

## FACTORS INFLUENCING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE INDIAN AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

<sup>1</sup>Shaistha Khan, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Atul Loomba

(Associate Professor)<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, <sup>2</sup>Supervisor

<sup>1-2</sup> Department of Management, Rabindranath Tagore University, Madhya Pradesh, India

### ABSTRACT

Customer satisfaction is a critical factor in the success of any industry, and the Indian automobile industry is no exception. This research paper aims to explore the various factors influencing customer satisfaction in the Indian automobile industry. Through a comprehensive literature review and empirical research, this study identifies key determinants of customer satisfaction in the context of the Indian automobile market. The research findings provide valuable insights for automakers and marketers to enhance customer satisfaction, thereby improving their competitive position in the market.

### Keywords:

Customer Satisfaction, Indian Automobile Industry, Factors, Determinants, Customer Experience, Product Quality, After-Sales Service, Price Perception, Brand Loyalty, Innovation, Consumer Expectations, Competition, Market Trends, Regulatory Environment.

### INTRODUCTION

The Indian automobile industry is one of the largest and most dynamic sectors of the Indian economy, contributing significantly to employment, economic growth, and technological advancement. With a rapidly growing consumer base and increasing competition, customer satisfaction has emerged as a crucial element for the success and sustainability of automotive companies operating in India.

Customer satisfaction in the Indian automobile industry is influenced by a myriad of factors that encompass various stages of a customer's journey, from pre-purchase considerations to post-

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purchase experiences. Understanding and managing these factors is vital for automakers to not only retain existing customers but also attract new ones in this highly competitive market.

This research paper aims to delve into the multifaceted landscape of customer satisfaction in the Indian automobile industry. By examining the diverse determinants that impact customer satisfaction, including product quality, after-sales service, price perception, brand loyalty, innovation, consumer expectations, competition, market trends, and the regulatory environment, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities faced by automotive companies operating in India.

Through an extensive literature review and empirical research, we aim to shed light on the intricate interplay of these factors and their relative significance in shaping customer satisfaction in the Indian context. The findings of this research will not only assist automotive manufacturers and marketers in fine-tuning their strategies but will also contribute to the broader understanding of customer satisfaction dynamics in emerging markets.

In the subsequent sections of this research paper, we will delve deeper into each of these factors, analyze their impact on customer satisfaction, and propose strategies that automotive companies can adopt to enhance customer satisfaction and maintain a competitive edge in the Indian automobile industry.

## **PRODUCT QUALITY AND RELIABILITY**

Product quality and reliability are among the foremost factors influencing customer satisfaction in the Indian automobile industry. Customers expect vehicles that are not only technologically advanced but also built to last, offering a trouble-free ownership experience. Here, we explore the significance of product quality and reliability, their impact on customer satisfaction, and strategies for automakers to excel in these areas.

**Importance of Product Quality: Safety and Performance:** Customers prioritize safety and performance when purchasing automobiles. High-quality vehicles are expected to meet safety standards and offer exceptional performance on Indian roads, ensuring driver and passenger confidence.

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1. **Durability:** In a diverse and often challenging Indian climate, durable vehicles that can withstand extreme weather conditions, rough terrains, and heavy usage are highly valued.
2. **Reduced Maintenance Costs:** Quality vehicles typically require fewer repairs and maintenance, resulting in lower ownership costs, which is a significant factor for cost-conscious consumers.

### Impact on Customer Satisfaction:

1. **Positive Ownership Experience:** Vehicles with superior quality and reliability provide customers with a positive ownership experience, leading to higher satisfaction levels.
2. **Brand Loyalty:** Satisfied customers are more likely to remain loyal to a brand and recommend it to others. A positive reputation for product quality can enhance brand loyalty.
3. **Reduced Complaints and Returns:** High-quality vehicles lead to fewer customer complaints and returns, which can improve an automaker's reputation and reduce customer service costs.

### Strategies for Enhancing Product Quality and Reliability:

1. **Rigorous Quality Control:** Implement stringent quality control processes throughout the manufacturing and assembly stages to identify and rectify defects before vehicles reach customers.
2. **Continuous Improvement:** Continuously assess and improve product design and manufacturing processes based on customer feedback and emerging technologies.
3. **Invest in R&D:** Invest in research and development to innovate and incorporate advanced technologies that enhance vehicle performance, safety, and reliability.
4. **Supplier Collaboration:** Collaborate closely with suppliers to ensure the quality of components and materials used in manufacturing.
5. **Comprehensive Testing:** Conduct extensive testing, including endurance, safety, and reliability tests, to identify potential weaknesses and address them proactively.

