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Brand Positioning and Customer Perception in The EV Industry – A Comparative Study of TATA Motors and MG Motors in The Electronic City, Bangalore Region

Dr. Shyam Shukla, Sweta Toppo

NSB Academy, Bangalore

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Abstract: The electric vehicle (EV) market in India has seen rapid growth, with major players like Tata Motors and MG Motors competing to capture the evolving consumer base. This study explores how brand positioning strategies influence customer perception in the Indian EV industry. Through primary data collected via surveys and secondary data from industry reports, this comparative study analyzes the branding dimensions that shape consumer trust, preference, and purchase decisions. The findings indicate that while Tata Motors leverages its domestic brand value and affordability, MG Motors emphasizes technological innovation and a premium experience. The study offers insights for marketers to align branding strategies with customer expectations in the growing EV segment.

Keywords: Brand Positioning, Customer Perception, Electric Vehicles, Tata Motors, MG Motors, EV Industry, Consumer Behavior, India

I. Introduction

The global automotive industry is undergoing a transformative shift toward sustainability, with electric vehicles (EVs) at the forefront. In India, this transition is significantly influenced by the branding efforts of early EV adopters like Tata Motors and MG Motors. Effective brand positioning not only determines competitive advantage but also molds customer perception, which is crucial in an emerging market with evolving preferences and limited awareness.

Theoretical Background of the Study

In the modern business landscape, brand positioning and customer perception have emerged as critical pillars in determining the success and sustainability of a product or service. This is especially true in dynamic and evolving industries such as the Electric Vehicle (EV) sector, where companies must not only deliver innovative products but also create a distinct identity in the minds of consumers. Brand positioning involves creating a unique image in the target market's mind, which is crucial for influencing consumer behavior in the EV industry [1]. This strategic process defines how a brand differentiates itself from competitors and why it represents the preferable choice for consumers. In the EV sector, where factors such as environmental consciousness, technological innovation, and cost-efficiency are paramount, effective brand positioning plays a pivotal role in shaping purchase decisions.

Customer perception, on the other hand, encompasses how customers view a brand based on their experiences, beliefs, and interactions. Perception is shaped by a variety of factors including advertising, word-of-mouth, product performance, pricing, after-sales service, and social influence, playing a vital role in brand loyalty and long-term relationships [1]. These perceptions form the foundation of brand loyalty and long-term consumer relationships. A positive customer perception often translates into repeat business, brand advocacy, and resilience against competitive pressures. Therefore, understanding and managing customer perception is as crucial as developing innovative products.

This study delves into several dimensions including strategic brand positioning in emerging industries, customer perception analysis through qualitative and quantitative lenses, comparative brand analysis of TATA Motors and MG Motors in the EV segment, market segmentation and targeting strategies, and the implications of positioning on consumer buying decisions. The study aims to provide insights into effective brand positioning strategies and their influence on consumer decisions [1]. By examining these dimensions, the research seeks to offer a holistic view of how brand positioning and customer perception interact to influence market outcomes in the rapidly evolving EV industry.

Industry Profile / Survey / Industry Background of the Study

The Indian Electric Vehicle (EV) industry is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by the convergence of technological innovation, environmental necessity, and government policy support [2]. This transformation is reshaping the automotive sector, presenting both opportunities and challenges for manufacturers, consumers, and policymakers. The rise in fuel prices, increasing pollution levels, and global commitments to reduce carbon emissions have collectively made the shift towards sustainable mobility a national priority. India, being the third-largest automobile market in the world, holds immense potential for EV adoption, making it a critical arena for global EV manufacturers.

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Key players in this competitive landscape include TATA Motors and MG Motors, both of which employ distinct branding approaches. TATA Motors leads in market share while MG Motors is known as a premium niche player [3]. TATA Motors, a homegrown automotive giant, has leveraged its deep understanding of the Indian market to position itself as an affordable and reliable EV provider. On the other hand, MG Motors, with its global roots and focus on innovation, has targeted a niche segment of tech-savvy and environmentally conscious consumers.

