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Customer Satisfaction Towards After-Sales Service in the Indian Passenger Car Industry: An Empirical Study of Lakshmi Hyundai

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Abstract

After-sales service has emerged as a defining differentiator in the highly competitive Indian passenger car market, where product specifications across rival brands have begun to converge. This paper examines customer satisfaction with the after-sales service offered by Lakshmi Hyundai, an authorised Hyundai dealership, with the dual objective of evaluating service quality on operational parameters and identifying opportunities for service improvement. A descriptive research design was adopted, and primary data were gathered through a structured questionnaire administered to one hundred customers who had availed of post-purchase service at the dealership. The responses were summarised using percentage analysis and inferential testing was carried out using the chi-square test of goodness of fit at the five per cent level of significance. The findings indicate that the majority of customers experience little difficulty in securing service appointments and report favourable impressions of the workshop's ability to address reported problems on the first visit. However, perceptible dissatisfaction exists around invoice transparency, waiting time, and the explanation of work carried out. The hypothesis that customers are not satisfied with the performance of the services was rejected for several dimensions and accepted for others, suggesting a mixed pattern of service delivery. The paper closes with managerial implications for dealership-led service operations and recommendations to strengthen customer retention in a brand-driven yet service-sensitive market.

Keywords: after-sales service, customer satisfaction, automobile dealership, Hyundai, service quality, chisquare test, India

1. Introduction

The Indian passenger car industry has undergone a structural transformation over the past three decades. From a market dominated by a single manufacturer for almost forty years, it has evolved into one of the most competitive automobile markets in the world. Liberalisation in 1991 invited a wave of multinational entrants such as Hyundai, Ford, Toyota, Volkswagen and Renault, while domestic manufacturers responded with renewed product portfolios. As technology and styling rapidly diffuse across brands, tangible product differences have narrowed. Customers today base their long-term loyalty less on the act of purchase and more on the quality of the relationship that follows the purchase. This relationship is built and tested at the dealership service centre.

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After-sales service includes scheduled maintenance, repair work, supply of genuine parts, complaint handling, warranty servicing and the everyday courtesies that surround these interactions. For a manufacturer, the dealership is the face of the brand; for the customer, it is the brand. A satisfying service experience can convert a one-time buyer into a repeat buyer and an advocate, while a poor experience can erase years of marketing investment. Studies on customer behaviour consistently report that the cost of acquiring a new customer is several times the cost of retaining an existing one, and that retained customers are more profitable over the lifetime of the relationship.

Against this backdrop, the present study focuses on Lakshmi Hyundai, an authorised Hyundai dealer, and examines the satisfaction of customers who have availed of after-sales service at its workshop. The study is empirical in nature and is grounded in primary data collected through a structured questionnaire. The intent is not to evaluate Hyundai as a brand but to understand the service experience that the dealership delivers, and to identify those touchpoints that strengthen or weaken customer confidence in the dealer.

2. Conceptual Background and Review of Literature

2.1 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is widely understood as the customer's evaluation of a product or service in relation to prior expectations. Kotler and Armstrong describe it as the degree to which a product's perceived performance matches a buyer's expectations; when performance falls short of expectations, the customer is dissatisfied, when it matches expectations the customer is satisfied, and when it exceeds expectations the customer is delighted. Ferrell argues that expectations themselves are shaped by prior experience, word of mouth, marketing communications and competitive alternatives, which makes satisfaction a moving target for managers.

In the services literature, satisfaction is distinguished from service quality. Service quality is typically treated as a long-term cognitive evaluation of the provider, while satisfaction is a more transactional and emotional response to a specific encounter. Both, however, feed each other: repeated satisfying encounters build a perception of high service quality, and a strong reputation for quality raises expectations for subsequent encounters.

2.2 After-sales service in the automobile sector

After-sales service in the automobile sector has been studied as a multidimensional construct. Researchers commonly identify dimensions such as the reliability of the workshop, the responsiveness of staff, the technical competence of mechanics, the courtesy of customer-facing personnel, the tangibles of the service environment, the transparency of pricing, and the speed of delivery. Empirical work in Indian and other emerging markets has repeatedly shown that customers weigh these dimensions differently. For instance, urban professionals often place a high premium on time, while small-town customers value personal recognition and the explanation of work performed.

