

Soniya Poudel

CUSTOMER SATISFICATION IN AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

A case study on customer satisfaction on automobile industry in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

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<p>The purpose of this study aimed on how the automobile industry in Nepal and their customers view the value of after sales service. The main objective was to recognize the differences, if any, between their perception and the way it will impact on customer satisfaction level.</p> <p>A descriptive cross-sectional and quantitative study was conducted to assess the customer satisfaction towards the after sales services in automobiles sector in Nepal. A total of 81 automobile users were included in the study. The variables considered in the study were the age group in years, sex, occupation, education level, income level, status of ownership, type of vehicle, usage of vehicles and the four dimensions of after sales services. The findings of this study demonstrate that after sales service was average. Among the four components, responsiveness after the sales service has major impact on satisfaction of the customers while the cost of service results the least satisfaction towards the customers.</p> <p>This study makes a significant contribution to the literature by extending and improving the existing information of the company to increase the after-sales service satisfaction of the customer in automobile industry in Nepal.</p>		
Key words After-Sales Service, Automobile, Customer Satisfaction and Satisfaction level		

CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

CRM	Customer relationship management
DOTM	Department of Transport Management
NADA	National Automobile Dealers Association
WTO	World Tourism Organization

ABSTRACT

CONCEPT DEFINITIONS

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1 INTRODUCTION

Nepal has a diversified geographical structure and automobile industry has been slowly growing as an important aspect of Nepalese market. As Nepal is landlocked by India on three sides and China to the north, most of the automobiles are imported from India. As for the automobile's history in Nepal, Rana prime minister Juddha Shamsher introduced vehicle for the first time in 1901. According to the data of the Department of Transport Management (DOTM), around 3, 539,518 automobiles were registered in Nepal in between Fiscal Years (FY) 1989/90 and FY 2018/19 (Government of Nepal / Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport 2019). As per the data of the census and economic center in Nepal (CEIC), the maximum units of automobiles sold between 2005 to 2017 was 9,300 units while it was just 1,400 units in 2005. With growing affordability and disposable income of Nepalese especially due to remittance and real estate business, the demand for automobiles is growing in the country (Department of transport management,2019).

Though there is increasing trend of the automobile's market in the Nepal, it is a very competitive market for automobile dealers to attract potential loyal buyers to their company. According to National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) of Nepal, more than twenty various brands of automobile dealers are present in Nepal. However, in comparison to other nations, Nepalese market is very small as the total area of the country is only 1,47,181 sq. km. and the market in Nepal is dispersed too. In such circumstances, where businesses compete for customers, customer satisfaction is seen as a key business strategy to attract and retain customers. It is well established that satisfied customers are key to higher economic returns which in turn leads to greater customer loyalty (Yi 1990,70)

After sales services play a vital role in customer satisfaction and customer retention (Juneja 2019). After sales service is the phenomenon of producing attractive services for the clients to let them reuse the products and services of an organization, which benefits the service providers and creates satisfaction to the service users (Sharma 2019). After sales services for automobile industry consist of follow up services after sales of automobiles including the services for maintenance and repair (Bloemer & Lemmink 1992). After sales services generates loyal customers, make them believe in the brand and use the service for a longer period (Juneja 2019). Satisfied clients speak good about the company, its products and its services. After sales services are very important for promoting sales. Customer satisfaction and after sales services are the most important factors that affect the automobile industry (Ulle, Patil, Varma, Aparna, Kumar & Murthy 2018,5)

Keeping one's clients satisfied with one's company proves out to be very helpful during the after-sale services. After sales services exists to facilitate that all the expectations of the clients are being met properly. Consequently, most of the commercial companies are not conscious of the after-sales service features and their effect on the purchaser satisfaction (Shaharudin, Yusof, Elias & Mansor 2009). Failing to comprehend the significance of the factors may lead to a devastating and threatening professional relationship. Dissatisfied clients will turn to available competitors who can provide quality after-sales services. Therefore, it is important to study customers satisfaction towards after sales services in automobiles industry.

2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study was to describe the customer satisfaction towards the after sales services in the context of automobiles in Nepal. The specific objectives were to describe the socio-demographic characteristics of participants and to determine level of customer satisfaction on after sales services in automobile industry.

In the developing countries like Nepal, after sales services in automobile industry plays an important role in terms of satisfaction of the customer but these area is highly neglected around the worldwide . The present research will fill the knowledge gap and investigate the customer satisfaction on the after sales services in the context of automobile in Nepal. Thus, the study basically answers the following questions: a) What were the socio-demographic characteristics of automobiles users? b) What was the level of customer satisfaction with after sales services in automobile industry?

To date, there have been very little literature have been undertaken in the issues of customer satisfaction on after Sales Service in automobile industry in Nepal. In this regard, the present research is one of the pioneer studies in the field. Therefore, from the data reported in this study, it could be expected that the results could benefit both researchers and automobile industry by giving a new source of concepts and information. The findings from the study could be utilized by the concerned authorities engaged in automobile industry, right from the manufacturers to retailers to develop an attractive and quality after sales services to attain customer satisfaction in order to attract and retain customers, which consequently upsurge the automobile business in developing countries such as Nepal.

Based on the review of available literature, customer satisfaction was considered as a dependent variable while socio-demographic variables, economic variables and after sales service components were taken as independent variables. The listed independent variables for the study included socio-demographic variables (age, sex, occupation and education level), economic variables (income level, status of ownership, type of vehicle and usage of vehicles) and after sales service components (quality of services, responsiveness of service centers, speed of services and cost of services). The dependent variable is customer satisfaction (level of customer satisfaction).

