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Purchase Intention of SUV Category Automobiles: Determinant Factors from the Customer Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to verify the impact of brand awareness, brand credibility, perceived quality, and perceived innovation as determinants of the intention to purchase SUV automobiles. For this purpose, quantitative research was carried out by applying a survey, with a convenience sample composed of 237 customers intending to purchase SUVs. Multivariate statistics were used to analyze the data through the Structural Equation Modeling approach. The study's main contributions confirm that brand awareness positively impacts the SUV's perceived quality, brand credibility, perceived innovation, and purchase intention. Brand credibility directly affects the SUV's perceived quality. Perceived innovation also influences the SUV's perceived quality. However, perceived innovation did not positively impact the purchase intention.

KEYWORDS

Brand Awareness, Brand Credibility, Perceived Innovation, Perceived Quality, Purchase Intention

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1. INTRODUCTION

Academics and marketing managers recognize that creating strong brands is one of the key factors in ensuring the long-term success of a company (Zablah, Brown, & Donthu, 2010) as there is a broad understanding that customers are looking for brands that provide them with unique and unforgettable shopping experiences (Sahin, Zehir, & Kitapçi, 2011). Positioning a product or a brand leverages a competitive advantage over competitors. Consequently, when a company defines its positioning, it also stimulates customers' purchase intention (Ahmad, & Zhang, 2020).

Knowing who the customers are, their thoughts and reactions to the stimuli during the purchase are essential for the profitability of organizations (Nunes, Pinheiro, Castro e Silva, 2013; Kirk, Ray, & Wilson, 2013). One of the pillars of research on the purchase process is the purchase intention (Prentice, Han, Hua, & Hu, 2019). During the product evaluation phase, customers identify their needs, determining their purchasing decisions (Ahmad, & Zhang, 2020).

In the literature, the purchase intention is pointed as one of the essential factors in brand management because it is the mental stage in the decision making process in which the customer develops a real disposition to act towards an object or brand (Wells, Valacich, & Hess, 2011). The main focus of marketing communication is to make customers intend to purchase the product promoted by a specific company or brand (Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Füller, 2013).

Besides, purchase intention refers to the combination of customers' interests in a brand or product and the likelihood of buying that item. It is strongly related to the preference for a particular brand (Dabbous, & Baraket, 2020) and affects customer's efforts, justifying the importance of anticipating it (Kim, 2018; Chae, Kim, Lee, & Park, 2020).

The literature also indicates several research gaps concerning the definition of the purchase intention antecedent constructs (Wu, & Chen, 2014; Ali, Xiaoling, Sherwani, & Ali, 2015; Martins, Costa, Oliveira, Gonçalves, & Branco, 2017). The first research gap refers to brand awareness, as pointed out by Wu and Ho (2014), who stated that it is necessary to expand the study of brand awareness and its impact on the industry sector purchase intention, that is to say, in the context of products.

Brand awareness also has a relationship with other constructs, as the study of Hsu and Hsu (2015) pointed out, which demonstrated the positive relationship between brand awareness and perceived quality. The relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention was also verified. According to the investigation conducted by Wu and Ho (2014), many studies confirmed the positive impact of brand awareness on customers' purchase intention. Following this thought, Wang and Yang (2010) highlighted that studies could include automobile brands to compare the relative strengths of the relationship between brand credibility, brand awareness, and the purchase intention of brands available in the market.

Moving forward on the constructs delimitation, another determinant of the purchase intention tested in this study was the brand credibility. In this sense, brand credibility conveys the reliability, specialization, and sympathy associated with the brand transferred to the product. Besides, it accumulates information that can influence future considerations regarding the brand, or product customers choose (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Dwivedi, Johnson, Wilkie, & Araujo-Gil, 2019; Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio, Campos, & Molinillo, 2020).

Perceived innovation was also investigated as a determinant of purchase intention. This construct has migrated from a technical vision to something that adds value to the development and marketing of products, services, and organization management (Hanaysha, Hilman, & Abdul-Ghani, 2014). As a result, the greater the degree of innovation involved in products or services, the easier it will be to add value to the companies' offer (products or services) and attract customers (Rimoli, Noronha, & Serralvo, 2013; Wang, Gao, Su, & Li, 2017).

This way, the research question that has guided this study development was: what is the relation of brand awareness, brand credibility, perceived innovation, and perceived quality as antecedents of SUV brands purchase intention? The presented question indicates the need to develop new researches concerning this theme.

