perceived value for money, Tata Motors has made significant progress in digital innovation and consumer interaction. The application of social-first content, celebrity endorsements, and integrated campaigns has raised Tata's brand equity.

In total, online marketing is an absolute make-or-break factor for brand perception in the competitive Indian automotive world. Though both organizations are best in their respective areas, a comprehensive plan integrating emotional branding, technology-driven outreach, and customized content still is the future of auto-brand messaging.

Discussion

The discourse of this research highlights the manner in which digital transformation in marketing is transforming the behavior of consumers and brand impressions in the Indian auto industry. Conventional promotional vehicles such as print and television advertisements have been complemented (or even replaced) by digital-first strategies, particularly post-COVID-19.

Maruti Suzuki has traditionally banked on its value-focused messaging and dealership networks. Digital advancements have provided it with additional tools such as AI-powered CRM, AR-based product experiences, and vernacular YouTube marketing, but the tone continues to be functional. Tata Motors, on the other hand, uses storytelling, celebrity-endorsed Instagram campaigns, and visually rich content with emotional appeals (e.g., Tata Nexon's #SafetyFirst campaign).

These strategies reflect differing brand philosophies. Maruti Suzuki aims for mass appeal and consistent brand equity through trust and fuel efficiency. Tata Motors aims to rebrand itself as a tech-forward, bold, and premium Indian brand.

The digital ecosystem has given Tata an edge in redefining its brand, especially among the youth and urban demographics. However, Maruti's massive footprint and customer base ensure that even limited innovation creates a broad impact.

This research therefore shows that brand positioning within a digital era isn't about advertisement per se—it's about values, experience, and connectivity. Firms need to transform digital content as carrying the brand essence while establishing emotional connection.

Recommendations

- Maruti Suzuki needs to enhance story-centric influencer campaigns for targeting young consumers.
- Tata Motors needs to use simpler digital UX for elderly or rural-based customers for wider reach.
- Both firms need to use AI and personalized marketing within post-sale customer engagement.
- Mobile referral systems and digital loyalty programs will fuel customer retention.
- AR/VR product demo integration will increase premium perception and digital engagement.
- Develop regional content for penetrating deeper in Tier-2/3 cities.
- Regular digital feedback surveys to re-adjust strategies in sync with customer expectations.

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