This study has been divided into six chapters. They are Introduction, Objectives of the study, Literature review, Research methodology, Findings and Analysis, Suggestions and Conclusions. The introduction provides the overview of the automobile industry in the context of Nepal and comprises general background of after sales service and its effect on customer satisfaction. In addition, it includes research problems with research questions, the rationale of conduction of the study, and then describes the objectives of the study and the general outlines of the report. The literature review consists up concepts and theory regarding the research area. Similarly, it includes review of articles related to the study. Research methodology provides the basic outline of the study and serves as a roadmap for the study to attain the set objectives. It includes research design, population, statistical analysis, data collection tools and techniques, sample size calculation and sampling, data analysis and data management. Findings are presented in the form of graphs, tables and figures. According to set the objectives, collected data were statistically analyzed and results were produced. These results were presented under this heading in the form of tables, appropriate graphs and valid figures. It encompasses of the summary of the study and its objectives and provides the results based on the research objectives along with the recommendations.

Customer satisfaction is defined as the measurement that determines how happy customers are with the products or services. Surveys regarding the customer satisfaction helps a company to improve quality, provide good service and change the product. The conceptual framework describes the factors or variables that impacts on major customer satisfaction from buying process to after sales process.

There are three components as listed below which has a major impact on customer satisfaction.

1. After sales service components
2. Economic Variable
3. Socio demographic Variable

After sales components such as Quality of service, Responsiveness of service centers, Speed of service and Cost of service shows the operative performance categories that plays an important role in customer satisfaction. Likewise, Economic variables such as Income level, Status of ownership, Type of vehicle, Usage of vehicle shows the purchasing power of the customer that as a major impact on customer satisfaction. Whereas Socio demographic variable such as Age, Sex, Occupation and Education level indicates the buying decision of the customer making a major impact on customer satisfaction.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 The objective of literature review

Endnote software, Google scholar, abstracts from restrictive databases and other available databases were used to search the related articles using the key words such as after-Sales Service, automobile, customer satisfaction and satisfaction level. Moreover, literature search was continued with the search of articles in the reference list of selected articles.

3.2 Customer satisfaction

Satisfied customers determine long-term success of business, and the link between customer satisfaction and customer behavior has been well documented in marketing literature. High consumer satisfaction leads to greater customer loyalty. Increased customer satisfaction leads to decreased customer complaints and increased customer loyalty (Fornell & wernerfelt 1988). Satisfaction is caused when results meets the level of expectations or it is higher while dissatisfaction exists when output of the services is lower than consumer expectations. Simply stated, customer satisfaction can also be defined as satisfaction based on an outcome or a process. To sum up, customer satisfaction is imperative to all commercial businesses because of its impact on repeat purchases and recommendations through word-of-mouth. Satisfaction is not a universal phenomenon, and not everyone reaches the same level of satisfaction out of use of same goods or service. Customers have various needs, objectives and experiences that influence their expectations. It is significant to understand customer needs and objectives that correspond to different kinds of satisfaction. This requires segmenting the service, because no service can offer everyone the same degree of satisfaction.

3.3 After Sales Service

Historically, after sales service was viewed as the supporting strategy by the most manufacturing companies and it was left in the responsibility of the retailer, dealer or agent (Wilson, Bostrom & Lundin 1999,385). After-sales service consists of activities organized by business companies after the purchasing stage and is a part of Customer relationship management (CRM), which comprises creating and keeping profitable client relationships by dealing with all aspects of gaining, maintaining and

growing customers (Kotler & Armstrong 2010). After-sales service are the results happening after the consumer buys the product and devoted to support the buyer in the use of the item.

After-sales services strategies are one of the driving forces in the automobile industry. The complex nature of clients due to technological development in terms of information availability on product and related services has become a significant part of any agenda of acquiring an automobile irrespective of the geographical location. In order to describe the after sales service characteristics frantically, a study done in china selected twelve factors such as costs, convenience, responsiveness, waiting time, maintenance quality and etc. (Jian-Ling, Si-Feng, Yuan-Qi & Nai-Ming 2008).

3.3.1 Cost of Services

Basically, the customer satisfaction is determined by factors such as products/services quality, perceived value and price. Price is a deciding factor for customers when selecting products or services. When customers believe that the product's price is reasonable, the purchase behavior tends to be repeated. In contrast, if customers think that a certain product or services is worse than its costs, they will not repeat purchase behavior. The study done by (Lele1997, 144) developed an after-sales service model, which explored the costs customers absorb when their facilities fail. He presented a framework to identify the most cost-effective service strategies for numerous customer segments and decided how these strategies could affect equipment design.

3.3.2 Service quality

In today's world of intense competition, selling products only is not enough. The Management should focus on quality after sales service to enhance customer satisfaction. To hold and please a customer to greater degree, it is necessary that after sales service quality should be high. Service quality focuses on gaining customer loyalty through enhancing customer's perception about the company. Service quality is a multi-dimensional phenomenon (Cronin Jr & Taylor 1992, 60). The perceived quality of after sales services can be taken as an additional variable. After sales service quality is a significant part for any service providers in any type of industries where the customer plays a central role. The quality of the service determines the company global delivery system for the both product and related services, and consequently, it influences the future purchasing behavior.

3.3.3 Responsiveness

Employees responsiveness was one of the elements of after sales service, which could be judged and have a physical impact on the after sales service and plays a vital role on the good-will of the organization and upsurge the credibility of the organization and boost the trust and confidence of the client (Hussain, Bhatt & Jilani 2011,6).

