# Brand Perception and Consumer Behavior for Small Car's in Mandi Town, Himachal Pradesh

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**Abstract - In the evolving landscape of India's automobile sector, small cars have emerged as a popular choice among urban and semi-urban populations. This research examines the dynamics of brand perception and consumer behavior in the small car segment within Mandi town, Himachal Pradesh. By employing both primary and secondary data sources, including structured questionnaires answered by 100 respondents, the study explores key factors influencing brand preference, purchasing behavior, and post-purchase satisfaction. The findings highlight that safety, performance, and color are the most significant determinants in purchasing decisions. Maruti and Tata dominate brand ownership and future preference, with Maruti being the most owned brand and Tata ranking highest in purchase consideration. The data also reveal that the majority of consumers prefer new cars and rely heavily on friends and advertisements for information. Furthermore, individual autonomy dominates purchase decisions, with minimal spousal influence. The analysis includes graphical interpretations based on Likert scale rankings and percentage distributions. Ultimately, the study emphasizes the importance of spare part availability, vehicle solidity, and after-sales service in shaping brand perception. Recommendations suggest the need for tailored marketing strategies, enhanced service delivery, and innovative communication channels to better align with the evolving expectations of small car consumers in Mandi.**

**Keywords- Brand perception, Consumer behavior, small cars, Mandi town, Purchase decision, Likert scale, Marketing strategy**

## INTRODUCTION

The Indian automobile industry has witnessed rapid transformation over the past two decades, driven by economic growth, urbanization, and changing consumer preferences. Among various segments, small cars have gained significant popularity due to their affordability, fuel efficiency, ease of suitability for city and semi-urban environments. In towns like Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, these factors become even more critical, given the region's terrain, income patterns, and demographic profile. Mandi, known for its high literacy rate and increasing per capita income, presents a unique market where consumer choices are informed, value-driven, and shaped by both traditional and modern influences. This study aims to explore the underlying factors that influence brand perception and consumer behaviour in the small car market of Mandi town. It examines how demographic characteristics, income levels, education, and personal preferences shape the decision-making process, from brand awareness to post-purchase satisfaction. The research also investigates the role of promotional channels, decision-making authority within households, and the specific product features that drive loyalty. By focusing on this specific geography and consumer segment, the study offers valuable insights for manufacturers and marketers aiming to strengthen their presence in emerging small-town markets and adapt their strategies to meet localized consumer expectations effectively.

## METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes a descriptive design based on primary data collected from 100 respondents through structured questionnaires. Convenience sampling was used. Secondary data was sourced from journals and previous studies. The Likert scale method and percentage analysis were used to analyze ranked preferences. The present study adopts a scientific and systematic research methodology aimed at understanding consumer perception and behavior in the small car market of Mandi town, Himachal Pradesh. The need for this study arises from the sharp increase in fuel prices and the need for manufacturers to develop new strategies in the small car segment. Mandi was selected due to its high literacy rate (90.41%) and relatively high per capita income (₹3,94,102), making it a suitable location for market research. A total of 100 respondents were selected using convenience sampling. Both primary and secondary data sources were utilized. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires and personal interviews, while secondary data were obtained from journals, articles, and research publications. The collected data were systematically classified and analyzed using percentage analysis to identify meaningful trends and relationships. This methodology provides a strong foundation for evaluating consumer preferences and brand perceptions within the targeted region.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After collecting the data through questionnaires, all questionnaires were coded and data were checked for inconsistencies. After clearing the data, tables were prepared, and frequencies and percentages were derived.

| Distribution of respondents based on Gender status | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 66 | 66.00 |
| Female | 34 | 34.00 |
| Total | 100 | 100.00 |