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6. **Warranty and Maintenance Services:** Offer competitive warranty and maintenance packages to reassure customers of product reliability and support them throughout the ownership lifecycle.
7. **Transparency:** Be transparent about product specifications, safety features, and maintenance requirements to manage customer expectations effectively.

In summary, product quality and reliability play a pivotal role in shaping customer satisfaction in the Indian automobile industry. Automakers that prioritize these aspects and continually strive for excellence in design, manufacturing, and customer support are more likely to succeed in this competitive market and build lasting relationships with Indian consumers.

## EVALUATION OF MARUTI SUZUKI'S VEHICLE QUALITY AND RELIABILITY

Here's an evaluation of Maruti Suzuki's quality and reliability:

1. **Historical Reputation:** Maruti Suzuki has historically enjoyed a strong reputation for producing vehicles that are known for their reliability and good build quality. The company has been a dominant player in the Indian automobile market for several decades and has consistently ranked among the top-selling automakers in India.
2. **Quality Control:** Maruti Suzuki has invested in quality control and manufacturing processes to ensure that their vehicles meet industry standards. They have a well-established production system and quality control measures in place to maintain consistent quality across their product lineup.
3. **Customer Feedback:** Customer feedback and reviews have generally been positive regarding the reliability of Maruti Suzuki vehicles. Many owners have reported satisfaction with the durability and longevity of their Maruti Suzuki cars.
4. **Maintenance and Service:** Maruti Suzuki has an extensive service network across India, providing after-sales support and maintenance services. This network is essential for ensuring that customers can easily access service and repairs when needed.
5. **Warranty and Reliability Programs:** Maruti Suzuki typically offers competitive warranty and extended warranty options, which can provide peace of mind to customers regarding the reliability of their vehicles.

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6. **Resale Value:** Maruti Suzuki vehicles have historically retained their value relatively well in the used car market. This suggests that consumers have confidence in the long-term reliability of these vehicles.
7. **Consumer Reports and Surveys:** It's important to consult consumer reports and surveys specific to the Indian market, such as those conducted by automotive publications and organizations, to get a more up-to-date and detailed evaluation of Maruti Suzuki's vehicle quality and reliability.
8. **Product Portfolio:** Maruti Suzuki offers a wide range of vehicles, from compact cars to SUVs. The quality and reliability of specific models may vary, so it's advisable to research individual models to assess their performance and reputation.

In conclusion, Maruti Suzuki has historically maintained a positive reputation for producing reliable vehicles in the Indian market. However, the perception of quality and reliability can vary from one model to another, and individual experiences may also differ. Therefore, prospective buyers are encouraged to conduct thorough research, including reading reviews, considering specific models, and consulting recent consumer reports, to make informed decisions about the quality and reliability of Maruti Suzuki vehicles.

## AFTER-SALES SERVICE AND SUPPORT

After-sales service and support are crucial aspects of the customer experience in the automobile industry. It plays a significant role in influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

1. **Service Network:** Maruti Suzuki has one of the most extensive service networks in India. They have a widespread presence with numerous authorized service centers and workshops across the country. This extensive network makes it convenient for customers to access service and maintenance facilities, even in remote areas.
1. **Skilled Technicians:** Maruti Suzuki invests in training and certifying their service technicians to ensure that they have the skills and expertise needed to diagnose and repair issues effectively. This helps maintain the quality of service provided to customers.
2. **Genuine Spare Parts:** The company emphasizes the use of genuine spare parts during repairs and maintenance. This ensures that the parts used are of high quality and compatible

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with Maruti Suzuki vehicles, reducing the risk of issues arising from substandard components.