3.3.4 Speed of services

Customers wish for personalized service and speedy resolutions to their problems. For companies, speed in customer service, would mean valuing and respecting customers. If a company is always there and ready with service and solutions, customers would gravitate towards it (Newman 2017, 1). Clients barely have patience today. Thus, for customers, satisfied service would mean efficiency, knowledge, and immediacy. Not only accuracy but also fast service is critical too for customer satisfaction (Newman 2017, 2). With so fast-moving a life, especially business, clients seek corporations that can give them what they want fast.

3.4 Customer satisfaction towards after sales services

After-sales service provides a model in competitive market and influence customers satisfaction. According to (Jones & Sasser 1995, 88), four basic factors affect customer satisfaction. They were the basic elements of the product or service, basic support services, a retrieval process for encountering bad experiences and unusual service. There were numerous definitions of the key elements of the services, but this one was regarded appropriate in the context of care or after sales services. Customer satisfaction could be affected by various business factors such as marketing, product manufacturing, technological and engineering aspects of products & services, marketer's capability to commit on deadlines (Speed of services), cost, quality and performance of product, response to customers problems (Responsiveness to Service) and other after sales services.

Customer satisfaction leads to increased quality of products and its related after sales service, especially in the context of automobile industry. The level of customer satisfaction is influenced not only by quantity of product sold but also by the quality of after sales service given by an organization.

3.5 Literature gap

In fact, automobile industry is one of the top-most industries for many countries. In case of Nepal, to the best of knowledge based on available literatures, there has not been much research conducted in the area of customer satisfaction on after sale service. The individual brands present in Nepal have been conducting the satisfaction research for their own internal purpose. However, the holistic scenario of satisfaction level in terms of after sales service of automobile market is still unknown. Hence, the study measures the level of customer satisfaction towards the after sales services in the context of automobiles in Nepal.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This part of the research describes the method used and the calculation of the appropriate sample size for the study. The objective of this research was to describe the customer satisfaction towards the after sales services in the context of automobiles in Nepal.

4.1 Research design

The research was descriptive cross-sectional. The study type was quantitative. The study participants were users of two-wheeler vehicles, four-wheeler vehicles and users of both kinds of vehicles in Nepal. The users of two-wheelers, four-wheelers or both kinds of vehicles were only included for the study if they had a driving license. Moreover, the users of automobile were excluded for those users who had not gone to a servicing center of their vehicles, at least once in the past one year and for those users who could not listen, read and write questionnaires.

Most importantly, convenience non-probability sampling technique was used due to the unavailability of sample frame. A total 84 questionnaires were filled up. However, only 81 responses were complete and meaningful. Therefore, only 81 responses were considered for analysis.

4.2 Research instrument

Instrument was the self-administered questionnaire containing close-ended questions. The scale was pretested amongst a sample of thirty (10%) users of automobiles and modified accordingly. Personal and web survey methods were used for data collection. In the personal method, the interviewer interviewed the respondents while in the web survey, questionnaires were sent to respondents through mail and social media.

The questionnaire had multiple choice questions, ranking questions and five-point Likert scale questions. Likert scale, named after its developer - Rensis Likert, is widely used rating scale that needs the participant to state a degree of agreement or disagreement with each of a series of statement starting by 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

4.3 Data organization and Field management

This chapter discusses how data was collected in the field. After the sample size was calculated, two companies in Nepal were approached and a permission was received to collect data through their service centers. Shristi Traders is one of the dealers of Ashok Leyland in Nepal. The other approached company was Center Point Auto Trading, which has dealership of Hyundai in the country. Both the companies agreed to collect the data as per proposal in behalf of the author. The data was collected through social networking sites i.e. Facebook and e-mail. The data was collected from May 2nd, 2019 to August 31st, 2019 by Shristi Trader's team while Center Point Auto Trading collected data from May 7th, 2019 to August 31st, 2019. After collecting of data, all the collected data were printed and handed over to the representative of the author in Nepal, who edited and entered all the data into excel sheet; and then mailed it to the author. The author supervised the representative for all the process of editing and data entry through viber and messengers. She also edited data by herself and then analyzed it as per objectives of the thesis to carry on the further processes like report writing; and to get completed in September 2019.

5 FINDING AND ANALYSIS

After completion of data collection by Center Point Auto Trading and Shristi Traders, all information was gathered, edited, coded and entered into Excel by the representative of the author in Nepal in her close supervision. The author validated the process and the data before analysis. Univariate analyses such as percentage and mean calculation were done to report the characteristics. Altogether 81 were successfully interviewed, yielding a response rate of 96%.