Several factors are driving the growth of the EV industry in India including government initiatives, rising awareness, infrastructure improvements, and increasing product availability. Government initiatives, rising awareness, infrastructure improvements, and increasing product availability are driving the growth of the EV industry in India [4]. The Government of India has introduced multiple initiatives under its Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME) schemes, alongside state-level incentives, tax rebates, and infrastructure development plans to promote EVs. These initiatives aim to achieve 30% EV penetration by 2030, particularly in the two-wheeler, three-wheeler, and passenger car segments, setting ambitious targets for the industry.

Contribution to the GDP of the Country and to the Economy in General

The EV sector contributes to job creation, reduces reliance on oil imports, and stimulates economic growth [5]. The electrification of transportation is not merely an environmental initiative but also an economic strategy that promises to reshape India's industrial landscape. The EV sector supports the growth of battery manufacturing, charging infrastructure, automotive components, IT, and recycling industries [6]. This support fosters innovation, entrepreneurship, and skill development, contributing to a more robust and diversified economy.

The EV sector fosters economic diversification and enhances global trade through technological innovation and sustainability initiatives [6]. By reducing dependence on fossil fuels and promoting cleaner technologies, the EV sector contributes to a more sustainable and resilient economy. As India continues to invest in EV infrastructure and manufacturing capabilities, the sector is poised to play an increasingly significant role in the country's economic development, aligning with global trends toward sustainable and green economies.

Company History/Inception

Tata Motors expanded into commercial vehicles and entered the EV market with the Indica Vista EV in 2009 [7]. Established in 1945, Tata Motors has evolved from manufacturing locomotives to becoming a global automotive player. This journey reflects the company's adaptability and commitment to innovation. The company's entry into the EV market marked a strategic shift toward sustainable mobility, aligning with global trends and government initiatives.

Founded in 1924, MG Motors was acquired by SAIC Motor Corporation and entered the Indian market in 2019 with the MG Hector [8]. MG Motors has a rich heritage rooted in British automotive engineering. The acquisition by SAIC Motor Corporation marked a new chapter for the brand, combining its historical legacy with modern technology and global market strategies. The entry into the Indian market with the MG Hector and subsequent EV models demonstrated the brand's ambition to establish a strong presence in a rapidly growing automotive market.

Tata Motors focused on affordable solutions while MG Motors targeted the premium segment [9]. This difference in market entry strategies reflects the distinct brand positioning of each company. Tata Motors leveraged its existing brand recognition and manufacturing capabilities to offer accessible EV options for the mass market. In contrast, MG Motors aimed to capture a niche segment by providing technologically advanced and stylish EVs, thereby establishing a premium brand image from the outset.

Vision and Mission

Tata Motors aims to be admired and trusted globally by offering innovative, high-quality products [10]. The company's vision reflects its commitment to excellence, customer satisfaction, and sustainable growth. By focusing on innovation and quality, Tata Motors seeks to enhance its competitiveness in the global automotive market. This strategic direction underscores the company's ambition to not only meet but exceed customer expectations, while also contributing to a cleaner and more sustainable future.

MG Motors aims to be the most innovative and sustainable automotive company, enhancing driving experiences through cutting-edge technology [11]. MG Motors' vision emphasizes its dedication to technological advancement and environmental responsibility. By integrating smart and future-ready products, MG Motors aims to transform the driving experience, making it more efficient, connected, and eco-friendly. This forward-looking approach aligns with the brand's commitment to sustainability and innovation in the automotive industry.

Tata Motors aligns with affordability and reliability, while MG Motors emphasizes technology and sustainability [12]. This alignment ensures that each company's actions are consistent with its core values and market positioning. Tata Motors' focus on affordability and reliability resonates with a broad consumer base, seeking practical and value-driven transportation solutions. MG Motors, on the other hand, appeals to consumers who prioritize cutting-edge technology and environmental sustainability, thereby carving out a distinct niche in the market.

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Product and Service Profile

Tata Motors offers the Nexon EV, Tigor EV, and Tiago EV, along with a range of passenger and commercial vehicles [3]. The Nexon EV, Tigor EV, and Tiago EV represent Tata Motors' commitment to providing accessible and practical electric mobility solutions. In addition to EVs, Tata Motors continues to offer a diverse portfolio of passenger and commercial vehicles, catering to a wide range of customer needs and preferences. This comprehensive product lineup positions Tata Motors as a versatile player in the Indian automotive market.

