

Mahindra



Official name: Mahindra & Mahindra Limited.

Owned by: Mahindra Group.

Current situation: Mahindra is the world's largest manufacturer of tractors, and also makes road vehicles that feel like tractors. Mahindra quality is laughably bad.

Mahindra has had little success in the West.

Mahindra once tried to establish itself in Australia, then fled when its vehicles failed to find buyers.

As if that weren't bad enough, the recent arrival of Chinese-made pickups and SUVs has given Mahindra some serious competition.

Chances of survival: Poor. The Mahindra company itself will doubtless survive in India, but there are few credible reasons why Westerners would buy Mahindra vehicles. In the Western World, Mahindra seems doomed •



A brief commentary on Mahindra



MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA is part of the Mahindra Group, a major Indian industrial and commercial conglomerate.

Originally established in 1945 as Mahindra & Mohammed Ltd, the partnership was broken up by the partition of India. The second half of the partnership, Malik Ghulam Muhammad, moved to Pakistan to become the finance minister. Mahindra & Mohammed then became Mahindra & Mahindra.

Mahindra & Mahindra bought the rights to build Indian versions of the World War II Willys Jeep. From Jeep manufacture, Mahindra branched out into light commercial vehicles and farm equipment.

Mahindra is the world's largest manufacturer of tractors, with sales totalling more than 200,000 per year.





Although a major industrial force in India, Mahindra vehicles are regarded as something of a bad joke in the rest of the world, due to the dated and often-outright-strange designs, clumsy assembly and a well-earned reputation for poor quality materials throughout.

Previous attempts to launch Mahindra offroaders into countries like Australia, ended in tears. Mahindra offroaders drove like tractors, broke down, and rusted badly from new. Even a rock-bottom retail price couldn't save them.





Back with a: “It’s going to be different this time” message, Mahindra is attempting once more to gain credibility with Western customers.





Mahindra has three problems: one is that, in the un-demanding Indian market, Mahindra has never had to learn to build vehicles properly.

Second, because, in India, cost is the most important factor in vehicle sales, Mahindra has never bothered to learn how to make vehicles desirable to customers who aren't merely fixated on price.

Third, Mahindra appears to be blissfully unaware of how demanding the Western market is, and how poorly Mahindra vehicles perform in this market. Unlike the Japanese, Koreans, and, more recently, the Chinese, there's no sense that the bosses at Mahindra have ever said:

“Hell! By Western standards, our vehicles are a bad joke: we'd better get our act together.”

Vehicles from Japan, Korea and China were also once laughably bad, but Japan, Korea and China took ownership of the problem. It was this humility that gave rise to the rapid improvement in vehicles from these countries.



By comparison, in the decade or so since Mahindra took another shot at the Western market, there's been little improvement in quality, nor any sense that Mahindra has learned from past mistakes.



Mahindra is currently trying to re-enter the US market, after its aborted 2012 launch. Mahindra had promised a network of up to 350 dealers, an assembly plant in Alabama, and a nationwide promotional campaign.

What Mahindra got instead was a major lawsuit from disgruntled dealers. Mahindra had announced the nationwide release of its pickup truck, without first checking whether the truck met America's regulations. It didn't, and couldn't. Mahindra fled back to India.

As things stand, Mahindra has zero chance of succeeding in the West. Its vehicles are poorly built and often look silly. Worse, Mahindra's trump card: low price, won't help. Why? Because Western customers who buy solely on price are likely to buy something from China.

Chinese models are likely to be more recognisably modern and were generally copied off proven Western vehicles. Few Mahindra models even belong in the current century •