2. PROPOSED THEORETICAL MODEL AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Brand awareness denotes a customer's ability to recognize and remember a brand in different situations, transforming this awareness into purchasing behavior (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020). Thus, brand awareness emerges as the first construct investigated, which can be understood as customers' brand associations by remembering or recognizing a brand. Besides, Keller (2008) stated that brand awareness provides an advantage to the brand and even affects customer purchasing decisions (Huang & Sarigollu, 2011). These same associations are formed by some elements such as name, signs (or symbols), and attributes that help compose another determinant construct for this study, the brand credibility.

Deepening the understanding of perceived quality in the automotive sector, the study proposed by Stylidis, Wickman and Söderberg (2015) showed that automobile manufacturers need to develop products that meet their customers' expectations. The influences on intentions, choices, and decisions arise from the characteristics of the product, which are: aesthetic, functional or emotional, which more broadly signal quality and customer satisfaction (Panchal, Khan, & Ramesh, 2012; Samudro, Sumarwan, Simamjuntak, & Yusuf, 2020).

The first relationship tested is the impact of brand awareness on product perceived quality. Clark, Doraszelski and Draganska (2009) pointed out the relation between brand awareness and perceived quality. The authors mentioned that awareness measures how well customers are informed about the existence and availability of a brand, that is to say, to what extent the brand is part of the customer choice. Meanwhile, quality measures the degree of subjective differentiation of the product; in other words, the direction customers take when they perceive that an announced brand is better.

In addition, Wu and Ho (2014) highlighted that brand awareness provides customers with quality assurance. However, in some cases, it can have little influence on their purchase intention. Depending on that, brand awareness and perceived quality are naturally seen as actions built up over time in response to brand communication stimuli (Clark et al., 2009). Moreover, when there is a notable difference in brand awareness between the brands offered, customers tend to choose and buy the most familiar brands with greater quality perception (Hsu & Hsu, 2015).

To this end, Asshidin, Abidina and Borhanb (2016) mentioned that the quality perception varies depending on several factors, such as when customers make the purchase or consume a product, and where it is purchased or appreciated. Customer**'s** implicit quality perception of the brand replaces other factors when they are making a purchasing decision. Therefore, considering the discussions raised around the investigated constructs, the following hypothesis is proposed:

- **H1:** Brand awareness positively influences customer perceived quality.

The brand credibility concept has traditionally been linked to the process by which a brand can convey a value promise through the product it represents (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020). Current concepts add that brand credibility results from customers' internal and subjective responses at the level the brand delivers on promises made through marketing strategies at all customer contact points with the brand (Dwivedi et al., 2019).

Research points out that brand credibility positively affects brand purchase intention through perceived quality (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Sweeney& Swait, 2008; Baek, Kim, & Yu, 2010; Ng, Butt, Khong, & Ong, 2013). On this horizon, Baek et al. (2010) stated that brand credibility increases perceived quality. Thus, perceived quality and brand credibility more powerfully influence customer intentions and purchase decisions (Sweeney & Swait, 2008).

The study by Spry, Pappu and Cornwell (2011) contributed to the understanding when they mentioned that greater brand credibility could increase customers perception about the quality of the product, influencing their psychophysical processes, through which objective levels of quality are transferred to perceived and subjective levels of quality that can affect their intentions or future behavior.

Therefore, companies and their respective brands with greater credibility established in the market and outstanding customers or the general market perceived quality have a greater possibility to leverage their sales and, consequently, their success (Ng et al., 2013). In view of this, the brand credibility has a direct and positive effect on purchase intention (Jeng, 2016), and thus, considering the discussions around the subject, the second hypothesis of this study is proposed:

- **H2:** Brand credibility positively influences customer perceived quality.

The literature points out that, naturally, people trust credible companies, entities, or brands, that is, with which they are most familiar and trust (Wang & Yang, 2010; Panchal et al., 2012). According to Anees-ur-Rehman, Saraniemi, Ulkuniemi and Hurmalinna-Laukkanen (2018), any purchase involves some kind or level of risk, but this is greatly mitigated when brand awareness is high. In such situations, customers can have more confidence in the choices or decisions they make.