A second strand of literature focuses on the role of the dealer as an intermediary. Because the manufacturer rarely interacts with the end consumer in person, the dealer's service department effectively delivers the manufacturer's promise. Dealer-level studies in markets such as Korea, Brazil and India have documented wide variation in service quality across outlets of the same brand, suggesting that managerial practice at the dealership exerts a stronger influence on satisfaction than the brand alone.

2.3 Research gap

While there is a substantial body of work on customer satisfaction at the brand and manufacturer level, fewer studies have examined service quality at the level of a single dealership in a tier-two Indian city. The present study seeks to contribute by reporting evidence from one such dealership and by triangulating descriptive findings with formal hypothesis testing.

3. Objectives and Hypotheses

3.1 Objectives

- To examine the satisfaction of Lakshmi Hyundai customers with the after-sales service offered by the dealership.
- To compare the perceived service quality of Lakshmi Hyundai with that of other Hyundai dealers operating in the same market.
- To identify the touchpoints during the service encounter that drive satisfaction or dissatisfaction among customers.
- To draw out managerial implications and recommendations for improving the after-sales experience.

3.2 Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following null hypothesis, framed for each operational dimension examined:

H0: The observed pattern of customer responses on a given service dimension is not significantly different from a uniform distribution; that is, customers are indifferent across response categories.

H1: The observed pattern of customer responses on the dimension is significantly different from a uniform distribution; that is, customers express a clear preference for one response category.

The hypotheses were tested using the chi-square test of goodness of fit. The level of significance was fixed at five per cent. The decision rule was to reject the null hypothesis when the computed chi-square statistic exceeded the tabulated value at the appropriate degrees of freedom.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research design

A descriptive research design was adopted. Descriptive research is appropriate where the objective is to portray accurately the characteristics of a particular phenomenon, in this case the pattern of customer

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responses to after-sales service. The study did not seek to manipulate any variable; rather it sought to record and analyse customer perceptions as they presently exist.

4.2 Sources of data

Both primary and secondary sources were used. Primary data were collected directly from customers of Lakshmi Hyundai who had availed of service at the dealership during the study period. Secondary data were drawn from company brochures, the dealership's records, industry reports on the Indian passenger car market and prior published research on customer satisfaction and service quality.

4.3 Instrument design

A structured questionnaire was prepared in consultation with the dealership and pretested on a small group of customers. The instrument carried closed-ended questions on a range of service dimensions, including the ease of getting an appointment, the first-visit fix rate, the conduct of the post-service road test, the explanation of work done, billing transparency, the courtesy of staff, the cleanliness of the workshop, the time taken to deliver the vehicle and the customer's overall willingness to recommend the dealership.

4.4 Sampling

A sample of one hundred customers was drawn from those who visited the workshop during the study window. Convenience sampling was used because the study had to be completed within a defined time frame and customers were approached as they arrived at the service centre. While convenience sampling restricts the statistical generalizability of the findings, the sample is representative of the dealership's active service base in terms of vehicle model mix and ownership age.

4.5 Tools of analysis

The collected responses were tabulated and analysed using percentage analysis to summarise the distribution of responses. Charts and graphs were used to present the patterns visually. Inferential analysis was carried out using the chi-square test of goodness of fit at the five per cent level of significance to test whether the observed distribution of responses departed significantly from the assumption of customer indifference.

4.6 Limitations

- The study is confined to a single dealership in a defined geography, and the findings should not be generalised to all Hyundai dealers or to the broader passenger car industry.
- The sample size of one hundred respondents, while adequate for descriptive purposes, restricts the statistical power of inference.
- The use of convenience sampling introduces the possibility of self-selection bias, since customers who agreed to respond may differ systematically from those who declined.
- The questionnaire captures perceptions at a single point in time and cannot track how satisfaction evolves across successive service visits.

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5. Industry and Company Profile

5.1 The Indian passenger car industry

Until the early 1980s the Indian passenger car market was dominated by two domestic manufacturers, with the Ambassador and the Premier Padmini occupying most of the road. The entry of Maruti Udyog in 1983, in collaboration with Suzuki of Japan, marked the first major shift towards modern small-car manufacture. The deeper transformation began in the 1990s, when economic liberalization lifted restrictions on foreign equity and import of components. Multinational manufacturers, including Hyundai, Ford, Toyota, Honda, Volkswagen, Renault and Nissan, established Indian operations either independently or in partnership with local firms. By the turn of the millennium, the market featured a wide range of models across the hatchback, sedan, sport utility and multi-utility segments.

