



# **An Empirical Analysis of Brand Equity and Customer Perception: A Study of Harsha Toyota**

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**ABSTRACT:** Brand equity has emerged as a critical determinant of organizational success in highly competitive markets, particularly in the automobile industry where brand perceptions strongly influence consumer purchase decisions. This study examines the brand equity of Harsha Toyota in Hyderabad, with a focus on understanding customer awareness, perceptions, satisfaction levels, and loyalty toward Toyota products and services. The research adopts a customer-based brand equity framework and employs both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 100 respondents using quota sampling. The analysis uses percentage and descriptive statistical techniques, supported by tabular representations. The findings reveal that Toyota enjoys strong brand recognition, positive brand image, high service satisfaction, and competitive pricing perception among customers. However, gaps exist in awareness generation, rural and semi-urban outreach, and post-service engagement. The study concludes that strengthening promotional strategies and enhancing customer relationship management can further reinforce Harsha Toyota's brand equity.

**KEYWORDS:** Brand Equity, Customer Perception, Automobile Industry, Toyota, Service Quality

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In today's competitive marketplace, brands play a pivotal role in influencing consumer behavior and shaping organizational performance. A brand is not merely a name, logo, or symbol but a composite of perceptions, experiences, emotions, and associations held by consumers. Brand equity refers to the value added to a product or service by its brand name, which manifests in consumer preference, loyalty, and willingness to pay a premium.

Brand equity represents an intangible asset that enhances a firm's market position and long-term profitability. Strong brand equity leads to numerous advantages such as customer loyalty, reduced sensitivity to price changes, enhanced effectiveness of marketing communication, and opportunities for brand extensions. In the automobile industry, where functional features are often comparable across competitors, brand equity becomes a decisive factor in purchase decisions.

Toyota Motor Corporation is globally recognized for its quality, reliability, innovation, and customer-centric philosophy. In India, Toyota has established a strong presence through its products and dealer networks. Harsha Toyota, a prominent Toyota dealer in Hyderabad, plays a significant role in delivering Toyota's brand promise through sales and after-sales services. Understanding the level of brand equity at Harsha Toyota is therefore essential for evaluating customer perceptions and identifying areas for improvement.

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Brand equity has been widely studied by researchers across marketing and management disciplines. Aaker (1991) conceptualized brand equity as a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand name that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service. These assets include brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and proprietary brand assets.

Keller (1993) introduced the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, defining brand equity as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to marketing activities. According to Keller, strong brand equity arises when consumers have high brand awareness and hold strong, favorable, and unique brand associations.

Lassar et al. emphasized the importance of customer-based brand equity and proposed dimensions such as performance, social image, value, trustworthiness, and attachment. Their study highlighted that strong brand equity enables successful brand extensions and long-term customer relationships.

Chen and Chen examined the negative effects of failed brand extensions on parent brand equity and found that unsuccessful extensions could dilute brand equity depending on the nature of the brand's existing equity. Kapareliotis explored financial and marketing approaches to measuring brand equity, emphasizing the relevance of both perspectives for managerial decision-making. Kish discussed global brand equity measurement systems and highlighted the importance of consistent tracking across markets.

Studies by Mackey and Bamert extended brand equity research to service industries, demonstrating that consumer-based brand equity measures are applicable beyond tangible products. Raj's research in the food industry underscored repeat purchase behavior as a key indicator of brand equity.

Overall, the literature establishes that brand equity is multidimensional, customer-centric, and strategically vital across both product and service markets, including the automobile sector.

### **III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The primary objective of the study is to assess and analyze the brand equity of Harsha Toyota in the Hyderabad market. The specific objectives are:

1. To examine customer awareness and perception of Toyota and Harsha Toyota.
2. To identify key attributes influencing customer preference for Toyota vehicles and services.
3. To assess customer satisfaction with Toyota's service quality and pricing.
4. To analyze the role of brand name in purchase and service decisions.
5. To identify gaps in service delivery and brand communication.
6. To provide suggestions for strengthening brand equity at Harsha Toyota.

### **IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology defines the systematic approach adopted to collect, analyze, and interpret data relevant to the research problem.

#### **Research Design**

The study is descriptive in nature, aiming to describe customer perceptions and evaluate brand equity dimensions based on survey responses.

#### **Sources of Data**

- **Primary Data:** Collected through a structured questionnaire administered to customers of Harsha Toyota.
- **Secondary Data:** Obtained from company records, annual reports, books, journals, and credible websites related to brand equity and Toyota.

#### **Sampling Design**

- **Sampling Technique:** Quota sampling (non-probability sampling).
- **Sample Size:** 100 respondents.
- **Sampling Unit:** Customers using Toyota vehicles and services.

#### **Data Collection Method**

The researcher interacted with approximately five respondents per day over a period of four weeks to collect data.

#### **Tools for Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using percentage analysis and descriptive statistics. The results are presented through tables and interpretations.

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**V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

**Table 1: Usage of Toyota Services**

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	100	100%
No	0	0%

**Interpretation:** All respondents surveyed were users of Toyota services, indicating complete brand penetration within the sample.

**Table 2: Attributes Considered While Purchasing a Vehicle**

Attribute	Respondents	Percentage
Brand Name	40	40%
Quality	25	25%
Comfort	12	12%
Service	10	10%
Price	8	8%
Performance	5	5%

**Interpretation:** Brand name emerged as the most influential factor, followed by quality, highlighting the strength of Toyota’s brand equity.

**Table 3: Awareness of Toyota Services**

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Aware	70	70%
Not Aware	30	30%

**Interpretation:** While awareness levels are high, there remains scope for improvement through enhanced promotional activities.

**Table 4: Satisfaction with Toyota Service Quality**

Rating	Respondents	Percentage
Excellent	60	60%
Very Good	20	20%
Good	10	10%
Average	10	10%
Poor	0	0%

**Interpretation:** A majority of respondents expressed high satisfaction, reinforcing Toyota’s reputation for service excellence.

**VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The analysis indicates that Harsha Toyota enjoys strong brand equity supported by high customer satisfaction, positive service perception, and strong brand name influence. Customers primarily associate Toyota with reliability, quality, and trustworthy service. The dominance of brand name as a purchase determinant confirms the effectiveness of Toyota’s long-term brand-building strategies.

However, the study also reveals certain gaps. Awareness levels, although substantial, are not universal. Dependence on word-of-mouth suggests limited reach of formal promotional channels. Additionally, customers expressed interest in enhanced service features and improved billing efficiency.

#### **VII. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

1. Toyota has a strong and positive brand image among customers in Hyderabad.
2. Brand name is the most influential factor in vehicle purchase decisions.
3. Service quality is perceived as excellent by a majority of respondents.
4. Pricing is considered competitive compared to other automobile brands.
5. Word-of-mouth is the primary source of brand awareness.
6. Customers expect continuous improvement and additional service features.

#### **VIII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

1. The sample size of 100 respondents limits generalization of findings.
2. The study is confined to Hyderabad and nearby areas only.
3. Time constraints restricted broader data collection.
4. Responses may be influenced by personal bias of respondents.
5. The study focuses only on brand equity and not on financial or operational aspects.

#### **IX. CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that Harsha Toyota possesses strong brand equity driven by customer trust, service quality, and brand reputation. Toyota's consistent focus on quality, reliability, and customer satisfaction has resulted in high levels of brand loyalty. Nevertheless, to sustain and enhance its competitive advantage, Harsha Toyota must invest in broader promotional strategies, expand its reach to semi-urban and rural markets, and continuously innovate its service offerings. Strengthening customer engagement and communication will further solidify Toyota's brand equity in the long run.

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