The uniqueness of brand credibility becomes a valuable tool to reassure customers, reducing their perceptions of risk. In this way, the increase of the purchase probability becomes viable. The authors also emphasize that another point to be highlighted in this relationship is that brand awareness and brand credibility probably result in premium pricing, repeated purchases, increased sales, and more significant market share (Anees-Ur-Rehman et al., 2018).

In this context, the results of the research by Yousaf, Zulfiqar, Aslam and Altaf (2012) showed that brand awareness is highly influential in brand credibility and that this can increase confidence in the company's brand(s) and its offerings (products or services), providing them with knowledge and greater customer familiarity about this brand(s) or products and/or services. As a result, the third hypothesis of the research is proposed:

- **H3:** Brand awareness positively influences brand credibility from the customer perspective.

The perceived innovation construct, according to Wang et al. (2017), can be understood as a set of uniqueness, diversity, and novelty that customers can feel or perceive, and such a combined set of feelings can lead to impulse buying by customers. The authors also pointed out that perceived innovations can effectively increase companies' brand value, especially in high technology sectors, such as the automotive industry. Innovative products have symbolic social value, highlight personality and identity to products and/or services, and are more likely to generate brand loyalty. In general, perceived innovation comes from a brand's ability to bring something new to the market, increasing the degree and perceived quality of products (Hanaysha et al., 2014).

Another aspect highlighted is the influential relationship between perceived innovation and perceived quality. According to Gleim, Lawson and Robinson (2015), most innovations focus on updating the product's technical quality. Wu and Chen (2014) argued a paradigm on how customers perceive companies' innovation strategies and their effectiveness. The authors mentioned that innovation is the most critical aspect that influences customers' purchase intention and the company's performance in the market in which it operates. Concerning perceived quality, it means assessing the customer´s perception of product quality, representing customers' global judgment about the superiority of a particular company product or service concerning other market alternatives (competitors).

Therefore, Wu and Ho (2014) emphasized that the perceived innovation, through information disclosure by the company, can improve the quality of products or services and benefits in advancing the corporate image and attracting potential customers. Previous studies demonstrated that existing products to which some kind of innovation is incorporated or innovative products provide greater value to customers and enhance the perceived quality resulting from them. In other words, innovation could change quality standards or improve the quality of products and/or services and attract potential customers for the purchase. Hence, the fourth research hypothesis for this study is presented:

- **H4:** Perceived innovation positively influences customer perceived quality.

According to Wang et al. (2017), there is a robust relationship between brand awareness and perceived innovation. The authors mentioned that the product perceived innovation is the customers' subjective evaluation, which comes from their perception of products. In convergence to this, Cho, Fiore and Yu (2018) pointed out that there is the customer innovation acceptance factor. Hence, if customers are more prone to innovation, this posture will easily lead them to adopt product innovations, increasing awareness and confidence in the new product.

Research developed by Kim, Morris and Swait (2008) showed that individuals form a high innovation awareness if they are repeatedly exposed to this innovation and develop strong associations with relevant purchase or consumption suggestions. In this sense, Gleim et al. (2015) highlighted that it takes more than an innovative company to attract customer attention. Companies need to recognize that creating awareness around the company's ability to innovate is critical to raising customer awareness of its efforts. Therefore, the fifth hypothesis of research can be formulated:

- **H5:** Brand awareness positively influences customer perceived innovation.

According to the literature, the purchase intention is a behavioral intention of an individual or buyer; that is, it depends on a customer's attitude toward behavior and the subjective norms associated with their behavior (Asshidin, Abidin, & Borhan, 2016). The purchase intention can also be understood as the customer tendency or willingness to buy a particular product or service in the future and positively predict the chance of purchase (Mao et al., 2020).

In turn, Wu and Chen (2014) defined that the purchase intention can be an emotional reaction resulting from the customer's global evaluation of a product or service, indicating the possibility that this same customer would like to buy that particular brand, product, or service or even be willing or planning to buy it in the future (Wu & Ho, 2014). If customers have a positive purchasing intention, then a customer engaged with a particular brand can potentially make that purchase (Ali et al., 2015).

Depending on this, Wu and Ho (2014) presented that brand awareness and purchase intention are positively related. The authors mentioned that the direct effect is even greater between brand awareness and purchase intention when it comes to familiar brand purchases.