The industry today is characterised by intense competition on price, fuel efficiency, design and feature content. Manufacturers compete not only at the point of sale but throughout the ownership cycle through service networks, finance schemes, insurance partnerships, used-car programmes and customer engagement initiatives.

5.2 Hyundai Motor Company

Hyundai Motor Company traces its origins to the engineering and construction group founded by Chung Ju Yung in 1947. The motor company itself was established in 1967 and grew rapidly during the second half of the twentieth century, supported by an export orientation that took its products to North America, Europe and other Asian markets. By the mid-1980s Hyundai was selling cars in the United States, and by the late 1990s it had been ranked among the leading global automakers on metrics of initial quality. The company has invested heavily in design, engineering and brand building and is today consistently included in lists of the world's most valuable automotive brands.

Hyundai Motor India Limited was incorporated in 1996 and set up its manufacturing facility at Irungattukottai near Chennai. Models such as the Santro established Hyundai as a credible challenger in the small-car segment, and subsequent launches in the sedan and sport-utility segments deepened the brand's presence. India has emerged as a significant manufacturing and export hub for Hyundai, with vehicles shipped from Chennai to several international markets.

5.3 Lakshmi Hyundai

Lakshmi Hyundai is an authorized dealer of Hyundai Motor India and operates sales, service and spare parts functions under a single roof. The dealership caters to a diverse customer base ranging from first-time car buyers in the small-car segment to repeat customers in the premium hatchback and sedan segments. The service department handles scheduled maintenance, body repairs, accident repairs, warranty work and predelivery inspection. As with most Hyundai dealers, the service centre operates within service standards laid down by the manufacturer and is subject to periodic audit.

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6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section presents the analysis of primary data collected from one hundred customers of Lakshmi Hyundai. Each subsection deals with one service dimension. For brevity, only a representative subset of the twenty-one operational questions is reported in detail; the patterns reported here are consistent across the remaining items.

6.1 Ease of getting a service appointment

Customers were asked whether they had faced any difficulty in securing a service appointment. The distribution of responses is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Problems faced in getting a service appointment

Category	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E)	(O-E)²/E
Over-booked workshop	1	25	-24	23.04
Phone not available	2	25	-23	21.16
Mechanics not available	7	25	-18	12.96
Faced no problems	90	25	65	169.00
Total	100	100	0	226.16

The computed chi-square statistic of 226.16 far exceeds the tabulated value of 7.815 at three degrees of freedom and the five per cent level of significance. The null hypothesis of indifference is rejected. The pattern of responses is overwhelmingly favorable: nine out of ten customers reported no difficulty in obtaining an appointment. The small minority who reported problems were divided between an overbooked workshop, an unreachable telephone line and the unavailability of a suitable mechanic. The result speaks well of the dealership's appointment management, though the operational issues flagged by the minority deserve attention because they tend to be remembered disproportionately by affected customers.

6.2 First-visit fix rate

A central indicator of workshop competence is the ability to diagnose and correct a reported problem on the first visit. The responses are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Ability to fix the reported problem on the first visit

Rating	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E)²/E
Excellent	20	25	1.00
Good	67	25	70.56
Fair	8	25	11.56
Poor	5	25	20.00

Total	100	100	103.12

The chi-square statistic of 103.12 again exceeds the critical value, and the null hypothesis is rejected. The dominant response is 'Good', endorsed by two-thirds of respondents, with an additional one-fifth rating the workshop 'Excellent'. The thirteen per cent of customers who rated the workshop 'Fair' or 'Poor' represent a meaningful minority. In service operations literature, customers who experience an unresolved problem on the first visit are statistically more likely to defect to a competing dealer, and this group therefore warrants targeted follow-up.

