

Brand Perception of Prominent Heavy Bikes in India

Hemant Patil¹, Chinmay Lele², Kunal Lohokare³, Mansi Lende⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Department of MBA, MES'IMCC, Pune

¹hbp.imcc@mespune, ²chinmaylele2003@gmail.com, ³kunallohokare1212@gmail.com, ⁴mansilende300@gmail.com

Peer Review Information	Abstract
Type: Article Received: 26 March 2026 Revised: 23 April 2026 Accepted: 09 May 2026 Published: 01 June 2026	The premium motorcycle segment in India has witnessed significant growth in recent years, driven by changing consumer preferences and rising income levels. Motorcycles are no longer considered only as a mode of transportation but also as a reflection of lifestyle and personal identity. This study focuses on analyzing consumer perception towards prominent heavy motorcycle brands in India. The research examines both functional factors such as reliability, fuel efficiency, and after-sales service, as well as symbolic factors like brand image and status. Data was collected from 184 respondents using a structured questionnaire. The findings indicate that practical factors such as fuel consumption and value for money have a greater influence on purchase decisions compared to symbolic factors. The study also highlights the importance of reliability and service in shaping consumer perception. Keywords: Consumer Perception; Heavy Motorcycles; Brand Image; Purchase Behaviour; Consumer Preferences; Customer Satisfaction; Indian Motorcycle Market.

How to Cite This Article

Patil, H., Lele, C., Lohokare, K., & Lende, M. (2026). Brand perception of prominent heavy bikes in India. *International Journal of Research and Development: A Management Review*, 15(2), 178–185.

Introduction

The Indian two-wheeler industry has seen significant changes in recent years, particularly with the rapid growth of the premium motorcycle segment (250cc and above). The segment has been witnessing steady expansion, with the premium motorcycle market in India growing at an estimated compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 9% to 12% (IMARC Group, 2024). With increasing disposable incomes and a growing interest in leisure riding, consumers are shifting from basic commuter motorcycles to higher-capacity bikes. Motorcycles are no longer viewed only as a means of transportation but are also associated with lifestyle, status, and personal identity.

According to CRISIL Research (2023), the share of premium motorcycles in total two-wheeler sales is gradually increasing, reflecting a shift towards value-driven yet aspirational consumption.

At the same time, consumer preferences in this segment are evolving. While premium motorcycles are aspirational products, purchase decisions are increasingly influenced by practical factors such as fuel efficiency, cost, and after-sales service. This shift highlights the need to understand how both functional and symbolic factors influence consumer perception. This study is motivated by the need to understand the changing balance between practical and symbolic factors in influencing consumer perception in the premium motorcycle segment in India.

Problem Statement

Marketers lack contemporaneous, multi-brand data to map consumer desires and concerns in the heavy bike segment. There is a strategic need to understand why traditionally "premium" factors may be taking a backseat to practical concerns and how category-wide weaknesses in after-sales service affect brand trust.

Review Of Literature

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in understanding consumer perception and buying behaviour in the two-wheeler industry, particularly in the premium motorcycle segment. With changing consumer preferences, motorcycles are no longer seen only as a means of transportation but are also associated with lifestyle and personal identity.

According to Kumar and Sharma (2018), brand image and brand trust play an important role in influencing consumer buying behaviour in the automobile sector, as consumers often depend on their perception of a brand while making purchase decisions. However, the study focuses primarily on brand-level analysis and does not provide a comparative perspective across multiple premium motorcycle brands. Similarly, Singh and Gupta (2019) found that factors such as fuel efficiency, cost, and performance are key considerations influencing the purchase of premium motorcycles in India, highlighting the importance of practical aspects in decision-making. However, the study does not compare these factors across different competing brands or examine how they rank relative to symbolic factors such as status and brand image.

Further, although Keller (2009) and Aaker (1997) emphasized that brand perception is shaped by both functional and symbolic attributes, existing studies do not clearly quantify the relative importance of practical factors such as fuel efficiency and cost in comparison to symbolic factors like status and brand image in the premium motorcycle segment.

