



## Service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in automobile repair services in Kathmandu

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### Abstract

This study examines the service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in automobile repair services in Kathmandu. Customer satisfaction is the dependent variable. The selected independent variables are empathy, tangibility, assurance, responsiveness and reliability. The primary sources of data is used to assess the opinions of respondents regarding empathy, tangibility, assurance, responsiveness and reliability. The study is based on primary data of 121 respondents. To achieve the purpose of the study, structured questionnaire is prepared. The correlation and multiple regression models are estimated to test the significance and importance of service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in automobile repair services in Kathmandu.

The study showed a positive impact of empathy on customer satisfaction. It indicates that increasing in empathy leads to change in customer satisfaction. Similarly, tangibility is positively correlated to customer satisfaction. It indicates that better tangibility stimulates the customer satisfaction. Likewise, reliability is positively correlated to customer satisfaction. It indicates that better reliability can stimulates the customer satisfaction. Further, assurance is also positively correlated to customer satisfaction. It indicates that assurance leads to change in customer satisfaction. In addition, responsiveness is positively correlated to customer satisfaction. It indicates that increase in responsiveness leads to change in customer satisfaction.

**Keywords:** empathy, tangibility, assurance, responsiveness, reliability, customer satisfaction

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### 1. Introduction

Customer satisfaction is defined as a measurement that determines how happy customers are with a company's products, services, and capabilities. Customer satisfaction information, including surveys and ratings, can help a company determine how to best improve or changes its products and services. An organization's main focus must be to satisfy its customers. This applies to industrial firms, retail and wholesale businesses, government bodies, service companies, nonprofit organizations, and every subgroup within an organization.

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Customer satisfaction is a measure of how products and services provided by a company meet or surpass customer expectation. Nowadays, mere products cannot satisfy customer's expectation; customers demand instant after sales service as well. Service quality and customer satisfaction are important aspects of business since a company's growth is largely dependent on how well it maintains its customers through service and how well they keep their customers satisfied (Edward and Sahadev, 2011). According to Chang *et al.* (2017), customer satisfaction is expected to result from good service efficiency, which will improve customer engagement and inter-relationship. González *et al.* (2007) asserted that customer satisfaction is linked to high service quality, which makes businesses more competitive in the marketplace. The success of any organization depends on the service quality that creates corporate value, which leads to customer satisfaction and loyalty (Makanyeza and Mumiriki, 2016). Due to the intense competition, companies have realized that the key to success is retaining customers. Likewise, companies have also realized that satisfied customers can be retained easily. Therefore, customer satisfaction is the core of the success of any organization (Oliver, 1999). Priyo *et al.* (2019) stated that service quality is essential for customer satisfaction and loyalty in the service industry. Service quality is a good predictor of customer satisfaction in the communication industry. Thus, companies should improve customer service at the right time (Agyapong, 2011). According to Chang *et al.* (2017), customer satisfaction is expected to result from good service efficiency, which will improve customer engagement and interrelationship. Customer satisfaction is defined as an evaluation of the perceived discrepancy between prior expectations and the actual performance of the product (Tse and Wilton, 1988). Customer's involvement is also important as when buyer consider the product important and invests time to seek information then it ultimately enhances the satisfaction level (Russell-Bennett *et al.*, 2007). This satisfaction may influence the concerned company by repurchase, purchase of more products, positive word of mouth and willingness of customer to pay more for the particular brand. Any business is likely to lose market share. Customers and investors if it fails to satisfy customers as effectively and efficiently as its competitors is doing (Anderson *et al.*, 2004).