Table No.1

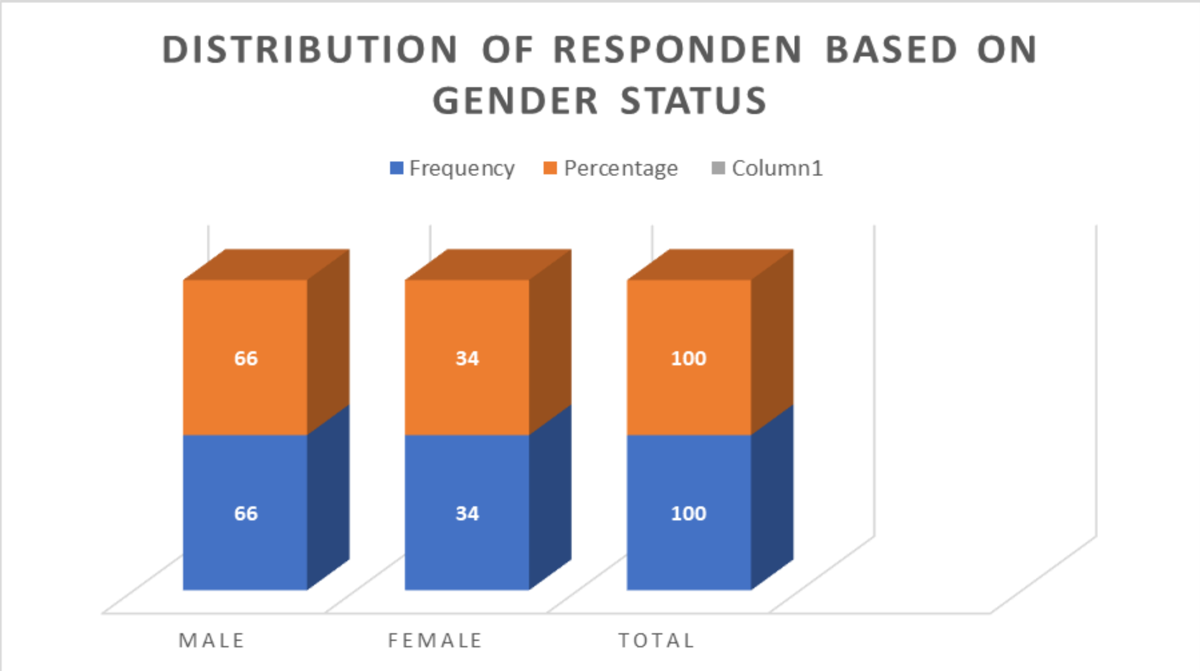


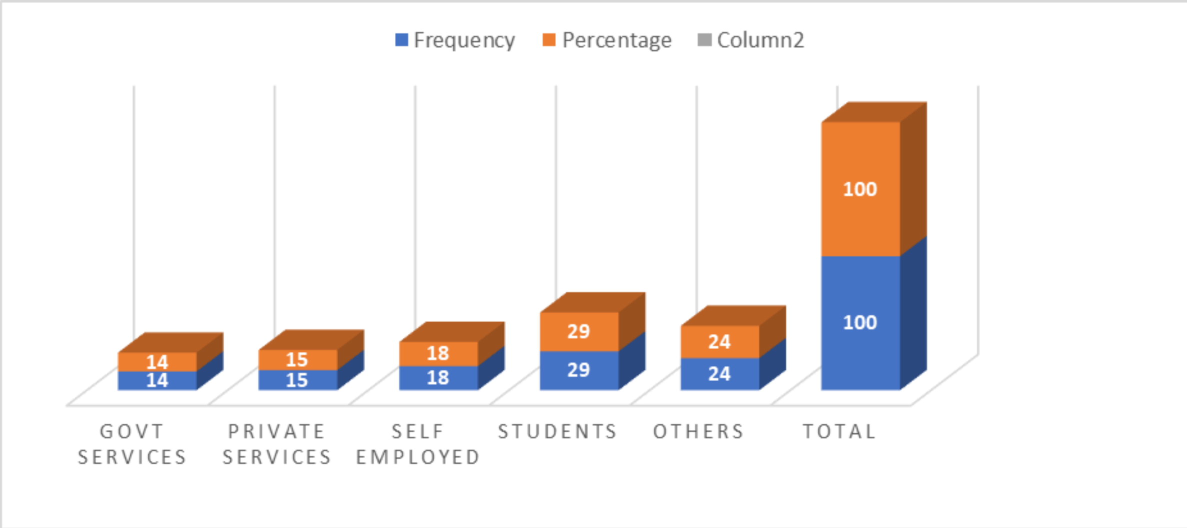

Figure No.1

The table and figure present the gender distribution of the respondents surveyed. Out of the total 100 participants, 66% were male and 34% were female. This indicates that the majority of respondents were male, suggesting a higher level of male participation or interest in the subject matter of the study. The gender imbalance may reflect broader demographic trends in the target population or possibly cultural or social factors influencing the participation rate. Understanding this distribution is important, as gender can influence consumer behavior and brand perception, which are central to the focus of the research.

| Respondents based on occupation status | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Govt. Service | 14 | 14.00 |
| Private Service | 15 | 15.00 |
| Self Employed | 18 | 18.00 |
| Students | 29 | 29.00 |
| Others | 24 | 24.00 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100.00 |

Table No.2

FigureNo.2




DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON OCCUPATION STATUS

The table and figure present the occupational status of the respondents who participated in the study. A significant portion of the respondents, 29%, are students, indicating a high level of youth involvement or interest in the subject matter. This is followed by 24% categorized under others, which may include homemakers, unemployed individuals, or those engaged in informal work.