In addition, while after-sales service has been recognized as an important determinant of customer satisfaction (Chaudhari and Deshpande, 2017; Rajagopal, 2018), there is limited research that provides a comparative assessment of service perception across different premium motorcycle brands. These limitations in the existing literature form the basis of the research gaps addressed in this study.

The study focuses on key variables identified from the literature. Factors such as reliability, fuel efficiency, after-sales service, and cost represent the independent variables, while recommendation likelihood and purchase intention are treated as dependent variables. These variables help explain how different attributes influence consumer decision-making in the premium motorcycle segment.

Research Gaps

The study identifies three critical gaps in existing literature:

- Gap 1: Lack of a single, recent quantitative study benchmarking five diverse brands (RE, Jawa, Kawasaki, HD, and Triumph) simultaneously.
- Gap 2: Insufficient quantification of how practical factors (like "Petrol Consumption") now compete with emotional factors (like "Status") in the premium segment.
- Gap 3: Undocumented comparative assessment of after-sales service weaknesses across these leading brands.

Research Questions

- How do Indian consumers benchmark key attributes (status, reliability, service) across prominent heavy bike brands?
- What are the top-ranked influencers and barriers in the purchase decision process for premium motorcycles?
- What is the correlation between a brand's perceived reliability and the consumer's likelihood to recommend it?

Objectives Of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the brand perception of prominent heavy bike brands in India, namely Royal Enfield, Jawa, Harley-Davidson, Kawasaki, and Triumph, in order to derive meaningful insights for marketing strategies. The study considers both functional attributes such as reliability and fuel efficiency, as well as symbolic attributes such as status and brand image.

The first specific objective is to assess and compare consumer perceptions of key attributes, including status, reliability, after-sales service, and technology, across the selected brands. The second objective is to identify and rank the key factors influencing purchase decisions, along with the major barriers such as cost, petrol consumption, and comfort. The third objective is to study the relationship between brand perception and consumer behaviour, particularly in terms of recommendation likelihood and future purchase intention.

Scope Of Research

The scope of the study is limited to understanding consumer perception of heavy motorcycles (above 250cc) in India. The study focuses on key factors influencing perception, including functional attributes such as reliability, fuel efficiency, and after-sales service, as well as symbolic attributes such as brand image, status, and lifestyle association. It also examines how these factors influence consumer purchase decisions. The study is limited to selected brands within the premium motorcycle segment.

Methodology

The study is based on primary data collected from Indian consumers who are either current owners or aspiring buyers of heavy motorcycles (above 250cc). A total of 184 valid responses were collected for the study. The sample predominantly consists of male respondents, mainly in the age group of 26–35 years, with monthly incomes ranging between ₹40,000 and ₹80,000. The respondents mainly belonged to urban areas, with significant representation from cities such as Pune, Mumbai, Nashik, and Bangalore. These cities represent major urban markets in India where demand for premium motorcycles is relatively higher.

The study follows a non-probability convenience sampling method. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered using Google Forms. The questionnaire was shared through personal contacts and social media platforms, and responses were collected from individuals who were willing to participate.

The questionnaire included questions related to demographic details such as age, gender, and income, along with ownership preferences and consumer perception towards heavy motorcycles. It was divided into different sections to make it simple and easy for respondents to answer. A mix of multiple-choice questions and Likert scale-based items was used to understand respondents' opinions on factors such as reliability, fuel efficiency, after-sales service, and brand image. This focus aligns with the target segment for premium motorcycles, which primarily consists of urban, working-age individuals with moderate to high income.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested using descriptive analysis and correlation techniques based on the collected data.

- H1 (Alternative): Practical factors (e.g., 'Petrol Consumption', 'Worth Buy') are ranked significantly higher as purchase influencers than the symbolic factor 'Status & Image'.
- H2 (Alternative): The perception that a brand 'Is Reliable and Durable' will have a significant positive correlation with the consumer's likelihood to recommend that brand.