Gold and Wooldridge (1995) stated that the concept of customer satisfaction is new to the companies which have given more preference to price and availability of products for caring profits. Therefore, there must be clarity as to what customer satisfaction really means. Suja (2000) found that the success of the firm will be determined by how effective it has been in

meeting the diverse customer needs and wants by treating each customer as unique and offering products and services suits his/her needs. According to Xia *et al.* (2004), price fairness refers to consumers' assessments of whether a seller's price is reasonable, acceptable or justifiable. In a separate study on factors affecting customer satisfaction, the authors found that charging a fair price helps to develop customer satisfaction and loyalty. Herrmann *et al.* (2007) concluded that customer satisfaction is directly influenced by price perceptions, albeit indirectly, through the perception of price fairness. The price fairness itself and the way it is fixed and offered have a great impact on satisfaction. According to Bloemer and Odekerken (2002), customer satisfaction is the result of successful marketing that creates value for consumers. Contemporary marketing efforts are geared towards meeting consumers' needs and ensuring customer satisfaction and strategizing on how to retain such customers (Rashid and Hassan, 2009). Judgments of product performance are related to expectations that could enhance the customer satisfaction or brand loyalty (Awan and Rehman, 2014).

Bagodi and Mahanty (2008) stated that customer satisfaction as corner stone of sustainable growth two-wheelers industry. Two-wheelers allow people to navigate such roads easily and it makes the daily travel both affordable and convenient. All the players in the market are trying to hold their place in the minds of the consumers, with better understanding of customer's perceptions, companies can determine the actions required to meet the customer's need they can identify their own strengths and weaknesses, where they stand in comparison to their competitors, chart out the future progress path and improvement. Liang and Wang (2006) revealed various facts about consumer satisfaction and its relationship with its determinants such as features, prices, availability of spare parts, and soon. Sanjuq (2014) explained that customer satisfaction is a measure of how well the service delivered matches the customer's expectation on providing a better service. The customer expect organizational brand promotional strategies should be based on developing innovative offer and product. Developing cost friendly value driven packages and tariffs, offering quality service after sales service. The buyer's satisfaction after purchase on the offers performance in relation to the buyer's expectation is very important. In general, satisfaction is a person's feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance in relation to his/her expectation. The consumer is price conscious and the brand loyalty is diminishing because of number of options in each segment moreover customers are ready to experiment today

(Srivastava, 2015). If the performance matches the expectation, the customer is satisfied. If the performance exceeds the expectations, the customer is highly satisfied or delighted. It is an era of customer delight for the industry and the conventional measures implemented by the service organization tends to be inadequate to attract customer persistently (Bagodi and Mahanty, 2008).

In the context of Nepal, Jha (2001) revealed that maintenance of vehicles and monitoring system are relatively unsatisfactory. Similarly, Pandey and Joshi (2010) found that service quality is positively related to satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. Furthermore, Maunder *et al.* (1999) found that the need for safe, efficient and effective transport are essential to ensure adequate and affordable accessibility and the continuing sustainable development of livelihoods. The brand image, price fairness, better design, comfort, and fuel efficiency have positive relationship with customer satisfaction towards the use of two-wheeler in Kathmandu valley (Giri and Thapa, 2015). Customer satisfaction largely depends on how customers are treated before, during and after the sales is made, along with product or service utility (Giri and Thapa, 2016). Sharma (2002) stated that there is a growing interest in understanding the consumer's perception as it is observed as an important factor to understand the concept of consumer satisfaction.

Pandit (2009) asserted that consumer perception about any product is affected immensely by the quality and design of the product. There is huge influence of design of a product in determining the consumer's first perception about the product and the company as a whole (Jha and Bhandari, 2015). The product quality must always exceed the customer's expectation, because the standard of an enterprise is determined by the customer who has experienced that product and uses that experience and feeling to form a judgment against business (Joshi, 2009). According to Rana (2012), the consumers who are more price conscious perceive price as an important factor in purchasing any product. Price is an important aspect that determines whether the consumer will purchase the product or not. According to Paudel (2010), reliability refers to the extent to which individual items of the company satisfies scaling criteria that has been set by the company. In addition, Naresh (2015) explained that reliability dimension is critical because it embeds the dynamic capability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately for a better consumer perception.