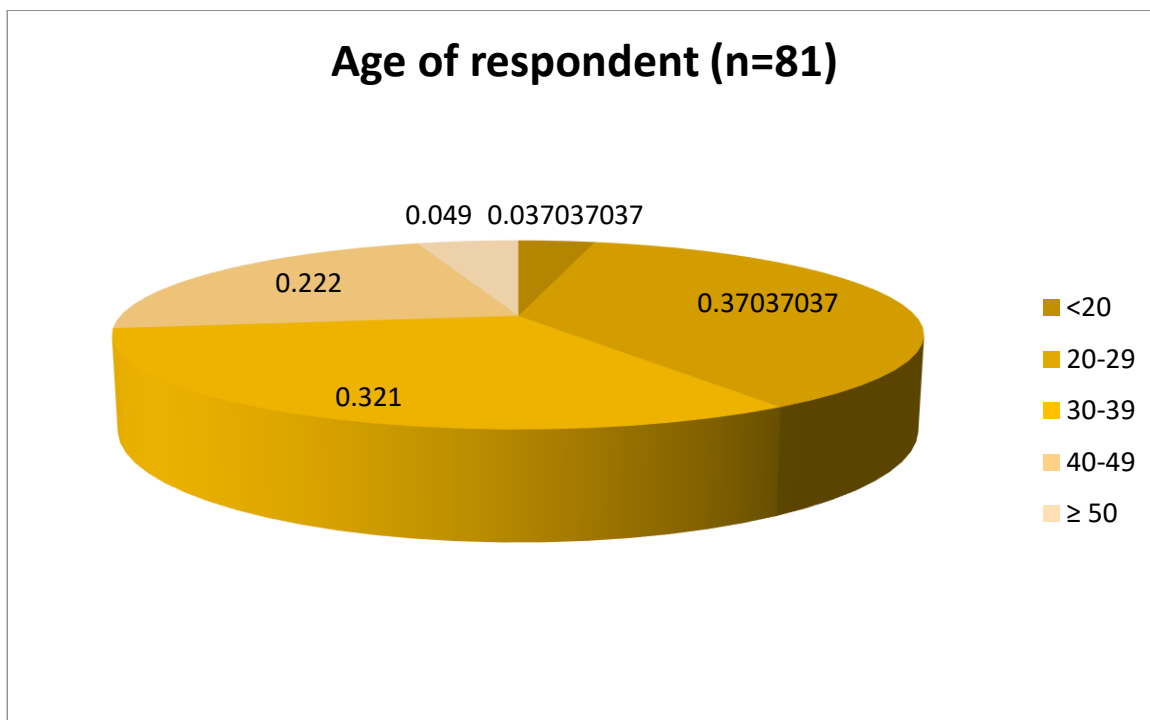


FIGURE 1. Age of respondent (n=81)

Figure 1 shows the age group of the respondents of the survey who had filled the questionnaire. The first question in the form was age group, where the following options were given like below 20, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49 and over 50. According to the survey result, more than one-third of the participating automobile users were from 20-29 age group (37%) and 30-39 age group (32%) respectively. A minority of the participants was under 20 years of age (4%) and more than 50 years (5%). In Nepal, one gets a driving license when s/he turns 18. On the other hand, a minority of people more than 50 years of age

only drive an automobile. In such circumstances, it is acceptable to have a larger proportion of people aged between 20 to 50 years using automobile.

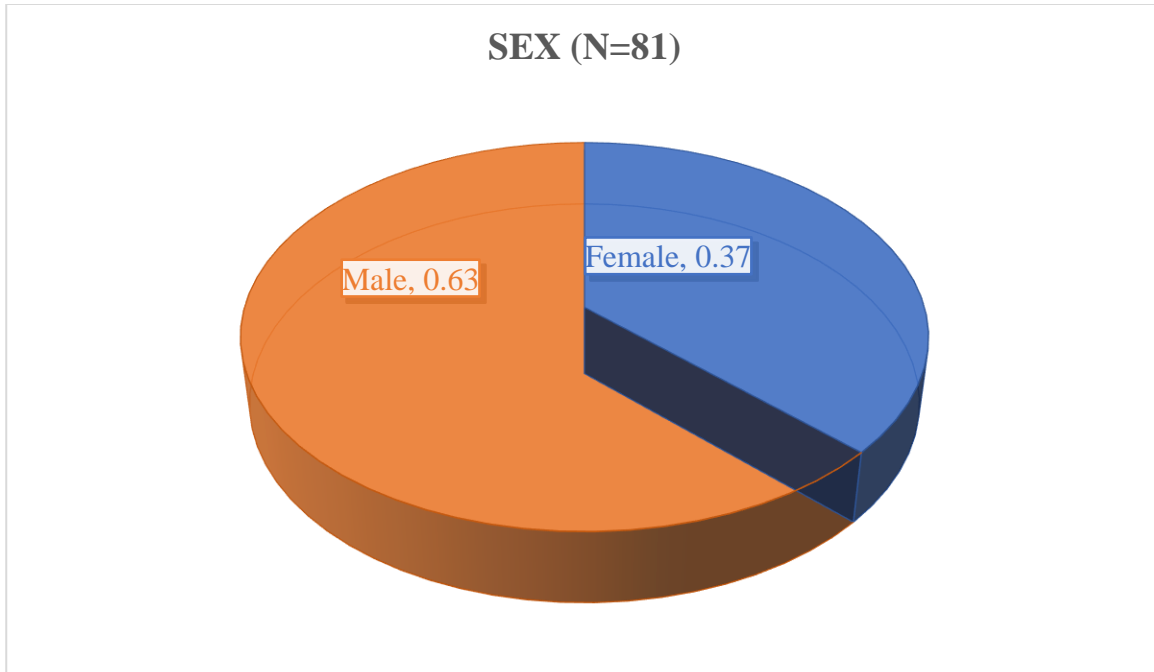


FIGURE 2. Sex distribution of participants (n=81)

Figure 2 shows the percentage of males and females that participated in the survey. In the questionnaire, there were two options to choose from, i.e., 'Male' and 'Female'. The proportion of male respondents was higher than that of female. In the above figure 2, it can be observed that around two-thirds (63%) of the participants were male. It was in accordance with the cultural scenario of a developing country such as Nepal where male dominated society prevailed attributed to the fact that more males owned automobiles based on their financial status.