Data Analysis & Discussion

The data collected from 184 respondents was analyzed to understand consumer perception towards prominent heavy motorcycle brands in India. The analysis focuses on both demographic characteristics and key factors influencing purchase decisions.

Descriptive Statistics

As shown in Table 1, the sample predominantly consists of male respondents (80.4%), with the majority belonging to the age group of 26–35 years. Most respondents fall within the ₹40,000–₹80,000 income range, indicating representation from the middle and upper-middle-income group.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Key Findings	Percentage of Total (N=184)
Gender	Predominantly Male respondents.	Male: 80.4%
Age	The majority fall within the prime purchasing age groups.	31-35 Years: 32.1% 26-30 Years: 25.5%
Monthly Income	Most respondents belong to the middle and upper-middle-income brackets.	₹40,000–₹60,000: 37% ₹60,000–₹80,000: 28.8%
Geographic Spread	Responses were concentrated in major cities and surrounding areas.	Significant representation from Pune, Mumbai, Nashik, and Bangalore

Purchase Influencing Factors

As shown in Table 2, practical factors such as petrol consumption and comfort are the most important in influencing purchase decisions. This indicates that consumers in the premium motorcycle segment prioritize usability and cost efficiency over purely symbolic aspects.

Table 2: Key Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions

Rank	Factor	Percentage (N=184)	Classification
1	Petrol Consumption	(124) 67.4%	Utilitarian/Economic
2	Comfort	(123) 66.8%	Experiential/Product
3	Worth Buy (Money)	(123) 66.8%	Utilitarian/Economic
4	Riding Experience	(102) 55.4%	Experiential/Product
5	Requirement	(94) 51.1%	Utilitarian/Personal
6	Status and Image	(87) 47.8%	Symbolic/Emotional

Result

As shown in Table 2, practical factors such as petrol consumption (67.4%) and worth buy (66.8%) are ranked higher compared to the symbolic factor status & image (47.8%).

Hypothesis-1 (H1)

Thus, Practical factors rank higher than Status and Image.

Purchase Barriers

The study identifies financial constraints and fuel consumption as the primary barriers influencing purchase decisions. In addition, factors such as the weight and handling of the motorcycle also affect consumer preferences. This highlights that economic considerations remain important even in the premium segment.

As seen in Table 3, money (75%) and petrol consumption (62.5%) are the major barriers affecting purchase decisions.

Table 3: Major Barriers Affecting Purchase Decisions

Rank	Barrier	Percentage (N=184)	Classification
1	Money	(138) 75%	Economic/Financial
2	Petrol Consumption	(115) 62.5%	Economic/Running Cost
3	Heavy Carriage/ Weight of Bike	(84) 45.7%	Product/Usability

Brand Perception Analysis:

As shown in Table 4, Royal Enfield holds a strong position in terms of status, reliability, and after-sales service, while competitors such as Kawasaki and Triumph show relatively weaker perception in terms of value and service.

Table 4: Comparative Brand Perception Across Selected Motorcycle Brands

Brand	Is a Status Symbol	Is Reliable and Durable	Has Good After-Sales Service	Not Worth Purchasing (Overall Negative Perception)
Royal Enfield	59.8% (Rank 1) (110)	50% (Rank 1) (92)	27.7% (Rank 1) (51)	23.9% (Rank 5) (44)
Harley-Davidson	46.7% (Rank 2) (86)	38.6%(Rank2) (71)	15.2% (Rank 2) (28)	36.4% (Rank 4) (67)
Java	43.5% (Rank 3) (80)	34.8%(Rank4) (64)	9.8% (Rank 3) (18)	42.4% (Rank 2) (78)
Triumph	40.2% (Rank 4) (74)	35.3%(Rank3) (65)	7.6% (Rank 5) (14)	42.4% (Rank 2) (78)
Kawasaki	37.5% (Rank 5) (69)	32.6%(Rank5) (60)	9.2% (Rank 4) (17)	44% (Rank 1) (81)