The above discussion shows that empirical evidences vary greatly across the studies on the service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty

in automobile repair services. Though there are above mentioned empirical evidences in the context of other countries and in Nepal, no such findings using more recent data exist in the context of Nepal. Therefore, in order to support one view or the other, this study has been conducted.

The major objective of the study is to examine the service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in automobile repair services in Kathmandu. Specifically, it examines the relationship of empathy, tangibility, assurance, responsiveness and reliability with customer satisfaction in Kathmandu.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: section two describes the sample, data, and methodology. Section three presents the empirical results and final section draws the conclusion.

## 2. Methodological aspects

The study is based on the primary data which were collected from 121 respondents through questionnaire. The study employed convenience sampling method. The respondents' views were collected on empathy, tangibility, assurance, responsiveness and reliability. This study is based on descriptive as well as causal comparative research designs.

### *The model*

The model used in this study assumes that customer satisfaction depends upon service quality and loyalty in automobile repair services. The dependent variable selected for the study is customer satisfaction. Similarly, the selected independent variables are empathy, tangibility, responsiveness, reliability and assurance. Therefore, the model takes the following form:

$$CS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 E + \beta_2 R + \beta_3 RS + \beta_4 A + \beta_5 T + \varepsilon$$

Where,

CS = Customer satisfaction

E = Empathy

R = Reliability

RS = Responsiveness

A = Assurance

T = Tangibility

Empathy was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the

respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “This automobile service provider gives personal attention to its customers”, “This automobile service provider focuses on customer expectations” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha = 0.933$ ).

Reliability was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “This automobile service provider provides service in promised time”, “This automobile service provider provides personal information security” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha = 0.924$ ).

Responsiveness was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “This automobile service provider provides efficient service to the customers”, “This automobile service provider is ready to help you” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha = 0.923$ ).

Assurance was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “This automobile service provider has polite staff”, “This automobile service provider has knowledgeable staff” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha = 0.926$ ).

Tangibility was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “This automobile service provider has a complete physical facility”, “This automobile service provider has a customer lounge” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha = 0.913$ ).

Customer satisfaction was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “I am satisfied with the four wheeler I am using”, “I am satisfied with the price of my four wheeler” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha = 0.896$ ).

The following section describes the independent variables used in this study along with the hypothesis formulation.

### *Empathy*

Empathy refers to the ability to understand another person's thoughts and feelings in a situation from their point of view, rather than your own. Andaleeb *et al.* (1994) found that higher level of perceived empathy lead to greater customer satisfaction. Similarly, Basu and Andaleeb (1998) found that empathy has a significant positive influence on overall evaluation. Likewise, Itani *et al.* (2015) stated that there is a positive relationship between salespeople's empathy and salespeople's listening behavior, and the positive relationship between salesperson's listening and customer's RQ with bank are attenuated by the salesperson's FS. In addition, Lee *et al.* (2011) revealed that there is a positive relationship between customer emotions toward the service brand. Moreover, Mohamed *et al.* (2022) found that service quality factor empathy is positively correlated to customer satisfaction. Further, Afridi *et al.* (2020) found that trust based loyalty significantly and positively mediates employee empathy and customers' advocacy. Likewise, Isitor *et al.* (2020) revealed that empathy has a positive and significant influence on loyalty of Airtel's business partners. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction.

### *Tangibility*

Tangibility refers to the quality of being perceivable by touch. Ambekar (2013) examined the commercial vehicle users' response about service centers. The study found that the difference between mean ratings of expected and perceived tangibility factors is statistically not significant. Similarly, Cardao-Pito (2010) discovered that the tangibility of product flows is significantly and positively associated with capital structure. Likewise, Fan *et al.* (2012) found a positive relationship between leverage and asset tangibility. Further, Cardao-Pito *et al.* (2021) demonstrated that there is a relevant empirical correlation between the tangibility of product flows and the capital structure, which is not compatible with the prediction that firms selling durable goods must have less debt in their capital structure. Moreover, Kamakoty (2021) found that there is no significant difference in service quality with respect to tangibility of Global brand and National brand. Further, Bei and Chino (2006) found a positive relationship between tangibility and customer satisfaction. Likewise, Kanwar (2007) revealed a positive relationship between tangibility



and customer satisfaction. Similarly, Afza and Hussain (2011) stated that tangibility is positively influencing the leverage and is consistent with static trade off theory with coefficient value of 0.083 which is not statistically significant. Moreover, Pathirana (2019) found that the tangibility have the weakest relationship with the dependent variable with the customer satisfaction. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a positive relationship between tangibility and customer satisfaction.