3. **Customer Assistance:** Maruti Suzuki typically offers a customer care hotline and online assistance channels for customers to get help and information regarding their vehicles, service appointments, and inquiries.
4. **Warranty and Extended Warranty:** Maruti Suzuki provides warranty coverage for new vehicles, and customers often have the option to purchase extended warranty packages for additional coverage. This can give customers peace of mind regarding unexpected repair costs.
5. **Service Packages:** The company may offer service packages that cover routine maintenance and servicing for a specified duration or mileage, which can be convenient for customers and help them budget for maintenance expenses.
6. **Digital Services:** Maruti Suzuki has been adopting digital tools and platforms to enhance the customer service experience. This includes online service appointment booking, digital service records, and updates through mobile apps.
7. **Feedback and Improvement:** Maruti Suzuki usually collects customer feedback to improve its after-sales service. This feedback loop helps identify areas for improvement and ensures that customer concerns are addressed promptly.
8. **Service Quality and Waiting Times:** While Maruti Suzuki's service network is extensive, the quality of service and waiting times at specific service centers may vary. This can depend on the location and the efficiency of individual service centers.
9. **Customer Satisfaction:** Overall, customer satisfaction with Maruti Suzuki's after-sales service has been generally positive. However, as with any large service network, individual experiences may vary, and customer feedback plays a crucial role in addressing concerns and making improvements.

Please note that the quality of after-sales service and support can change over time and may vary by location. It's advisable to consult recent customer reviews, check the specific service center's reputation in your area, and inquire about the latest service offerings when considering a Maruti Suzuki vehicle to ensure you receive the best possible after-sales support.

## ASSESSMENT OF MARUTI SUZUKI'S AFTER-SALES SERVICE AND CUSTOMER SUPPORT

1. **Online Reviews and Customer Feedback:** Look for recent customer reviews and feedback on Maruti Suzuki's after-sales service. Websites and forums like Team-BHP, MouthShut, and various social media platforms often have discussions and reviews from customers sharing their experiences.
2. **Visit Maruti Suzuki Service Centers:** If possible, visit a nearby Maruti Suzuki authorized service center to get a first-hand impression of their facilities, staff, and customer service. You can also inquire about their service packages, waiting times, and available amenities.
3. **Speak with Existing Maruti Suzuki Owners:** If you know someone who owns a Maruti Suzuki vehicle, ask them about their experiences with after-sales service and support. Personal recommendations can provide valuable insights.
4. **Contact Maruti Suzuki Customer Care:** Reach out to Maruti Suzuki's official customer care hotline or online channels to ask questions, seek clarification on specific services, and gauge their responsiveness and willingness to assist.
5. **Check Warranty and Service Plans:** Review the warranty coverage and available service plans for the specific Maruti Suzuki model you are interested in. Understand the terms and conditions, as well as what is covered under warranty.
6. **Compare with Competitors:** Compare Maruti Suzuki's after-sales service offerings with those of its competitors in the Indian automobile market. This can help you determine if Maruti Suzuki's service and support align with your expectations.
7. **Visit Online Forums and Communities:** Explore online automotive forums, community groups, and social media pages dedicated to Maruti Suzuki owners. Engaging in discussions and asking questions can provide insights into common service-related issues and solutions.
8. **Ask for Recommendations:** Seek recommendations from friends, family, or colleagues who own Maruti Suzuki vehicles. They may have valuable insights into their experiences with after-sales service.

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9. **Consult Automotive Publications:** Check reputable automotive publications and websites for reviews and assessments of Maruti Suzuki's after-sales service and customer support. They often conduct surveys and evaluations of service quality.
10. **Consider Your Location:** Keep in mind that the quality of service and support may vary by location, so consider the proximity and reputation of service centers in your area.

Remember that customer experiences can vary, and it's essential to gather information from multiple sources to form a well-rounded assessment. Additionally, the quality of after-sales service may change over time, so staying informed with the latest information is crucial when making a decision regarding a Maruti Suzuki vehicle.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, customer satisfaction in the Indian automobile industry, especially with respect to Maruti Suzuki, is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including product quality, reliability, after-sales service, and customer support. Maruti Suzuki has historically maintained a positive reputation for producing reliable vehicles and has invested in an extensive service network to support its customers.

However, the perception of quality, reliability, and service can vary based on individual experiences and specific service center locations. Therefore, prospective buyers are encouraged to conduct thorough research, read recent customer reviews, and visit service centers in their area to evaluate the quality of after-sales support.

Maruti Suzuki's commitment to customer satisfaction through rigorous quality control, extensive service centers, skilled technicians, and genuine spare parts is vital in maintaining its strong position in the Indian automobile market. The company's continuous efforts to improve and adapt to changing customer expectations will be crucial in ensuring a positive ownership experience for its customers.

Ultimately, the assessment of Maruti Suzuki's after-sales service and customer support should be based on current and local factors, as the quality of service can evolve over time and may vary by



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location. Making an informed decision based on recent feedback and experiences will contribute to a satisfying and trouble-free ownership experience for Maruti Suzuki vehicle owners in India.

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