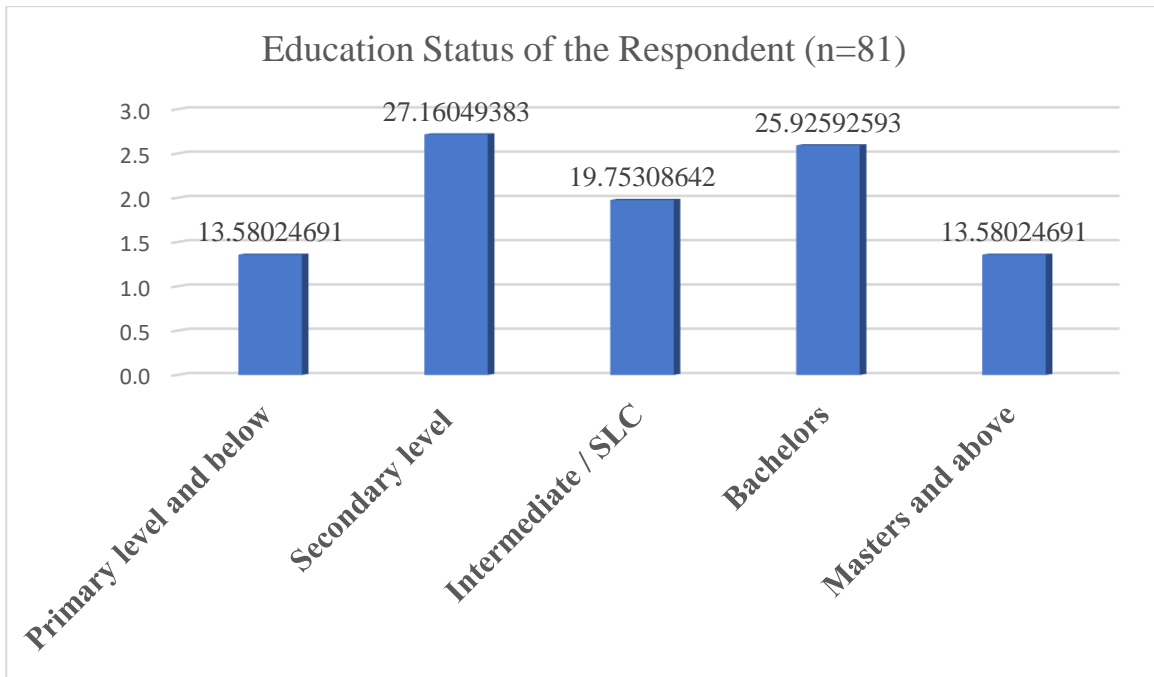


FIGURE 3. Educational status of participants (n=81)

Figure 3 describes the third primary question of the survey where participants were asked to choose their educational status. The majority of participating automobile users (27%) had passed secondary level only in the context of Nepal while one-fourth of them completed bachelor level qualification. About 14% of respondents had master's and above educational level and primary level and below education respectively.

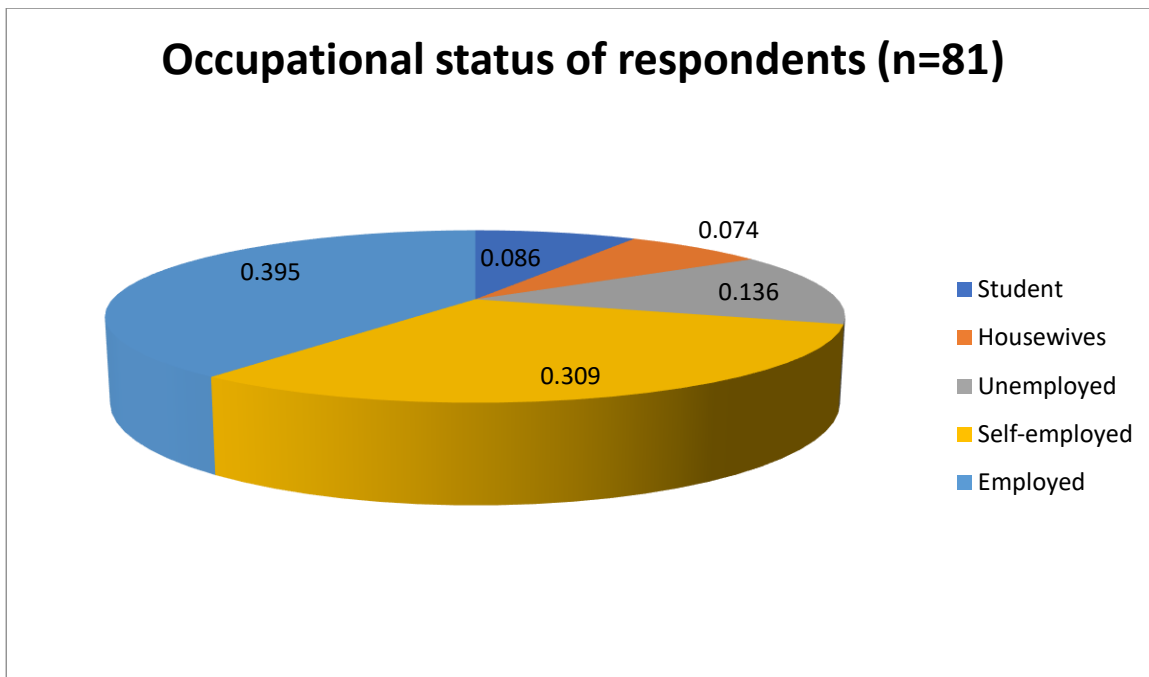


FIGURE 4. Occupational status of respondents (n=81)

Another question for the participants was about their occupational status. The options given were students, housewives, unemployed, self-employed and employed. From the figure 4, it can be seen that two-fifths (40%) were employed while a minority (7%) of them was housewives. The figure 4 shows that a majority of those using automobiles are either self-employed or employed.