### *Responsiveness*

Andaleeb and Basu (1998) stated that the influence of responsiveness and convenience are significant and remained the same with or without warranty. The responsiveness and convenience have significant influence on the overall evaluation of service quality. Similarly, Pathirana (2019) found that customers are moderately satisfied about the service they are receiving and there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality. Likewise, Pinaraswati *et al.* (2022) stated that responsiveness has a significant impact on customers' satisfaction towards. In addition, Tjiptono (2008) showed a positive correlation with satisfaction. Further, Shrestha (2020) found that there is a positive correlation between responsiveness and customer satisfaction. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a positive relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction.

### *Reliability*

Reliability refers to how consistently a method measures something. Shrestha (2020) stated that the correlation between customer satisfaction and reliability is positive which indicated that the increase in reliability a service quality dimension will increase customer's satisfaction. Similarly, Andaleeb and Basu (1998) showed a positive relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction. Likewise, Woods *et al.* (2010) found that vehicle reliability has a positive impact on the consumers' likelihood of choosing a vehicle. In addition, Lee and Govindan (2014) showed that car's reliability significantly influence the consumer buying behavior towards national cars. Moreover, Rao (2004) found a positive relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:



H<sub>4</sub>: There is a positive relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction.

#### *Assurance*

Assurance refers to the high degree of certainty that something is accurate, complete, and usable. Aghdaie and Faghani (2012) stated that assurance has a significant relationship with the Iran customer's satisfaction of MB (mobile banking) services. Similarly, Rajicic *et al.* (2008) found that assurance positively impacts customer satisfaction. Likewise, Jipto *et al.* (2017) found a positive relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction. Further, Pinaraswati *et al.* (2022) revealed that assurance has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. In addition, Pathirana (2019) found that there is a positive relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H<sub>5</sub>: There is a positive relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction.

### **3. Results and discussion**

#### *Correlation analysis*

Correlation is a term that refers to the strength of a relationship between two variables. A strong or high correlation means that two or more variables have a strong relationship with each other, while a weak or low correlation means that the variables are hardly related. This section of the study presents the results and discussions of the correlation analysis. The correlation measures the strength of the linear relationship between variables. The strength of linear association between two numerical variables in a sample of population is determined by the correlation coefficient.

Table 1 shows the computation of Kendall's Tau correlation coefficient matrix of customer satisfaction and service quality in the automobile service industry.

Table 1

#### **Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients matrix**

This table presents Kendall's Tau coefficients between dependent and independent variables. The correlation coefficients are based on 121 observations. The dependent variable is CS (Customer satisfaction). The independent variables are E (Empathy), R (Reliability), RS (Responsiveness), A (Assurance), and T (Tangibility).

Variables	Mean	S.D.	CS	E	R	RS	A	T
CS	3.626	0.8508	1					
E	3.636	0.882	0.577**	1				
R	3.664	0.8513	0.546**	0.601**	1			
RS	3.644	0.8388	0.500**	0.582**	0.607**	1		
A	3.583	0.8987	0.515**	0.576**	0.605**	0.677**	1	
T	3.55	0.8806	0.416**	0.531**	0.565**	0.618**	0.672**	1

Note: The asterisk signs (\*\*) and (\*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent levels respectively.