In addition, Wang et al. (2017) defended that companies can stimulate customer purchase intention from the brand awareness perspective. In other words, brand awareness plays a key role in the customer purchase intention process, leading them to be more willing to buy certain products. For example, brand awareness has a stronger effect on brand purchase intention for car brands (Wang & Yang, 2010). Based on this, it is possible to present the sixth research hypothesis:

- **H6:** Brand awareness positively influences customer purchase intention.

The impact of customer innovation perception on behavioral intention still needs to be examined. According to Gleim et al. (2015), there are few studies in this area. To this end, Horn and Salvendy (2006) found that if customers received more detailed information about innovative products, their purchase intention would be positively stimulated.

By broadening this understanding, companies can improve their products or services through innovation to further increase purchase intention. The effects of perceived innovation should be considered from a customer perspective and measure customer perceptions of their intention to purchase new products (Wu & Ho, 2014).

In short, the more customers perceive innovations, the greater the potential to purchase innovative products (Wang et al., 2017). Allied to this idea, Rubera, Ordanini and Griffith (2011) mentioned that customers´ perceived innovation, at the product level, positively affects their purchase intention. Besides, Gleim et al. (2015) suggested that their study results support the premise that customer innovation perceptions lead to increased purchase intentions. Therefore, taking into account that few studies examined the relationship between perceived innovation and purchase intention, the seventh research hypothesis was formulated:

- **H7:** Perceived innovation positively influences customer purchase intention.

Figure 1 presents the proposed theoretical model and illustrates the hypothesized relationships.

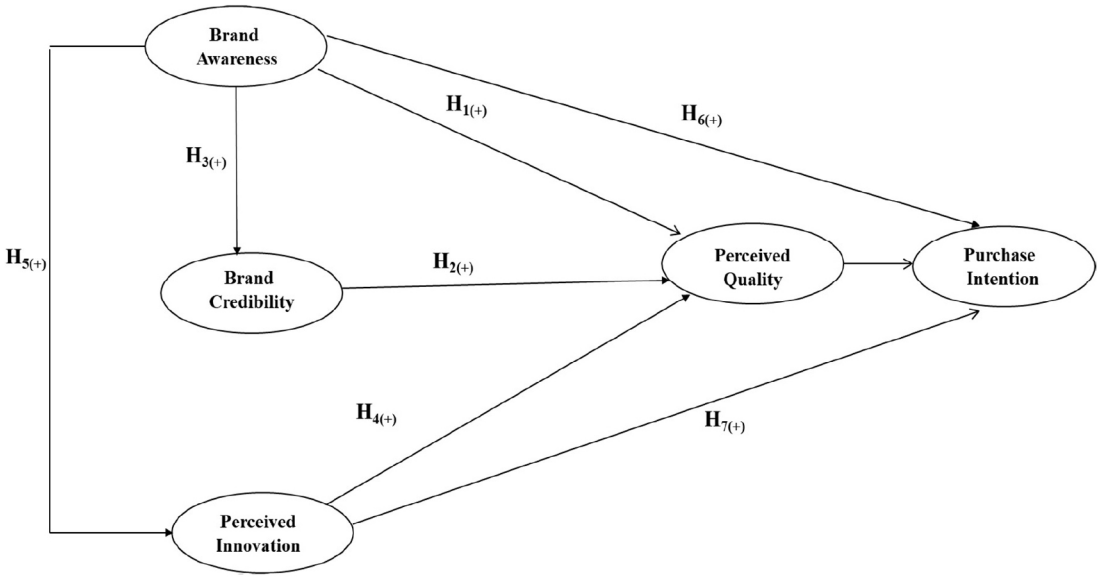

Figure 1. Proposed Theoretical Model.
Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the literature.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The quantitative descriptive research method was applied to the study, by applying a survey, following the assumptions of Hair Jr., Barry, Anderson and Black (2018), who highlighted that this technique allows obtaining more exact information, enabling to verify the existing relations between the tested variables, through large and representative samples. Thus, the cross-sectional survey questionnaire was applied to a representative sample of the target population to generate a report of the variables under study at a given time (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012).

The data collection was carried out with customers who intended to buy an SUV car, of the five best selling brands in this category of cars, being Nissan, Ford, Chevrolet, Honda, and Jeep, which were responsible for more than 80% of the SUV sales of Serra Gaucha. The questionnaire operationalization was performed through the survey participants' self-filling method (Hair Jr. et al., 2018).