6.3 Conduct of the post-service road test

A short road test after every service is a standard quality-control measure intended to verify that the work performed has had the desired effect. Customers were asked whether their vehicle had been taken on a road test before delivery. Sixty-nine per cent confirmed that the road test had been performed, twenty per cent reported that it had not, and eleven per cent were unsure. Although the dealership's compliance rate appears reasonably high, the fact that nearly a third of customers either did not receive the road test or were not informed of it points to an opportunity for communication improvement. Customers tend to associate visible quality steps with overall workshop competence, and the simple act of informing the customer that the road test has been performed adds disproportionately to perceived quality.

6.4 Customer perception of road test necessity

In a related question, ninety per cent of respondents agreed that the road test is a necessary part of the service process. This indicates strong customer awareness of the value of post-service verification and suggests that consistent execution of the road test, accompanied by a brief explanation to the customer, would yield a positive return on satisfaction.

6.5 Explanation of work performed

When asked whether the service advisor explained the nature of the work carried out and the parts replaced, sixty-two per cent of customers reported that they had received a satisfactory explanation. Twenty-three per cent reported that the explanation was partial or unclear, and fifteen per cent reported that no explanation had been offered. The latter group, although a minority, were also the most likely to report dissatisfaction with the overall service experience. The finding aligns with the broader services literature, which emphasises that customer perception of competence is built less by the technical quality of the work itself and more by the visible signals of that competence.

6.6 Billing transparency

Billing emerged as one of the weaker dimensions. Only fifty-four per cent of respondents rated the clarity of the invoice as 'Good' or 'Excellent'. A further thirty-one per cent rated it 'Fair' and fifteen per cent rated it 'Poor'. Common concerns included the use of cryptic line items, the absence of cost estimates before work was undertaken and the perceived bunching of small charges. Although a chi-square test on this distribution

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rejects the null hypothesis of indifference, the substantive message is that billing represents a soft underbelly in the otherwise satisfactory service experience.

6.7 Waiting time and vehicle delivery

Customers were asked whether their vehicle was delivered at the promised time. Fifty-eight per cent reported that the promise had been kept, twenty-nine per cent reported a delay of up to half a day, and thirteen per cent reported a delay of more than a day. Delays were attributed by customers to nonavailability of spare parts, congestion at the workshop and the need for additional work discovered during inspection. The dealership should consider proactively communicating revised delivery times to affected customers, as delay communicated in advance is typically less damaging than delay discovered at the time of pickup.

6.8 Courtesy of staff

Customer interactions with reception, service advisors, billing staff and security personnel were uniformly rated favourably. Seventy-three per cent of customers rated staff courtesy as 'Excellent' and a further twenty-one per cent as 'Good'. Only six per cent reported any negative experience. This is among the strongest performance areas for the dealership and contributes meaningfully to the overall favourable impression.

6.9 Workshop environment

The cleanliness and orderliness of the workshop, the comfort of the customer lounge and the availability of refreshments are tangible cues that customers use as proxies for workshop competence. Sixty-eight per cent of respondents rated the environment as 'Good' or 'Excellent', though some customers commented on overcrowding during peak service days. Investments in waiting-area amenities and visible cleanliness signals would offer a high return on customer perception at relatively modest cost.

6.10 Willingness to recommend

The most consolidated measure of customer satisfaction is the willingness to recommend the dealership to friends and family. Seventy-one per cent of respondents indicated that they would recommend Lakshmi Hyundai, twenty-one per cent were neutral, and eight per cent indicated that they would not. The proportion of detractors, although small, is non-trivial: the literature on word of mouth suggests that detractors typically reach a larger audience than promoters, and the dealership should treat the eight per cent as a strategic priority.

7. Summary of Findings

- The dealership performs strongly on appointment availability, staff courtesy and the workshop's ability to fix reported problems on the first visit.
- The post-service road test is conducted in a majority of cases, but the dealership does not consistently communicate this to the customer, which reduces the satisfaction return on the practice.
- Explanation of work performed is uneven across service advisors, and customers who did not receive an explanation were the most dissatisfied.

- Billing transparency is the weakest dimension, with a meaningful minority of customers reporting unclear invoices and unexpected charges.
- Waiting time and adherence to promised delivery time are areas of moderate performance, with delays driven by parts availability and discovery of additional work.
- Seven out of ten customers are willing to recommend the dealership, indicating a healthy net promoter base, but the existence of an eight per cent detractor segment warrants targeted intervention.
- The original hypothesis that customers are not satisfied with the dealership's service is rejected for most operational dimensions and only partially supported for billing and delivery time, suggesting a mixed but broadly favourable picture.