MG Motors provides the MG ZS EV and other models like MG Hector, MG Gloster, and MG Astor, focusing on connected car technology [13]. The MG ZS EV embodies MG Motors' focus on delivering technologically advanced and stylish electric vehicles. Along with the MG Hector, MG Gloster, and MG Astor, MG Motors aims to provide a premium driving experience, characterized by innovative features and connectivity. This strategic focus on technology and design helps MG Motors differentiate itself in the competitive automotive landscape.

Both companies offer extensive service networks, warranties, and customer care support [13]. These services are essential for building customer trust and ensuring satisfaction. Tata Motors leverages its widespread service network to provide reliable after-sales support, while MG Motors focuses on delivering a premium customer experience through its connected car technologies and customer care initiatives.

Competitors in the Indian EV Market

Mahindra Electric focuses on affordable solutions, while BYD India emphasizes electric buses and commercial vehicles [5]. Mahindra Electric has been a pioneer in the Indian EV market, focusing on affordable and practical electric vehicles for urban commuting. BYD India, on the other hand, leverages its global expertise in battery technology to offer electric buses and commercial vehicles, catering to the growing demand for sustainable transportation solutions in the public sector.

Tesla's potential entry is expected to bring global expertise and innovation, though high prices may limit market penetration [14]. Tesla's entry into the Indian market would introduce cutting-edge EV technology and a premium brand image, potentially reshaping consumer expectations and competitive dynamics. However, the high price point of Tesla vehicles may limit their accessibility to a smaller segment of affluent consumers, posing a challenge for widespread market penetration.

Mahindra Electric has a strong brand recognition but limited global presence; BYD India has expertise in battery technology but less consumer awareness [14]. Mahindra Electric's strong brand recognition in India positions it well to cater to the mass market, but its limited global presence may restrict its ability to compete with international players. BYD India's expertise in battery technology provides a competitive advantage in terms of product performance and cost-efficiency, but its relatively lower consumer awareness may hinder its ability to capture a larger market share.

Competitive Analysis: Tata Motors vs. MG Motors

Tata Motors leads in the EV market with affordable EVs and a wide dealership network [3]. With models like the Nexon EV, Tata Motors has established a strong presence in the Indian electric vehicle market. The company's focus on affordability and accessibility has enabled it to capture a significant share of the market, particularly among budget-conscious consumers. The extensive dealership network further enhances its competitive advantage, providing convenient access to sales and service support for customers across India.

MG Motors targets the premium segment with advanced features and innovative designs [13]. MG Motors has successfully positioned itself as a premium EV brand, offering vehicles with advanced features, stylish designs, and connected car technologies. This strategic focus has enabled MG Motors to attract a niche segment of tech-savvy and environmentally conscious consumers, who are willing to pay a premium for innovative and high-quality electric vehicles.

Tata Motors has limited premium EV offerings, while MG Motors faces challenges due to higher prices [13]. While Tata Motors excels in providing affordable EVs, it faces challenges in expanding its presence in the premium segment. On the other hand, MG Motors, with its focus on premium offerings, faces the challenge of higher prices, which may limit its accessibility to a broader consumer base.

Competitive Positioning and Market Strategy

Tata Motors is positioned as a value-driven, affordable option for consumers [3]. This positioning resonates with a large segment of the Indian population, seeking practical and cost-effective transportation solutions. By focusing on affordability, reliability, and fuel efficiency, Tata Motors aims to capture a significant share of the mass market.

MG Motors positions itself as a premium EV brand with advanced technology and safety features [13]. This positioning appeals to consumers who prioritize innovation, style, and performance. By offering vehicles with connected car technologies, advanced safety features, and premium interiors, MG Motors aims to attract a niche segment of tech-savvy and affluent consumers.

Tata Motors focuses on mass-market adoption, whereas MG Motors targets tech-savvy consumers [13]. This difference in market strategies reflects the distinct brand positioning of each company. Tata Motors aims to drive mass-market adoption by providing

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affordable and reliable EVs, while MG Motors focuses on capturing a niche segment of tech-savvy consumers with its premium offerings. By tailoring their market strategies to align with their brand positioning, both companies aim to maximize their competitiveness and achieve sustainable growth in the Indian EV market.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyze the brand positioning strategies of Tata Motors and MG Motors in the EV sector.
- To assess customer perceptions and attitudes toward these two brands.
- To compare the impact of these strategies on consumer purchasing decisions.
- To recommend effective branding approaches for better market penetration.