A convenience sample was determined, which totaled 256 cases. In elaborating the survey questionnaire, a seven-point Likert type scale was adopted, with the extremes "1. I totally disagree" to "7. I totally agree". Thus, the data collection instrument, or survey questionnaire, was prepared based on scales validated by Wu and Ho (2014) and Baek et al. (2010) for each of the constructs tested, and the contributions extracted from the literature review were observed. The selected articles were carefully chosen because the developed constructs are closer to the automotive sector. It is also important to point out that a native reviewer translated the scales. The scales used were operationalized from previous studies, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Constructs operationalization

Constructs	Observable variables	Scale items	Authors
Brand Awareness	BAW_1 to 4	1 to 7	Wu and Ho (2014)
Brand Credibility	BCR_1 to 4	1 to 7	Baek, Kim and Yu (2010)
Perceived Innovation	PIN_1 to 4	1 to 7	Wu and Ho (2014)
Perceived Quality	PQL_1 to 4	1 to 7	Wu and Ho (2014)
Purchase Intention	INT_1 to 4	1 to 7	Wu and Ho (2014)

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Twenty respondents participated in a pre-test, and there was no need to make adjustments to the survey instrument. It is important to note that these questionnaires were not incorporated into the final survey sample.

Moving to data analysis steps, we initiated the data preparation by verifying missing data and atypical observations (outliers). For the verification of missings, the listwise deletion process was used (Byrne, 2016). Thus, four questionnaires were eliminated, totaling 252 valid questionnaires. The outliers were then verified using a combination of uni and multivariate analyses. First, the verification of univariate standard scores (Z scores) was applied, and 9 cases were eliminated because they had values above |3| (Hair Jr. et al., 2018). The multivariate outliers were also verified by calculating the Mahalanobis distance (D^2), considering a significance of $p<0.005$, divided by the degree of freedom (df = 20), indicating six cases for exclusion, resulting in a final sample of 237 cases (n = 237).

The accomplishment of the assumption tests finalized the data analysis preparation, including normality, homoscedasticity, linearity, and multicollinearity (Hair Jr. et al., 2018; Kline, 2015). All results were satisfactory as they presented values as recommended in the literature.

4. RESULTS PRESENTATION

After eliminating the 15 outlier cases, the sample resulted in 237 valid cases. In the sample characterization, the information considered: (i) age; (ii) individual monthly income; (iii) number of cars and; (iv) SUV brands considered as reference. The age group with the highest consumption representing 30.4%, is between 26 and 33 years old. Concerning the respondents' individual monthly income, the highest concentration of customers reported an income between R$ 4,900.00 and R$ 9,000.00, representing 70.9% of the sample.

Among the brands pointed out in the questionnaire, the Kia Motors brand, with 42 respondents, representing 17.7% of respondents, was the most consumed brand, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2
SUVs reference brands considered by respondents

SUVs Reference Brands	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Kia Motors	42	17.7%
Nissan	25	10.5%
Ford	27	11.4%
Chevrolet	21	8.9%
Honda	40	16.9%
Other brands	82	34.6%
Total	**237**	**100%**

Source: Data from research.

Following the data analysis, the constructs individual validation intends to measure how much a set of tested variables represent the latent construct (Hair Jr. et al., 2018). Thus, unidimensionality was verified through the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), resulting in factor loads ranging from 0.54 to 0.84, with 0.000 indexes in the Bartlett test and 0.924 in the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, following the indication recommended by the literature. Besides, the Cronbach's Alpha was verified, with values ranging from 0.797 to 0.966. Finally, the convergent validity was calculated (considering as parameters values above 0.5), employing (CFA) Confirmatory Factorial Analysis (Malhotra et al., 2012), as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability, and extracted variance

Constructs	Explained Variance	Cronbach's Alpha de	Composite Reliability	Variance Extracted
Brand Awareness	64.23%	0.79	0.88	0.65
Brand Credibility	77.23%	0.88	0.95	0.83
Perceived Innovation	83.28%	0.93	0.95	0.85
Perceived Quality	90.64%	0.96	0.98	0.83
Purchase Intention	72.14%	0.87	0.92	0.75

Source: Data from research.

The results of both the composite reliability with indexes higher than 0.70 and the variance extracted, with indexes higher than 0.50, met the indexes recommended in the literature (Hair Jr. et al., 2018; Malhotra et al., 2012). To identify the discriminant validity between the constructs presented for the proposed theoretical model, the procedure indicated by Fornell and Larcker (1981) was used, in which the variances extracted from the constructs are compared with the shared variances. The results presented an adequate discriminant validity of three of the constructs under analysis, according to Table 4.