8. Suggestions and Recommendations

Several practical recommendations flow from the findings and from the broader literature on service operations.

- Introduce a written pre-service estimate that is shared with the customer before work begins and updated if additional work becomes necessary, to address concerns around billing transparency and unexpected charges.
- Train service advisors to deliver a short, structured handover at vehicle pickup covering the work done, parts replaced, road test outcome and recommended next service. Standardisation of this single moment of contact would have a disproportionate impact on perceived competence.
- Implement a same-day call-back protocol for customers whose vehicles required repeat visits, since this group represents the highest defection risk.
- Strengthen the parts ordering and stocking system to reduce the incidence of delivery delays caused by parts unavailability.
- Make the post-service road test visible and verifiable, for example by including a brief road-test summary on the invoice.
- Invest modestly in the customer waiting area, particularly during peak service days, to improve the tangible cues that customers use to evaluate the workshop.
- Establish a structured grievance redressal channel and publicise it clearly, so that customers who experience a problem feel that there is a credible route to resolution rather than abandoning the dealership for a competitor.

9. Managerial Implications

The findings carry implications for both the dealership and the manufacturer. For the dealership, the central message is that the quality of the technical work, while necessary, is not sufficient. Satisfaction is built and lost at the soft edges of the service encounter, in the explanation of work done, the clarity of the bill and the keeping of delivery promises. These are areas that the dealership can address through training and process design rather than capital investment, and they offer the highest leverage for satisfaction improvement in the short term.

For the manufacturer, the dispersion of satisfaction across the dealer network points to the value of a more granular monitoring system. Industry-standard post-service feedback mechanisms tend to focus on overall satisfaction scores. The more actionable insight comes from disaggregated scores on the specific touchpoints identified in this study. Manufacturer-led benchmarking and the sharing of best practices across dealers would help to lift the performance of weaker outlets and strengthen the brand promise as experienced by the end customer.

10. Conclusion

This study examined customer satisfaction with the after-sales service offered by Lakshmi Hyundai, drawing on responses from one hundred customers and using percentage analysis and chi-square testing. The evidence supports a broadly favourable verdict on the dealership's service delivery, with strong performance on appointment availability, staff courtesy and first-visit fix rate. At the same time, the study identified meaningful gaps on billing transparency, delivery time and the consistent explanation of work performed. The original hypothesis of customer dissatisfaction was rejected for most dimensions and partially supported for a few, yielding a mixed but actionable picture.

Beyond the immediate findings, the study reinforces a broader argument that has been advanced in the services literature: in a market where products are converging, after-sales service is the most durable form of competitive advantage available to a dealer. The dealer that consistently delivers a clear, courteous and credible service experience earns not just repeat business but the more valuable currency of customer advocacy. Future research could extend the present study by tracking satisfaction across multiple service visits over time, comparing satisfaction across dealers of the same brand and across brands in the same city, and testing the impact of specific service interventions in a quasi-experimental design.

11. Extended Theoretical Discussion

11.1 The expectation-disconfirmation paradigm

The expectation-disconfirmation paradigm, developed in the consumer behaviour literature during the late 1970s and refined extensively since, provides the dominant theoretical lens for the study of customer satisfaction. The paradigm holds that satisfaction is the product of a comparison between prior expectations and perceived performance. When perceived performance exceeds expectations, positive disconfirmation occurs and the customer is delighted. When performance falls short, negative disconfirmation occurs and the customer is dissatisfied. When performance matches expectations, the customer arrives at simple confirmation, which is typically experienced as routine satisfaction rather than as delight.

Applied to the after-sales service context, the paradigm has several practical implications. First, the dealership cannot manage satisfaction without managing expectations. A customer who has been promised same-day delivery and receives next-day delivery is more dissatisfied than a customer who has been promised next-day delivery and receives next-day delivery, even though the objective service is identical. Second, communications, advertising and previous service encounters all feed into the expectation set that the customer brings to the workshop, and these influences are largely outside the immediate control of the service advisor. Third, repeated positive disconfirmation raises the expectation baseline, which means that delighting customers is harder over time and that managers must continually search for new sources of positive surprise.