II. Literature Review

Consumer Perceptions and Preferences

Affordability, running costs, and environmental impact significantly influence consumer decisions regarding EVs [4]. Indian consumers are particularly sensitive to the price of electric vehicles due to the relatively low per capita income in the country. The total cost of ownership, including running costs and maintenance, is a crucial factor in their decision-making process. Furthermore, growing environmental awareness has made the reduced carbon footprint of EVs an attractive feature for many consumers.

Younger, urban consumers are more aware and inclined towards EV adoption [18]. Younger consumers in urban areas tend to be more informed about the benefits of electric vehicles and more open to adopting new technologies. Their higher levels of education, exposure to global trends, and concern for environmental issues make them a key target segment for EV manufacturers. Understanding the preferences and perceptions of this demographic is essential for developing effective marketing strategies.

Range anxiety, insufficient charging infrastructure, and high upfront costs are significant barriers to EV adoption [15]. The limited driving range of EVs compared to traditional vehicles remains a major concern for many consumers. The lack of adequate charging infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, further exacerbates this anxiety. Additionally, the high upfront costs of EVs, despite government subsidies, continue to be a barrier for price-sensitive consumers.

Barriers to Adoption

Infrastructure limitations, particularly charging networks, hinder EV adoption [15]. The availability of charging stations is a critical factor in the widespread adoption of electric vehicles. Without a reliable and convenient charging network, consumers are hesitant to switch to EVs due to concerns about range anxiety and the inconvenience of finding charging points. Addressing this infrastructure gap is essential for fostering greater EV adoption in India.

Limited consumer awareness and insufficient after-sales support impede EV acceptance in rural areas [18]. In rural areas, where access to information and technology is limited, consumer awareness about the benefits of EVs is relatively low. The lack of adequate after-sales support, including service centers and trained technicians, further discourages EV adoption. Bridging this awareness gap and providing reliable after-sales support are crucial for expanding the EV market beyond urban centers.

Reducing battery costs and enhancing consumer education are essential for broader EV adoption [19]. The high cost of batteries is a major factor contributing to the high upfront price of EVs. Reducing battery costs through technological innovation and localized manufacturing is essential for making EVs more affordable for the mass market. Additionally, enhancing consumer education about the benefits of EVs, including their long-term cost savings and environmental advantages, can help overcome misconceptions and drive greater adoption.

Brand Positioning and Strategy

Successful EV brands in India emphasize affordability, practicality, and eco-friendliness [3]. Brands that focus on providing affordable, practical, and eco-friendly electric vehicles are more likely to succeed in the Indian market. These brands understand the unique needs and preferences of Indian consumers, who prioritize value for money, reliability, and environmental sustainability. By aligning their brand positioning with these key factors, they can effectively capture a significant share of the market.

Tech features and brand trust are key drivers of loyalty in mature EV markets [13]. In more developed EV markets, such as those in Europe and North America, tech features and brand trust play a crucial role in driving customer loyalty. Consumers in these markets are more likely to prioritize advanced technologies, innovative designs, and the reputation of the brand when making purchasing decisions. Building brand trust through reliable performance, excellent customer service, and transparent communication is essential for fostering long-term customer relationships.

Aligning brand identity with customer expectations is crucial for long-term success [1]. For EV manufacturers to achieve sustainable growth and relevance, it is essential to align their brand identity with the expectations and preferences of their target customers. This involves understanding the values, needs, and aspirations of consumers and tailoring the brand's messaging, product

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offerings, and customer experiences to resonate with them. By creating a strong alignment between brand identity and customer expectations, EV manufacturers can build brand loyalty, enhance customer satisfaction, and drive long-term success.

Research Gap and Relevance of the Study

Brand positioning plays a critical role in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in emerging sectors like electric vehicles (EVs), where perceptions of innovation, sustainability, and technological advancement influence purchase decisions. According to Keller (2003), strong brand equity is pivotal for customer loyalty and premium pricing, while Aaker (1996) stresses the importance of differentiation and relevance in successful positioning strategies. In the EV context, Nair & Pillai (2021) identify innovation, reliability, and environmental consciousness as key attributes that shape brand perception.