Table 4
Discriminant validity

Constructs	BAW	BCR	PIN	PQL	INT
Brand Awareness (BAW)	**0.658**				
Brand Credibility (BCR)	0.712	**0.839**			
Perceived Innovation (PIN)	0.354	0.451	**0.853**		
Perceived Quality (PQL)	0.386	0.700	0.519	**0.931**	
Purchase Intention (INT)	0.532	0.555	0.357	0.367	**0.753**

Source: Data from research.

The data analysis in Table 4 shows that the variance extracted from the brand awareness construct (BAW - 0.658) was lower than the variance shared with the brand credibility construct (BCR - 0.712). These BAW and BCR values indicate a high correlation between the constructs. Based on this, we also chose to perform the additional Bagozzi and Phillips' (1982) test before excluding the constructs. In Table 5, the differences between the qui-squares for the constructs pairs were verified when considering the free and fixed models.

Table 5
Bagozzi and Phillips' test

Construct 1	Construct 2	χ^2 Fixed Model	χ^2 Free Model	Dif.	Sig.
Brand Awareness	Brand Credibility	104.89	78.83	26.06	0.000

Source: Data from research.

Based on Bagozzi and Yi (2012), the results stressed that discriminant validity is more difficult to demonstrate when two or more constructs are highly correlated but distinct, according to theory. As explained above, we concluded that the model constructs are valid because they are significant ($p < 0.000$), indicating no correlation between the constructs, confirming the difference between the fixed and the free models and the discriminant validity of the tested constructs.

4.1. Theoretical Model Validation

The model fit indexes of the structural model were proposed to obtain the theoretical model validation (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2015). From the hybrid model estimation, the theoretical model validation started by obtaining the model fit indexes, resulting from the maximum likelihood (MLE) estimation method, which reflects the analysis of the matrices of estimated and observed covariances, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Theoretical model fit indexes

Goodness-of-fit indexes	Recommended values	Resultant values
GFI	Equal or superior to 0.900	0.855
AGFI	Equal or superior to 0.900	0.801
NFI	Equal or superior to 0.900	0.917
IFI	Equal or superior to 0.900	0.947
TLI	Equal or superior to 0.900	0.933
CFI	Equal or superior to 0.900	0.946
RMSEA	Between 0.05 and 0.08	0.084

Source: Data from research.

The result of the RMSEA (0.084) presented an index in the border zone, as the literature suggests that it varies from 0.05 to 0.08 (Hair Jr. et al., 2018). However, the other fit indexes were satisfactory. CFI (0.946), TLI (0.933), NFI (0.917), and IFI (0.947), presented values higher than 0.900. The GFI (0.855) and the AGFI (0.801), on the other hand, presented values close to those recommended. As far as the model fit indexes are concerned, it is important to note that, according to Bagozzi and Yi (2012), the GFI and the AGFI often do not present acceptable values and, for that reason, are not presented in several studies today.

The next step in analyzing the results was to perform the hypothesis test to check the significance and magnitude of the regression coefficients (Hair Jr. et al., 2018). In Table 7, the hypotheses, structural paths, non-standardized coefficients, standardized errors, t-values, and probabilities are demonstrated.

Table 7
Hypothesis test of the proposed theoretical model

Hy	Structural Paths	Non-standardized coefficient (β)	Errors	Standardized coefficient (β)	t-values	p	Result
H1	BAW PQL	0.729	0.270	0.541	2.702	$p = 0.007$	Suportted
H2	BCR PQL	1.126	0.199	1.035	5.661	$p < 0.001$	Suportted
H3	BAW BCR	1.135	0.144	0.917	7.899	$p < 0.001$	Suportted
H4	PIN PQL	0.429	0.068	0.454	6.300	$p < 0.001$	Suportted
H5	BAW PIN	1.009	0.143	0.706	7.041	$p < 0.001$	Suportted
H6	BAW INT	1.624	0.242	0.760	6.715	$p < 0.001$	Suportted
H7	PIN INT	0.030	0.105	0.020	0.288	$p = 0.773$	Not suportted

Source: Data from research.
Note: Significance level at 0.05.