11.2 The SERVQUAL dimensions

The SERVQUAL framework proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry identifies five dimensions along which customers evaluate service quality: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. Each of these dimensions maps directly onto observable practices in an automobile workshop.

- Tangibles refer to the physical evidence of the service, including the cleanliness of the workshop, the appearance of staff, the comfort of the waiting area and the layout of the service reception. In the present study, the workshop environment dimension corresponds to tangibles.
- Reliability is the ability of the workshop to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. The first-visit fix rate and adherence to promised delivery time are core indicators of reliability.
- Responsiveness is the willingness of the workshop staff to help customers and provide prompt service. The ease of getting an appointment and the readiness of staff to answer questions are indicators of responsiveness.
- Assurance is the knowledge and courtesy of staff and their ability to inspire trust and confidence. The explanation of work performed and the credibility of the service advisor's recommendations are indicators of assurance.
- Empathy is the caring, individualised attention that the workshop provides to its customers. The handling of grievances and the personal recognition of repeat customers are indicators of empathy.

The findings of the present study can be re-read through the SERVQUAL lens. Lakshmi Hyundai performs well on responsiveness and tangibles, and unevenly on assurance, with billing transparency and explanation of work emerging as specific weak points. Reliability is moderate, weighed down by delivery delays. Empathy is generally strong, as reflected in the favourable ratings of staff courtesy.

11.3 The service profit chain

The service profit chain, articulated by Heskett, Sasser and Schlesinger, links employee satisfaction to internal service quality, internal service quality to external service quality, external service quality to customer satisfaction, customer satisfaction to loyalty, and loyalty to profit. The chain has been validated in a wide range of service industries. Its relevance to a dealership is that the workshop technician, the service advisor and the billing clerk are themselves customers of the dealership's internal systems. When the parts store is well-stocked, when the diagnostic equipment is up to date and when the workshop layout is rational, technicians can deliver better service. When advisors are well-trained and adequately staffed, they can spend the time required to explain the work to the customer. The implication for the dealership is that investment in internal capability is a precondition for sustained external service quality.

12. Cross-Cutting Observations

12.1 Vehicle age and satisfaction

A cross-tabulation of overall satisfaction against vehicle age reveals a modest pattern. Customers whose vehicles were less than three years old reported the highest satisfaction levels, with eighty-one per cent indicating that they would recommend the dealership. Customers whose vehicles were between three and six years old reported a slightly lower recommendation rate of seventy per cent. Owners of vehicles older than six years recorded a notably lower rate of sixty-one per cent. The decline is consistent with the broader observation that the cost and complexity of repair work increases as a vehicle ages, which in turn places greater stress on the service relationship. It also suggests that the dealership has an opportunity to design specific retention programmes for owners of older vehicles, who would otherwise drift to independent garages.

12.2 Service type and waiting time

Customers who came in for routine periodic maintenance reported shorter waiting times and higher satisfaction than those who came in for unplanned repair work. This is unsurprising: routine maintenance is scheduled, predictable and standardised, while unplanned repairs require diagnosis, often involve waiting for parts and may uncover additional issues. The implication for the dealership is that the unplanned-repair segment is the more difficult satisfaction challenge and merits a tailored process, including a clearly communicated diagnostic step, a written estimate and a deliberate update protocol while the customer waits.

12.3 Communication channel preferences

When asked about preferred channels for service reminders and updates, sixty-four per cent of customers preferred short message service notifications, twenty-three per cent preferred a phone call, ten per cent preferred email, and a small minority preferred messaging applications. Younger customers and those with newer vehicles disproportionately preferred digital channels, while older customers preferred phone calls. The pattern indicates that a one-size-fits-all communication policy is suboptimal and that a tiered approach, with default channels by customer segment, would improve perceived responsiveness.

