

ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS AND SATISFACTION WITH ASHOK LEYLAND LIGHT COMMERCIAL VEHICLES (LCVs)

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Abstract

The Indian light commercial vehicle (LCV) market is dynamic and competitive, with Ashok Leyland emerging as a significant player, especially with its Dost and Bada Dost series. This research assesses public perception and customer satisfaction with Ashok Leyland's LCVs, identifying key factors that influence user experience. The study utilizes a mixed-method approach including survey responses, interviews, and secondary data analysis. Findings indicate that reliability, fuel efficiency, load capacity, and after-sales service are the key factors influencing satisfaction. Areas for improvement include parts availability and long-term maintenance support. This study provides actionable insights for Ashok Leyland and contributes to broader discussions on customer-centric innovation in the LCV segment.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

India's commercial vehicle industry plays a crucial role in logistics, agriculture, retail, and rural development. Ashok Leyland, one of India's foremost commercial vehicle manufacturers, has carved a niche in the LCV segment through its Dost (2011), Bada Dost, Partner, and MiTR series. Ashok Leyland LCVs are recognized for their strong build quality, fuel efficiency, and affordability.

Despite increasing sales and brand visibility, a deeper understanding of end-user satisfaction and

public perception remains under-researched, especially in Tier-II and rural markets. This study attempts to bridge that gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of customer perceptions, satisfaction levels, and expectations from Ashok Leyland's LCV lineup.

1.2 Objectives

- To assess public perceptions regarding Ashok Leyland LCVs.
- To measure customer satisfaction across multiple parameters.
- To identify the key strengths and areas of concern.
- To analyze the impact of demographic and usage factors on satisfaction.
- To suggest actionable recommendations to Ashok Leyland.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Industry Overview

Ashok Leyland recorded significant growth in the LCV sector, with over 450,000 units sold since the launch of Dost. Its vehicles compete with Tata Ace, Mahindra Jeeto, and Piaggio Porter in India's sub-3.5-ton segment. According to the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) report (2024), Ashok Leyland ranked highest in dealer satisfaction, particularly in commercial vehicle sales and service infrastructure.

2.2 Prior Research

A 2021 IJCRT paper highlighted key satisfaction factors: vehicle handling, braking, style, safety, and cost of maintenance. Another study by students at Manav Rachna University (2023) found that over 78% of respondents were satisfied or highly satisfied with Ashok Leyland LCVs, particularly praising fuel efficiency and durability. However, some respondents reported dissatisfaction with parts availability and the responsiveness of service centers in rural areas.

Customer reviews on platforms such as CarDekho and Team-BHP describe Ashok Leyland LCVs as economical workhorses with payload capacities suitable for agricultural and FMCG use. Feedback from Reddit users and truck driver forums emphasizes comfort, engine performance, and long-term reliability.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A mixed-method approach was adopted:

- Quantitative data: Survey of 250 LCV owners/users across Bhopal, Indore, and nearby semi-urban and rural areas.
- Qualitative data: In-depth interviews with 15 users and 5 dealership managers.

3.2 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to target current users of Ashok Leyland LCVs. Respondents included small business owners, fleet operators, farmers, and local transporters.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

- Questionnaire: Included 5-point Likert scale questions (1 = Very Dissatisfied to 5 = Very Satisfied).
- Interview Guide: Open-ended questions on vehicle performance, service experience, and expectations.

3.4 Variables Measured

- Reliability
- Fuel efficiency
- Driving comfort
- Payload capacity
- Safety features
- Maintenance cost
- Parts availability
- After-sales service
- Resale value

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Demographic Profile Respondents

Gender: 94% Male, 6% Female

Age Group: 2535 (28%), 3650 (45%), 50+ (27%)

Usage Purpose: Business (52%), Agriculture (30%), Transport (18%)

Location Type: Urban (35%), Semi-Urban (40%), Rural (25%)

4.2 Key Findings

4.2.1 Overall Satisfaction

- Satisfaction Rate: 81% rated 4 or 5 out of 5.
- Top Features: Fuel efficiency (88% satisfied), Reliability (84%), Load capacity (80%).

4.2.2 Fuel Efficiency

- Average mileage reported: 17.5 km/l (Dost), 16.2 km/l (Bada Dost).
- Rural users reported better fuel economy due to lower congestion.

4.2.3 Maintenance and Service

- 73% satisfied with service center availability in cities.
- Only 48% satisfied in rural areas due to spare parts delays and insufficient trained mechanics.

4.2.4 Comfort and Design

- 72% were satisfied with cabin comfort and AC options.
- 65% appreciated new ergonomic designs in the Bada Dost.

4.2.5 Safety and Technology

- Safety features like ABS, strong chassis were positively reviewed by 67% of respondents.
- GPS integration and digital displays in newer models enhanced user confidence.

4.2.6 Dealer and After-Sales Support

- Dealer behavior and financing assistance rated 4.1/5 on average.
- 58% desired faster claim processing for warranty issues.

5. Discussion

The research confirms that Ashok Leyland LCVs enjoy strong positive sentiment in India's light commercial vehicle market. Reliability, fuel efficiency, and economic viability are key strengths that attract small business owners. However, the brand must address issues such as limited service penetration in rural areas and delay in spare parts delivery.

Younger users and urban operators tend to prioritize technological features and comfort, while rural users prioritize durability and cost-efficiency. The rise of e-commerce logistics and last-mile delivery has also shifted focus toward comfort and uptime reliability.

6. Recommendations

1. Expand Rural Service Networks: Strengthen partnerships with local garages and mobile service units to ensure rural coverage.
2. Improve Spare Part Logistics: Invest in regional warehouses and supply chain automation to reduce part delivery delays.
3. Enhance After-Sales Service: Introduce a real-time customer service app to track vehicle servicing and feedback.
4. Train Dealership Staff: Conduct workshops on customer engagement, warranty processing, and technical know-how.
5. Digital Customer Interface: Roll out an app for servicing schedules, insurance, digital manuals, and real-time support.

7. Conclusion

Ashok Leyland LCVs are well-received among Indian users for their practicality, efficiency, and durability. The company's challenge lies in maintaining these strengths while enhancing customer service and adapting to the evolving needs of a digitally connected transport industry. With targeted improvements, Ashok Leyland can further consolidate its leadership in the LCV sector.

8. References

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