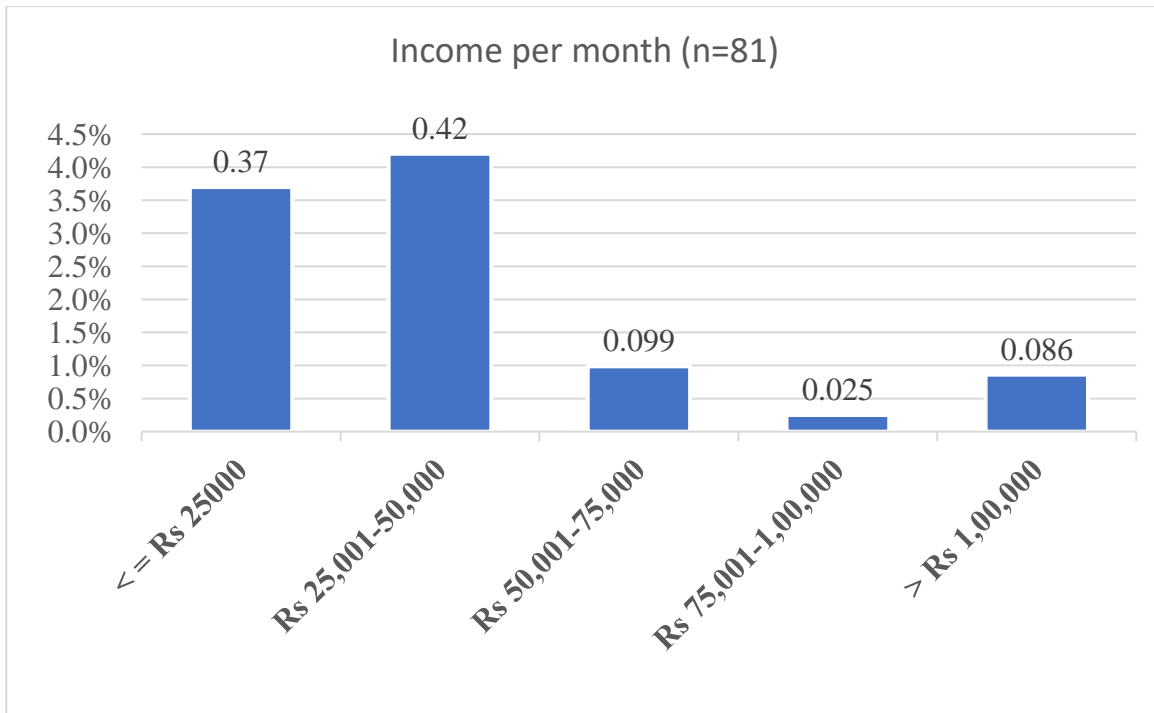


FIGURE 5. Income per month of the participants (n=81)

The next question in the survey was about income per month of the participants. In the survey of 81 participants, the majority of the respondents (42%) earned between twenty-five thousand and fifty thousand, followed by the proportion (one-third) that earned less or equal to twenty-five thousand. The minority of them earned more than fifty thousand.

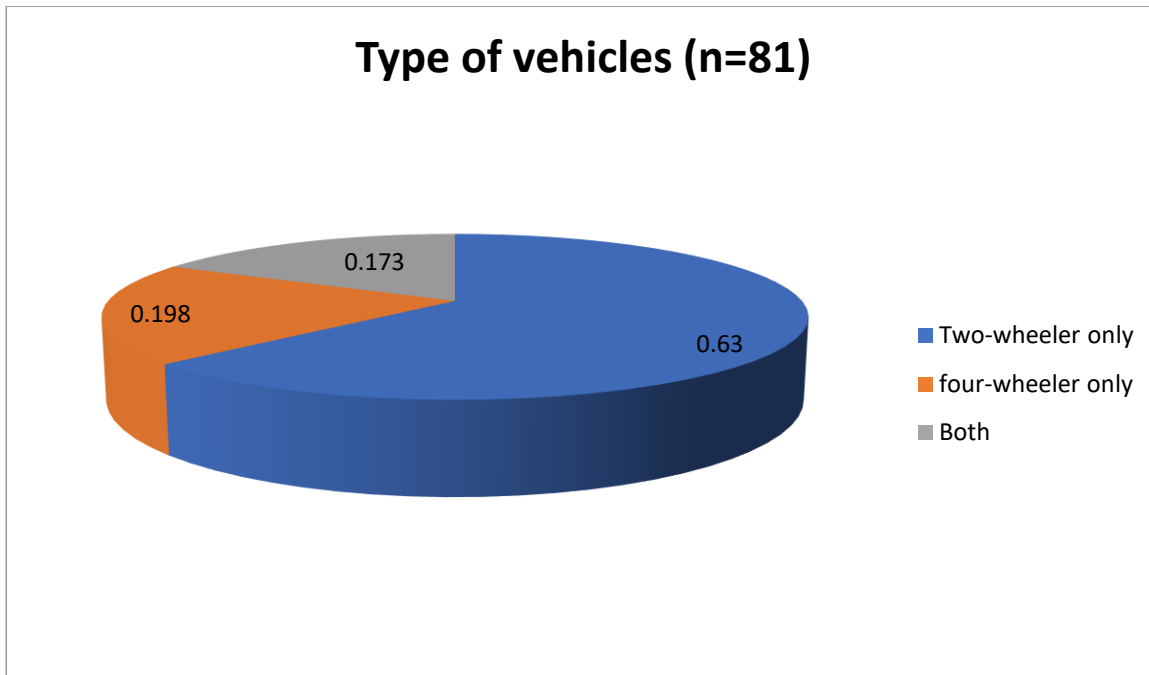


FIGURE 6. Type of vehicles (n=81)

Figure 6 displays that more than three-fifths (63%) of the respondents had a two-wheeler only while the minority of them (17%) had both two-wheeler and four-wheeler vehicles.