13. Comparison with Prior Studies

The findings of the present study sit comfortably alongside those of prior empirical work on after-sales service in the Indian automobile sector. Earlier studies on dealerships of other brands have consistently reported high satisfaction on appointment ease and staff courtesy, mixed satisfaction on first-visit fix and delivery time, and persistent dissatisfaction on billing transparency. The convergence of findings across brands suggests that billing transparency is a system-wide weakness in the Indian dealer ecosystem rather than a Hyundai-specific or Lakshmi Hyundai-specific issue. It also suggests that the dealer or manufacturer that solves the billing problem decisively will earn a meaningful competitive advantage in the post-sales space.

The willingness-to-recommend rate of seventy-one per cent observed at Lakshmi Hyundai is in line with the upper quartile of comparable dealerships reported in the published literature, indicating that the dealership performs above the industry mean on the most consolidated measure of customer loyalty.

14. Directions for Future Research

Several extensions of the present study would deepen the understanding of after-sales service satisfaction. First, a longitudinal design that tracks the same set of customers across multiple service visits would isolate the impact of cumulative experience on satisfaction. Second, a multi-dealer comparison within the same city would allow the partial isolation of dealer effects from manufacturer effects. Third, an experimental design that introduces a specific intervention, such as a structured pickup handover or a written pre-service estimate, in one workshop while leaving a comparable workshop unchanged, would establish causal effects more robustly than the present descriptive design permits. Fourth, the inclusion of behavioural measures such as the actual return rate for the next scheduled service would complement the self-reported willingness-to-recommend measure and reduce common-method bias. Finally, the integration of operational data from the workshop, including parts availability, technician utilisation and rework rates, with customer satisfaction data would enable a richer service profit chain analysis.

15. Concluding Reflections

The Indian passenger car industry continues to expand and to fragment. New manufacturers enter the market, established players refresh their portfolios, and digital channels reshape the way customers research, purchase and service their vehicles. In this environment the dealership service centre is not merely an operational unit but a strategic asset that determines whether a customer remains within the brand for the next purchase or migrates to a competitor. The evidence from Lakshmi Hyundai indicates that the dealership has built a credible foundation of operational competence and personal courtesy, and that the path to higher satisfaction lies in tightening the soft edges of the service experience, in particular the communication around billing, the explanation of work performed and the management of delivery promises.

The broader lesson for managers in the industry is that satisfaction is not a single number to be tracked monthly but a portfolio of micro-experiences to be designed deliberately. The customer's lasting impression of the dealership is assembled from the few moments that the customer remembers vividly: the greeting at reception, the conversation at handover, the line items on the invoice and the brief road test at delivery. Each of these moments can be improved through training and process design at modest cost, and together they account for the bulk of the variation in satisfaction observed in this study and in the literature. The dealer that invests systematically in these moments will be rewarded with the most durable form of competitive advantage available in a converging product market: a base of customers who choose to return and who choose to recommend.

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15.1 A note on method

The descriptive design and the chi-square test used in this study are well suited to the research questions posed, but they have inherent limits. The chi-square test of goodness of fit reveals only whether the observed response distribution departs from a uniform expected distribution; it does not test whether one dealership performs better than another, nor does it isolate the effect of any single managerial intervention. The percentage analyses reported in section six are sample estimates, and the true population proportions could differ within the bounds of normal sampling variability. Readers should therefore treat the numerical results as indicative of pattern rather than as point estimates of population parameters.

15.2 Practitioner takeaways

For practitioners who are short of time, the central takeaways from this study can be condensed into five propositions. First, customers experience the brand through the dealer, and the dealer should therefore be treated as the brand. Second, satisfaction is built at the soft edges of the service encounter and not only in the workshop bay. Third, billing transparency is the single most under-managed source of dissatisfaction in the Indian dealer ecosystem and offers the largest immediate upside. Fourth, delays are tolerable when communicated in advance and corrosive when discovered at pickup. Fifth, a small minority of detractors can outweigh a large majority of promoters in word-of-mouth impact, and detractor recovery should therefore be treated as a priority rather than as an exception.

15.3 Closing remark

Customer satisfaction is sometimes treated as a soft concept that resists measurement and management. The evidence assembled in this study suggests the opposite. With a modest investment in primary data collection, a straightforward statistical analysis and a deliberate reading of the findings against the established service quality literature, the dealership can identify exactly where its experience is strong and where it is weak. The harder work lies in acting on the findings, but the analytical part is well within the reach of any dealership that chooses to take customer satisfaction seriously.

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