Table 1 shows that empathy is positively correlated to customer satisfaction. It indicates that higher the empathy leads to increase in customer satisfaction. Similarly, reliability is positively correlated to customer satisfaction. It indicates that reliability in service leads to increase in customer satisfaction. Likewise, responsiveness is positively correlated to customer satisfaction. It indicates that higher the responsiveness from the service provider, higher would be the customer satisfaction. Further, assurance is positively correlated to customer satisfaction. It indicates that higher the assurance leads to increase in customer satisfaction provided by automobile service industry. In addition, tangibility is positively correlated to customer satisfaction which indicates that higher the tangibility, higher would be customer satisfaction.

### *Regression analysis*

Regression analysis is a statistical process for estimating the relationships among variables. The regression results were estimated where empathy, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility are used as independent variables and dependent variable is customer satisfaction. The regression result of empathy, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and tangibility in Kathmandu Valley is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

### **Estimated regression result of empathy, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility on customer satisfaction**

*The results are based on 121 observations using linear regression model. The model is  $CS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 E + \beta_2 R + \beta_3 RS + \beta_4 A + \beta_5 T + e$  where the dependent variable is CS (Customer satisfaction). The independent variables are E (Empathy), R (Reliability), RS (Responsiveness), A (Assurance), and T (Tangibility).*

Model	Intercept	Regression coefficients of					Adj. R_bar²	SEE	F-value
		E	R	RS	A	T			
1	0.694 (3.823)**	0.806 (16.165)**					0.696	0.4689	276.067
2	0.558 (2.966)**		0.837 (16.745)**				0.700	0.4664	280.385
3	0.601 (3.008)**			0.830 (15.538)**			0.667	0.4909	241.415
4	0.929 (4.778)**				0.753 (14.308)**		0.629	0.5181	204.709
5	1.101 (5.022)**					0.711 (11.868)**	0.538	0.5782	140.845
6	0.403 (2.299)*	0.427 (4.895)**	0.456 (5.051)**				0.748	0.4270	179.228
7	0.250 (1.440)	0.301 (3.308)**	0.331 (3.532)**	0.293 (3.440)**			0.769	0.4086	134.403
8	0.248 (1.442)	0.274 (2.974)**	0.316 (3.368)**	0.197 (1.897)	0.141 (1.582)		0.722	0.4061	102.723
9	0.256 (1.471)	0.279 (2.993)**	0.315 (3.345)**	0.213 (1.924)	0.157 (1.619)	0.037 (0.422)	0.771	0.4075	81.631

- Notes:
- i. Figures in parenthesis are t-values.
  - ii. The asterisk signs (\*\*) and (\*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent level respectively.
  - iii. Customer satisfaction is the dependent variable.

The regression results show that the beta coefficients for empathy are positive with customer satisfaction. It indicates that empathy has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the findings of Andaleeb *et al.* (1994). Similarly, the beta coefficients for reliability are positive with customer satisfaction. It indicates that reliability has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the findings of Shrestha (2020). In addition, the beta coefficients for responsiveness are positive with customer satisfaction. It indicates that responsiveness has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. This result is consistent with the findings of Shrestha (2020). Further, the beta coefficients for assurance are positive with customer satisfaction. It indicates that assurance has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the findings of Rajicic *et al.* (2008). Moreover, the beta coefficients for tangibility are positive with customer satisfaction. It indicates that tangibility has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. This finding is similar to the findings of Ambekar (2013).

4. Summary and conclusion

Customer satisfaction is a measure of how products and services provided by a company meet or surpass customer expectation. Nowadays,

mere products cannot satisfy customer's expectation; customers demand instant after sales service as well. Service quality and customer satisfaction are important aspects of business since a company's growth is largely dependent on how well it maintains its customers through service and how well they keep their customers satisfied.

This study attempts to examine the service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in automobile repair services in Kathmandu. The study is based on primary data of 121 respondents.

The major conclusion of this study is that empathy, tangibility, assurance, responsiveness and reliability have positive relationship with the customer satisfaction. The study also concludes that reliability is the most influencing factors followed by responsiveness that explains the change in customer satisfaction and service quality in automobile service industry of Kathmandu Valley.

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