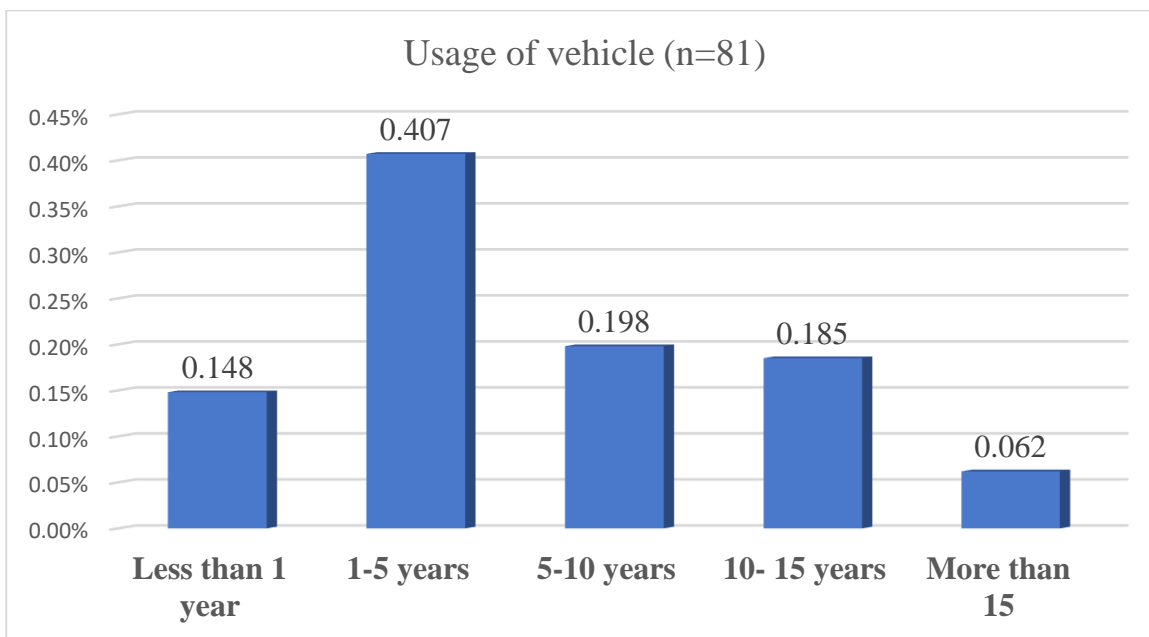


FIGURE 7. Usage of vehicle (n=81)

Another important question in the survey was about the duration of usage of vehicles. Most respondents (41%) used their vehicle for 1-5 years while only 6% of them used their vehicle for more than 15 years (FIGURE 7).

TABLE 1. Average scores of each dimension and aggregate scores of satisfactions (n=81)

S.N.	Dimensions	Average Score
1	Quality of services is as per my expectation	3.39
2	I am satisfied with its responsiveness of service centers.	3.65
3	Speed of services is satisfactory.	3.02
4	I am satisfied with the cost of services.	2.02
	Aggregate scores	3.02

The categories of the overall satisfaction towards after sales services consists up overall satisfaction regarding quality of services, responsiveness of service centers, speed of the services and cost of the services. Average scores were calculated for each dimension. Among the four dimensions, the one with the highest score was the satisfaction toward the responsiveness of service centers during after sales service, which was 3.65 points, indicating that the users were satisfied with the responsiveness of service centers. The following was the satisfaction regarding the quality of services and Speed of the services, which were 3.39 points and 3.02 points respectively; showing satisfactory level of after sales service. The dimension with the lowest score was the satisfaction toward cost of the services, which was 2.02 points, indicating that it was the weakest dimension regarding customer satisfaction towards after sales services. In aggregate, the score was 3.02 points pointing that the level of satisfaction towards the after sales services was around average. The detailed results are shown in table 1.