While previous research has examined EV adoption patterns and general marketing strategies of Indian automakers, there is a noticeable gap in comparative studies that explore how specific brands position themselves in localized urban tech hubs, such as Electronic City, Bangalore—a region with high EV awareness and early adopter demographics. Moreover, Tata Motors and MG Motors represent two contrasting brand strategies within the EV market: Tata positions itself as a value-for-money, indigenous innovator, while MG adopts a tech-savvy, global branding approach.

Yet, empirical comparisons of how these distinct strategies are perceived by actual consumers at the micro-market level remain scarce. This gap is particularly relevant in understanding how localization of brand positioning strategies can influence customer perception and market share within a dynamic and competitive EV ecosystem.

Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by comparing the brand positioning and customer perception of Tata Motors and MG Motors among consumers in Electronic City, Bangalore, thereby offering insights for marketers, policy-makers, and brand strategists in India's evolving EV landscape.

III. Research Methodology

Type of Study: Descriptive and comparative

Sampling Method: Convenience sampling

Sample Size: 150 respondents (EV owners and potential buyers across metropolitan Indian cities)

Data Collection: Primary data via structured questionnaire; secondary data from company reports, advertisements, and EV industry white papers

Geographical area of study: Electronic City, Bangalore

Tools Used: Likert scale analysis, brand association mapping, SPSS for statistical interpretation

IV. Analysis and Discussion

Brand Positioning

Tata Motors: Positioned as a *"value for money, reliable Indian brand"*. Their messaging focuses on accessibility, range, and safety (e.g., Nexon EV, Tigor EV).

MG Motors: Positioned as a *"tech-savvy, premium British brand"*, highlighting AI integration, luxury features, and global engineering (e.g., MG ZS EV, MG Comet).

Customer Perception Analysis

Trust and Familiarity: Tata Motors scores higher due to its long-standing presence and nationalistic appeal.

Innovation Perception: MG Motors leads in perception of technological sophistication and smart features.

Price Sensitivity: Tata's competitive pricing resonates more with cost-conscious consumers.

After-Sales and Service: Mixed reviews for both, but Tata has wider service coverage.

Parameter	Tata Motors	MG Motors
Affordability	High	Medium
Innovation	Medium	High
Reliability	High	Medium
Brand Recall	High	Medium
Premium Experience	Medium	High

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V. Findings

Differentiated Brand Positioning:

Tata Motors has successfully positioned itself as a reliable, affordable, and Indian-origin brand that resonates well with middle-class and first-time EV buyers. MG Motors, on the other hand, has crafted a premium, technology-forward, and globally-inspired brand image that appeals to urban and aspirational consumers.

High National Brand Recall for Tata Motors:

Due to its legacy in the Indian automobile market and consistent advertisement campaigns, Tata has stronger brand recall among respondents compared to MG Motors. The 'Make in India' sentiment strengthens consumer trust.

Perceived Innovation Leads with MG Motors:

Customers perceive MG as more innovative, citing features like AI integration, advanced infotainment systems, voice controls, and mobile app connectivity as key differentiators. Tata EVs are seen as functionally strong but lagging in premium tech appeal.

Affordability and Value-for-Money Drive Tata's EV Success:

Respondents indicated Tata's competitive pricing and lower total cost of ownership as major factors in their purchase decision. This aligns well with the Indian market's price-sensitive nature.

Brand Trust and Heritage Matter:

Tata's longstanding reputation in the Indian market gives it an edge in customer trust. Many customers mentioned "trust in the Tata brand" as a decisive factor in choosing their EV.

Urban-Rural Perception Gap:

Tata Motors has a better perception in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities due to its accessible price point and wider dealership network. MG Motors is seen more favorably in Tier 1 cities where consumers are more exposed to global trends and premium offerings.

After-Sales Service Perception:

Tata has a wider service network and longer presence in India, which reassures customers. However, some users raised concerns about service quality consistency. MG's fewer service centers affect buyer confidence, despite positive experiences where service is available.

Environmental Awareness and Brand Association:

A growing segment of customers relate EV adoption with environmental consciousness. Tata is seen as providing a practical solution for eco-conscious users, while MG is perceived as a lifestyle choice that combines green mobility with luxury.