Another way to verify the hypothesis test effectiveness is through the determination coefficients (R^2) based on each dependent variable's multiple squared correlations. R^2 demonstrates how much the independent variables can explain the variance of a dependent variable. The greater the power of explaining the regression equation, the better predicting the dependent variable (Hair Jr. et al., 2018; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). The coefficients of determination (R^2) of the theoretical model are presented in Table 8.

Table 8
Coefficients of determination - Proposed theoretical model

Constructs	Coefficient of Determination (R^2)
Brand Credibility (BCR)	0.941
Perceived Innovation (PIN)	0.498
Perceived Quality (PQL)	0.804
Purchase Intention (INT)	0.600

Source: Data from research.

The interpretation of the data in Table 8 presents as the coefficient of determination (R^2), the following results for the proposed model: brand awareness, brand credibility, perceived innovation, and perceived quality explain 60.0% of the variance of purchase intention; brand awareness, brand credibility, and perceived innovation explain 80.4% of perceived quality; brand awareness and brand credibility explain 49.8% of the variance of perceived innovation; while brand awareness explains 94.1% of the variance of brand credibility.

The results showed that purchase intention demonstrated high explanatory power from its determinant constructs (R^2 = 0.600 or 60.0%) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). That is, the results presented suggest a significant explanatory power for the constructs inserted in the proposed, tested, and validated theoretical model.

4.2. Results Discussion

This study's starting point was understanding the relationship of the determinants of customer purchase intention that have been explored in the marketing literature, more specifically in the context of SUV buyers, highlighting some research findings. When analyzing the hypotheses proposed in the model, it is evident that, of the seven hypotheses tested, six were statistically supported (see Table 7). The first hypothesis supported was H1 (Brand awareness positively influences customer perceived quality; $\beta = 0.541$ and $p = 0.007$), converging with Hsu and Hsu (2015) study, who showed that brand awareness reinforces the quality customers perceive.

H2 (Brand credibility positively influences customer perceived quality; $\beta = 1.035$ and $p < 0.0001$) was also supported, confirming the result found by Baek et al. (2010), in which the effects of brand credibility on customer utility are materialized through perceived quality, that is, brand credibility has a positive impact on perceived quality. Similarly, the study by Ng et al. (2013) pointed out that brand credibility translates into perceived quality.

H3 (Brand awareness positively influences brand credibility from the customer perspective; $\beta = 0.917$ and $p < 0.001$), met the results of Yousaf et al. (2012) research, which also showed that brand awareness is highly influential on brand credibility, as well as the study by Anees-r-Rehman et al. (2018), that demonstrated that brand credibility is highly valuable, increasing customers purchase intention.

H4 (Perceived innovation positively influences customer perceived quality; $\beta = 0.454$ and $p < 0.001$) was supported and presented results converging with the study of Wu and Ho (2014), which stated that perceived innovation is a key element to improve the perceived quality of a product or create new products, services or new functions.

Concerning H5 (Brand awareness positively influences customer perceived innovation; $\beta = 0.706$ and $p < 0.001$), also supported by Wang et al. (2017) who indicated that there is a positive impact between brand awareness and perceived innovation, as well as, the study of Cho et al. (2018), which showed that brand awareness impacts perceived innovation.

H6 (Brand awareness positively influences customer purchase intention; $\beta = 0.760$ and $p < 0.001$), corroborated the result of the study by Wang et al. (2017) and Wu and Ho (2014), who observed that brand awareness leads to purchase intention and that the development of new studies is necessary to confirm this relationship, mainly in different contexts, considering its particularities.

However, H7 was not supported (Perceived innovation positively influences customer purchase intention; $\beta = 0.020$ and $p = 0.773$). This result contradicts Gleim et al. (2015) empirical evidence, which suggests that customer innovation perceptions lead to increased purchase intentions. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the studies of Wang et al. (2017) stated that perceived innovation might indirectly affect purchase intentions. Thus, as highlighted by Wu and Ho (2014), a new product is a good, service, or idea perceived for some potentials as different from what is already known, presenting some novelty degree. It is noteworthy that, because it is something new, innovation may suffer some resistance from the public, leading to a delay in perception or denial and may not impact purchase intention.

The theoretical contribution of the model contextualized with customers intending to purchase SUVs is unprecedented for understanding the combination and interference of the determining factors with brand awareness, brand credibility, perceived innovation, and perceived quality regarding SUVs' purchase intention. Added to this is the fact that there are few academic papers relating to the automobile context.