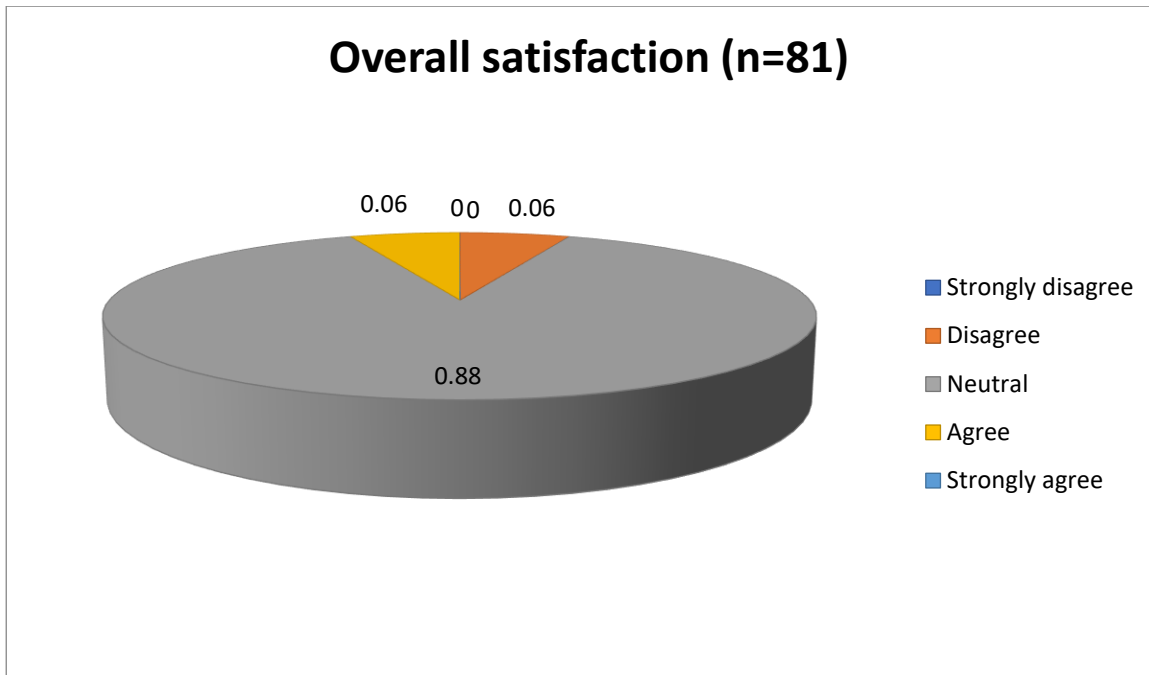


FIGURE9. Overall satisfaction (n=81)

The last question for participating in the survey was to rate their level of satisfaction from 1 to 5 where 1 stood for strongly disagree and 5 stood for strongly agree. According to the figure 9, none of participants rated 1 and 5 for their satisfaction for after-sales service. Similarly, 6% of users rated 2 and 4 for their satisfaction for after-sales service respectively. About 88% responded 3, that is, neutral for their satisfaction for after-sales service. The concerned authorities should still work hard for the development of after sales services in automobile sector of Nepal.

6 SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

As for recommendation, it is imperative that the company adopts a good after-sales services such as acceptable quality of services, prompt responsiveness of service centers, accelerated speed of the services and reasonable cost of the services to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency to satisfy the customer. Moreover, as the customers were comparatively less satisfied with cost of the services. The companies such as Center Point Auto Trading and Shristi Traders should focused on determining their cost of services and furthermore the most noticeable part for the customer was the responsiveness of the service centers to impact the customer satisfaction during after sales service. Most importantly, more studies on customer satisfaction on after-sale services should be conducted in future with a larger sample size and more rigorous research design and methods.

A descriptive cross-sectional and quantitative study was done to describe the customer satisfaction towards the after sales services in the context of automobiles in Nepal. A total of 81 automobile users were included in the study. The variables considered in the study were age group, sex, occupation, education level, income level, the status of ownership, the type of vehicle, the usage of vehicles and four the dimensions of after sales services. Regarding the background variables, more than one-third of the participating automobile users were from 20-29 age groups. Around two-third of participants were male and majority of participating automobile users had passed secondary level. Moreover, two-fifths of automobile users were employed. More than three-fifths of the respondents had a two-wheeler and more than one-third used their vehicle for 1-5 years. The findings of the study showed that the level of satisfaction towards the after sales services was around average. Among the four dimensions of after sales service, the customers were mostly satisfied towards the responsiveness of service centers during after sales service while that with the lowest score was the satisfaction toward cost of the service.

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Questionnaire

**“CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AFTER SALES SERVICES IN AUTOMOBILE
INDUSTRY IN NEPAL”**

Dear Respondents,

I am Soniya Poudel, industrial engineering student of Centria university of applied sciences, Finland. The following questionnaire is an integral of the Graduate Research Project for the completion of my studies. The research is performed with an objective to assess the customer satisfaction on the after sales services in the context of automobiles in Nepal. The title of the study is " CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AFTER SALES SERVICES IN AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY IN NEPAL". For any reasons, you are free to quit the participation at any time. Your input is valuable for my research. Hence, kindly fill up the answers carefully. I assure you that all the information shall be kept confidential.

Section I: General Information

Name:			Sex: Male / Female				
Age: Yrs		License: Yes / No ...	Read/write: Yes / No		Gone servicing center in last one year: Yes / No		
Please tick one for each criteria group.							
Q1. Age group		Q2. Education		Q3. Occupation		Q4. Income (per month)	
<20		Primary level and below		Student		Less than 25,000	
20-29		Secondary level		Housewife		25,001-50,000	
30-39		SLC / Intermediate		Un-employed		50,001-75,000	

40-49		Bachelors		Self-employed		75,001-100,000	
≥ 50		Masters and above		Employed		More than 100.000	

Q5. Type of vehicle

- Two-wheeler only
- Four-wheeler only
- Both

Q6. I have using the vehicles for

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- More than 15 years

Section II: This section examines various factors for after sales service satisfaction of customer of automobile.

1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= strongly agree

S.N.	Factors	1	2	3	4	5
A	Quality of services					
1	I believe the service centers consists of skilled and experienced technicians					
2	The service center is highly automated.					
3	I believe that the service provided by the service center are highly effective.					
4	I believe the technicians are experienced.					

B	Responsiveness of service centers					
1	I am satisfied with the complaint handling system of the service center.					
2	I am satisfied with the staff response of the service center.					
C	Speed of the services					
1	I feel easy contacting the Service department to make an appointment.					
2	My vehicle used to be ready for collection at the agreed time. (on time delivery)					
3	The service centers informed me at relevant time of servicing					
D	Cost of the services					
1	The cost for the service is affordable					
2	Discount facility is as per my satisfaction.					
3	The service center provides Various schemes on service					
4	There is various mode of payment available after service delivery at the service center. (cash, credit, cards, cheque)					
5	The price offered on the on-road service support are reasonable.					
0	Customer satisfaction					
1	Quality of services is as per my expectation					
2	I am satisfied with its responsiveness of service centers.					
3	Speed of services is satisfactory.					
4	I am satisfied with the cost of services.					
	I am overall satisfied with the quality of after sales service provided by the service centers.					