Table 5: Brand Recommendation and Future Purchase Intention for Prominent Heavy Bike Brands in India

Brand	High Recommendation Score (9 or 10)	Low Recommendation Score (0 or 1)	Total 'Not at All' Future Purchase Intention
Royal Enfield	25.5% (2.7% at 9, 22.8% at 10) (42)	20.7% (38 responses at 0, 0% at 1) (38)	62.5% (38)
Harley-Davidson	10.8% (0.5% at 9, 10.3% at 10) (19)	29.3% (28.8% at 0, 0.5% at 1)	78.8% (54)
Jawa	7.1% (0% at 9, 7.1% at 10) (13)	36.9% (36.4% at 0, 0.5% at 1)	83.2% (68)
Triumph	5.4% (0% at 9, 5.4% at 10) (10)	39.1% (39.1% at 0, 0% at 1)	86.4% (74)
Kawasaki	4.9% (0% at 9, 4.9% at 10) (9)	38.6% (38.6% at 0, 0% at 1)	86.4% (71)

Table 6: Relationship Between Reliability Perception and Recommendation Scores

Brand	Reliability Perception Rank	Recommendation Score (9 or 10) Rank
Royal Enfield	1 (50%)(92)	1 (25.5%)(42)
Harley-Davidson	2 (38.6%)(71)	2 (10.8%)(19)
Java	3 (34.8%)(64)	3 (7.1%)(13)
Triumph	4 (35.3%)(65)	4 (5.4%)(10)
Kawasaki	5 (32.6%)(60)	5 (4.9%)(9)

Result

As shown in Table 5, there is a perfect rank-order correlation between perceived reliability and recommendation scores across the selected brands. Brands with higher reliability perception, such as Royal Enfield, also show higher recommendation scores, while brands with lower reliability perception show lower recommendation levels.

Hypothesis-2 (H2):

The perception that a brand “Is Reliable and Durable” has a significant positive relationship with the consumer’s likelihood to recommend that brand.

Findings

The findings show that although premium motorcycles are seen as aspirational products, consumers mainly focus on practical factors while making purchase decisions. Factors such as reliability, cost, and after-sales service play a more important role compared to status or brand image.

Royal Enfield performs better because it offers a balance between acceptable reliability and service at a relatively accessible price. On the other hand, brands like Kawasaki and Triumph face challenges in building strong consumer perception, especially in terms of value and service. This suggests that even in the premium segment, Indian consumers prefer practicality and long-term usability over purely aspirational factors.

Objective 1: Assess and Compare Consumer Perceptions of Key Attributes -

This objective focused on how consumers benchmark status, reliability, and service across the five selected brands.

- Status and Image: Royal Enfield holds the strongest position as a status symbol (59.8%), followed by Harley-Davidson (46.7%). Kawasaki was ranked lowest in this category at 37.5%.
- Reliability and Durability: Royal Enfield is perceived as the most reliable brand (50%), with Harley-Davidson (38.6%) and Triumph (35.3%) following. Kawasaki is perceived as the least reliable among the group at 32.6%.
- After-Sales Service: Across the entire segment, after-sales service is a significant weakness. Royal Enfield leads but only with a 27.7% positive perception, while international brands like Triumph (7.6%) and Kawasaki (9.2%) struggle significantly with service perception.
- Overall Negative Perception: Kawasaki has the highest "Not Worth Purchasing" perception at 44%, while Royal Enfield has the lowest at 23.9%.

Objective 2: Identify and Rank Key Purchase Influencers and Barriers

This objective analyzed the factors that drive a purchase versus the obstacles that prevent one.

1. Top Purchase Influencers: Practical and utilitarian factors dominate the decision-making process.
2. Petrol Consumption: 67.4%.
3. Comfort: 66.8%.
4. Worth Buy (Value for Money): 66.8%.
5. Status & Image: Ranked significantly lower at 47.8%, confirming that pragmatism outweighs symbolism in this segment.