5. FINAL CONSIDERARTIONS

The proposed and validated theoretical model provides a nomological structure of the constructs that form the purchase intention. The results found answered the general objective of the research to test a theoretical model that contemplated brand awareness, brand credibility, perceived innovation, and perceived quality as determinants of the purchase intention of SUVs.

The first theoretical implication of this research was the confirmation of the positive relationship between brand awareness and perceived quality, meeting the results found by Hsu and Hsu (2015), in which the authors affirmed that brand awareness translates into a higher general evaluation of the product and a more positive perceived quality. Another empirical evidence of this study highlighted the effects of brand credibility on perceived quality and brand awareness, providing customers with greater knowledge about the products of a particular brand.

When verifying the study findings, brand awareness is the sign of how customers perceive the brand, thus helping marketing predict purchase behavior (Wang & Yang, 2010). The brand that awakens the highest brand awareness in the market tends to generate greater preference and greater purchase intention. In this sense, the importance of brands to have credibility with customers is highlighted because credibility can be translated as product information incorporated into a brand.

Besides, the perceived quality must be evidenced and accompanied by the company as something that transmits and transpires to the customer that the product, or the brand, is mutually exclusive. In this sense, automotive manufacturers need to develop and implement methods and techniques that emphasize the benefits and characteristics that lead the product or brand to have the special recognition of quality, reinforcing the technology and innovation of the product.

Another study contribution is that perceived innovation is a fundamental element to improve a product's perceived quality or create new products, services, or functions. In this sense, when perceived, innovation is part of high-performance and competitive organizations' path to success.

In view of the above, the theoretical contributions centered on developing a theoretical model with unprecedented combinations, especially concerning the perceived innovation

construct. Moreover, the proposed model was structured and tested from combinations of different determinants, which enabled: (i) the evolution of empirically tested concepts; (ii) the better individual understanding of each construct; and (iii) the expansion of correlation possibilities. Based on this understanding, automobile manufacturers can strategically plan the budget allocation for different brand activities, prioritizing those elements that most influence or exalt the product or brand benefits in the purchase intention.

Finally, as limitations of the study, it is essential to point out that, taking into consideration that it is a study applied to a non-probabilistic sample, for convenience, to facilitate the data collection and the viability of access to respondents, it is limited to the scope of the study, and the findings cannot be definitively generalized to the target audience. Another point regarding the target audience is that it was collected in only one region (city).

When it comes to developing future studies, testing the direct and positive relationship between brand awareness and repurchase intention, besides verifying the impact of the relationship between brand awareness and perceived quality, is suggested. One more possible relationship to be observed in future studies would be brand credibility positively influencing purchase intention. It would be interesting to observe, also, the comparison between nested models or with rival models. Besides, mediation or moderation tests with other constructs such as perceived value, brand personality, brand involvement, brand love, brand loyalty, and other methodological approaches, such as experimental approaches, are recommended.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

APPENDIX A

Original scale items used in the research

Constructs	Items	Original Scale Items Used in Research
Brand Awareness	BAW_1	I heard this brand.
	BAW _2	This brand is what I first thought of.
	BAW _3	This brand is very famous.
	BAW _4	Most of people know this brand.
Brand Credibility	BCR_1	This brand delivers (or would deliver) what it promises.
	BCR_2	Over time, my experiences with this brand lead me to expect it to keep its promises.
	BCR_3	This brand is committed to delivering on its claims.
	BCR_4	This brand has a name you can trust.
Perceived Innovation	PIN_1	The new functions of the SUV are easy to learn.
	PIN _2	The new functions of the SUV are convenient to operate.
	PIN _3	The technology is highly progressed.
	PIN _4	The functions are more pragmatic.
Perceived Quality	PQL_1	The quality is outstanding.
	PQL _2	The quality is credible.
	PQL _3	The quality is reliable.
	PQL _4	The quality is very stable.
Purchase Intention	INT _1	The purchase possibility of this SUV brand/model is high.
	INT _2	I am thinking about purchasing this SUV brand.
	INT _3	It is possible to purchase it in this price.
	INT _4	I will recommend other people to purchase this brand SUV model.

Source: Adapted from Wu, & Ho (2014) and Baek, Kim, & Yu (2010).