## FINDINGS

The study reveals several key findings that paint a detailed picture of small-car buyers in Mandi town. Demographically, the market skews male (66 percent) and youthful, with the largest age cohort (30 percent) falling between 26 and 35 years, while only one-fifth are over 46. Exactly half of the respondents are married, 30 percent unmarried, and 20 percent widowed, divorced, or separated, suggesting a mixed household profile. Education levels are notably high—40 percent hold postgraduate degrees and 26 percent are graduates—indicating that most buyers make informed, deliberate choices. Students constitute the single-largest occupational group (29 percent), and income data show that 45 percent earn under ₹2 lakh and another 28 percent earn ₹2–5 lakh annually, underscoring the dominance of low- to middle-income consumers. In terms of brand and product preferences, Maruti enjoys the highest top-of-mind recall (54 percent), though Tata edges ahead in actual purchase share (30 percent) versus Maruti's 23 percent, reflecting the sway of last-minute incentives such as price negotiations and dealer persuasion. An overwhelming 98 percent favour new cars, underscoring trust in warranties and status, and purchase decisions revolve chiefly around initial brand choice, price bargaining, and dealer visits. Buyers attach greatest value to easy spare-part availability, perceived solidity, and strong after-sales service. Information pathways remain rooted in personal connections and mass media: friends (26 percent) and advertisements (24 percent) rank above internet searches (20 percent). Decision-making is largely solitary—62 percent decide on their own—though parents sway one-fifth of purchases, and spouses have minimal influence. In daily use, 51 percent rely on personal preference, while friends and children exert secondary influence. Usage patterns emphasize versatility: three-quarters deploy their cars for multiple tasks such as shopping, commuting, and family travel. Short-term horizons dominate; 36 percent plan to keep or use the vehicle only two weeks to a month, and 51 percent drive just zero to two times within the reference period, hinting at cautious ownership and occasional shared or rental use. Satisfaction levels are broadly positive—75 percent are satisfied, 20 percent neutral, and a mere 5 percent dissatisfied—indicating strong but not unassailable brand perception and leaving room for further differentiation through service enhancements.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, several targeted recommendations can help manufacturers and marketers better align with consumer expectations in the small car segment of Mandi town. First, brands should focus on affordability, reliability, and safety, as these are crucial to the low- and middle-income, highly educated consumer base. Since students and young professionals form a significant portion of buyers, compact models with modern features and competitive pricing will likely appeal. The dominance of new car purchases suggests that offering attractive financing options and extended warranties could further boost sales. Emphasizing after-sales services, spare part availability, and vehicle durability can enhance brand loyalty, as these are among the most valued product attributes. Given that word-of-mouth and traditional media still have strong influence, marketing strategies should blend digital outreach with local influencer engagement and community visibility. As most purchase decisions are made independently, promotional efforts should target individuals rather than households. Additionally, enhancing customer satisfaction through versatile and efficient vehicles tailored to multipurpose use will align with usage patterns. Finally, addressing the 5% dissatisfaction through personalized service, regular feedback mechanisms, and timely issue resolution can improve brand perception and long-term customer retention in this emerging market.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that consumer behaviour in the small car market of Mandi town is shaped by a combination of economic, social, and personal factors. The demographic profile highlights a youthful, educated, and predominantly male buyer segment, with significant representation from low- to middle-income groups. Consumers in this region are highly value-conscious, favouring brands that offer safety, durability, fuel efficiency, and strong after-sales support. While Maruti enjoys strong brand recall, Tata has emerged as a competitive player in actual purchase decisions, indicating the importance of final-stage marketing efforts, such as dealer engagement and incentives. The overwhelming preference for new cars underlines the value placed on reliability, warranty, and ownership prestige. Purchase decisions are largely autonomous, and personal networks and advertisements play a central role in influencing choices. Furthermore, the versatile use of small cars for daily commuting, shopping, and family needs reinforces the need for compact, multipurpose vehicles. While customer satisfaction is generally high, a small segment of dissatisfied users suggests that ongoing improvements in service and responsiveness are still required. Overall, brands that invest in localized marketing, competitive pricing, post-sale services, and product innovation tailored to regional preferences will be better positioned to succeed in Mandi's evolving small car market.

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