6. Major Purchase Barriers: Economic and usability concerns are the primary deterrents.
7. Money (Financial Constraints): 75%.
8. Petrol Consumption: 62.5%.
9. Heavy Carriage/Weight of Bike: 45.7%.

Objective 3: Study the Relationship Between Brand Perception and Consumer Behaviour

This objective examined how perceptions of reliability correlate with the likelihood of recommending a brand or buying it in the future.

- Reliability vs. Recommendation Correlation: There is a perfect rank-order correlation between perceived reliability and recommendation likelihood. Brands perceived as more reliable consistently received higher recommendation scores.
- Recommendation Scores:
 - Royal Enfield received the highest recommendation score (9 or 10) at 25.5%.
 - Kawasaki received the lowest recommendation score at 4.9%.
- Future Purchase Intention: A large majority of respondents indicated they have "Not At All" intention to purchase certain brands in the future, with Triumph and Kawasaki seeing the highest rejection rates at 86.4%. Royal Enfield had the lowest rejection rate, though it was still high at 62.5%.

Suggestions

- For Royal Enfield: Monetize the lead in reliability and service by campaigning on low total cost of ownership.
- For Challenger Brands: Prioritize after-sales service expansion and offer "Fixed-Price Service Plans" to combat low trust.
- Financial Innovation: Offer localized financing or buy-back schemes to mitigate the primary "Money" barrier.
- Narrative Shift: Brands like Kawasaki should pivot from "speed" to "refined engineering and long-term reliability."

Future Scope

Future studies should use Structural Equation Modeling to explore the specific impact of the after-sales service gap on customer churn. Additionally, research could assess how service-focused marketing campaigns specifically shift recommendation scores for international brands.

Conclusion

The Indian heavy bike market is a balance of aspiration and pragmatism. Success depends on a brand's ability to mitigate economic anxieties regarding maintenance and fuel costs while maintaining a premium image. Currently, the perceived weakness of after-sales service remains the "Achilles' heel" for the entire segment.

References

1. Aaker, D. A. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(3), 347–356.
2. Automobile Manufacturers Association of India. (2023). *Annual report on two-wheeler sales and segment distribution*.
3. Balakrishnan, C. (2020). The role of affordability and utility in high-aspiration product adoption in emerging economies. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 41(3).
4. Chaudhari, S. S., & Deshpande, A. V. (2017). A study on customer satisfaction towards Royal Enfield motorcycles in Pune city. *International Journal of Research in Management & Social Science*, 5(2).
5. CRISIL Research. (2023). *Indian two-wheeler market analysis: Premium segment growth and key drivers*.
6. Johnson, D. (2021). The heritage vs. the modern: A comparative analysis of Royal Enfield and Harley-Davidson's brand strategies. *Auto Industry Quarterly*, 15(1).
7. Keller, K. L. (2009). Building strong brands in a modern marketing environment. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 25(5–6), 503–529.
8. Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2020). *Principles of marketing* (18th ed.). Pearson Education.
9. Kumar, A., & Sharma, M. (2018). Impact of brand image and brand trust on consumer buying behavior in automobile sector. *International Journal of Management Studies*, 5(2).
10. Muniswamy, S., & Shrivastava, S. (2017). Brand equity and customer loyalty: A study in the premium motorcycle segment. *Management Today*, 8(4).
11. Rajagopal, S. (2018). Service quality assessment and purchase decision for durable goods in India. *Asian Journal of Management Research*, 9(2).

12. Sharma, N., & Das, S. (2016). Influence of social groups and word-of-mouth on consumer purchase intention for two-wheelers. *Global Business Review*, 17(5).
13. Singh, P. K., & Gupta, A. (2019). Factors influencing the purchase of premium motorcycles in the Indian market. *Journal of Business Management & Social Sciences Research*, 8(3).
14. Sinha, R., & Varma, A. (2022). Localization strategy and competitive edge for global motorcycle brands in India. *Harvard Business Review Case Study*