Influence of Word-of-Mouth and Social Media:

Positive reviews and peer recommendations influence Tata purchases significantly. For MG, influencer marketing and online reviews play a stronger role due to its digital-first branding.

Demographic Insights:

Tata EV buyers skew toward age groups 30–50, family-oriented, and budget-conscious.

MG EV buyers skew toward younger (25–35), tech-enthusiast, and brand-aware consumers.

Charging Infrastructure Awareness is Low:

Both customer bases show low awareness of public charging infrastructure. However, MG customers expect better guidance and app-enabled navigation, aligning with their tech-first expectations.

Design and Aesthetics Perception:

MG is seen as more modern and stylish in design. Tata is perceived as robust and durable but needs to modernize its aesthetics to stay competitive with global players.

Emotional vs Rational Buying Triggers:

Tata EV buyers are driven by rational factors: cost, trust, and utility. MG buyers lean toward emotional factors: prestige, technology, and lifestyle alignment.

Perceived Risk Mitigation:

Tata's extensive presence in ICE vehicles and market familiarity reduces perceived risk in buying its EVs. MG, as a relatively newer entrant, faces hesitation from first-time EV buyers.

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Post-Purchase Satisfaction:

Most respondents from both brands expressed moderate to high satisfaction, but MG users were more likely to recommend the vehicle to peers due to the 'premium' ownership experience.

Based on above findings some of the model are suggested: -

1.EV Brand Positioning–Perception Alignment Model (EV-BPPAM)

Purpose: To align brand positioning strategies with evolving consumer perceptions in the Indian EV market.

Model Components:

Brand Element	TATA Motors Focus	MG Motors Focus	Recommended Alignment Strategy
Price	Affordable, value-based	Premium pricing	Tata: Maintain value
Technology	Functional, improving	Advanced, AI-integrated	Tata: Enhance tech features
Design & Aesthetics	Robust, conventional	Stylish, modern	Tata: Modernize aesthetics
Customer Trust	High (legacy brand)	Medium (newer brand)	MG: Strengthen local brand identity
Service Network	Extensive but inconsistent	Limited but personalized	Tata: Standardize service; MG: Expand

2.EV Consumer Decision-Making Funnel (EVCDF)

Purpose: To visualize how Indian consumers move through the EV purchase journey, and where Tata and MG can intervene.

Stages:

- Awareness – Influenced by advertising, social media
- Interest – Brand trust (Tata), tech appeal (MG)
- Evaluation – Comparison of pricing, features, reviews
- Trial – Test drives, peer experience
- Purchase – Financing, brand assurance
- Post-purchase Experience – Service quality, updates
- Advocacy – Word of mouth, digital feedback

Strategic Implication:

- Tata should enhance post-purchase and tech experiences.
- MG should work on awareness in new markets and price positioning.

3.Optional Adaptation of Existing Models:

- Keller’s Brand Equity Model (Customer-Based Brand Equity - CBBE):
- Use this to assess how awareness, associations, perceived quality, and loyalty are being built in each brand.
- AIDA Model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action):
- Apply this to your marketing funnel strategies to better target consumers at each stage.
- SWOT-Based Strategic Fit Matrix:
- Map strengths and weaknesses of Tata vs. MG against market opportunities and threats in India’s EV sector.

VI. Recommendations

Differentiated Brand Positioning:

Tata Motors has successfully positioned itself as a reliable, affordable, and Indian-origin brand that resonates well with middle-class and first-time EV buyers. MG Motors, on the other hand, has crafted a premium, technology-forward, and globally-inspired brand image that appeals to urban and aspirational consumers.

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Respondents indicated Tata's competitive pricing and lower total cost of ownership as major factors in their purchase decision. This aligns well with the Indian market's price-sensitive nature.

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Environmental Awareness and Brand Association:

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VII. Conclusion

In a rapidly evolving EV market, brand positioning plays a pivotal role in shaping customer perception and purchase decisions. Tata Motors and MG Motors exemplify two contrasting yet successful branding approaches—value-driven vs tech-centric. A hybrid approach blending affordability with innovation may pave the way for sustained leadership in the Indian EV market.

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