

# "Expectation Vs. Reality: A Study on Customer Satisfaction among Four Wheeler Owners in Chennai"

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## ABSTRACT

The Indian automotive industry is highly competitive, with customers expecting top-notch quality, comfort, and value for money. This study explores the gap between customer expectations and satisfaction levels among four wheeler owners in Chennai. A survey-based approach was used to gather data on customer perceptions and expectations, focusing on attributes like appearance, comfort, cost, and technology. The findings reveal a significant gap between what customers expect and what they actually get, highlighting the challenges faced by manufacturers in meeting customer demands. The study concludes that comfort, convenience, and affordability are key areas where four wheeler manufacturers need to focus to bridge the expectation-satisfaction gap.

**Keywords:** Automobile, Expectation, Satisfaction, customers, four wheelers, Loyalty.

## INTRODUCTION

In the automotive industry innovations of new vehicles plays an important role in Indian economy. At present most of the people uses either two wheeler or four wheeler motor vehicles. These industries also try to innovate new designs, development change, manufacturing and marketing of their products. Today's vehicle industry is looking beyond the creation of faster and more efficient vehicles. The industries are trying to give better quality and service to their customers. The customers expectations towards the products are mileage, fuel capacity, comfort, cost, performance, colour and reliable brand. To fulfill the customers expectations and making them to retain, the industrialists should find the level of satisfaction of customers. Customer satisfaction is the key parameter to know the customers expectations for a particular product is fulfilled or not. The increment or decrement in the number of customer to a product is totally depend on customers satisfaction.

In four wheeler automobile industries there are some gaps in between perceived and expected service. Perceived and Expected service directly affect the customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is very important term in each and every industry. Customer satisfaction is defined as the percentage of total customers who are using the product and experience the quality of service of their service center and gets satisfied.

Service quality is an achievement in customer satisfaction and reflects at each service encounter. Customers expectations for service quality is from their past experiences, word of mouth and advertisement. Actually, Customers compare perceived service with expected service in which if the perceived service falls short of the expected service, customers gets disappointed. Any service industry cannot survive in this highly competitive environment without satisfying their customers.

Customers get satisfaction not only from the branded products. He expects the quality of service in minimal cost and time after purchase of the vehicles. Maintenance is required for all kinds of vehicles. This service quality is an achievement for the industrialists to retain their customers and bringing new customers to their

business. Industrialists use a measurement tool to measure the quality of service rendered by them to the customers through consumer survey.

Service quality is related to profitability, costs, customer satisfaction and retention. The Indian automotive industry customers are well aware of the products and service quality. The customers may shift from one brand to another when his expectations are not met. Today, in market, there are more competitors to supply for the customers demand but not to their satisfaction level. In automobile industry the industrialists can attract the customers by adding some features to the products. This may make the customers to switch from one brand to another.

### **Reasons For Importance Of Customer Satisfaction:**

- Customer satisfaction increases the lifetime value of the customer to the business.
- Customer satisfaction is a point differentiation.
- It is helpful to reduce the negative communication about the products of word to mouth
- It shows the loyalty of the customers to the business.
- It helps to retain the customers.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

1. Ash (1978), in his study on 67 durable products he found that there is a weak association between education, sex and income, etc., satisfaction from durable products. He also stated that situational characteristics are also responsible for customer satisfaction. Situational characteristics like marital status, family size and suggesting people for choosing the durable products, etc.
3. Kotwal (2009), says that buyers prefer to buy comfort and luxury of a mid sized cars.
4. Baumgartner and Jolibert (2008), from their research it has been revealed that consumers prefer to buy Japanese car which has been ranked high for fuel economy and reliability.
5. Maran (2002) in his article he conveys that semi-urban areas people postpone their purchases due to an illiary Industries often failed to supply components to manufacturers which in turn affects the delivery schedule, small car owners faces high cost of maintenance due to Inflation.
- 6) Hundal B.S and Grover Saurabh (2010) Tata nano was named as people's car. People's expectation gets satisfied with all the factors which they expected from automobile industry.
- 7) Hsiu-yuan Hu, Ching-Chan Cheng, Shao – 1 Chiu and Fu yuan Hong found that customer satisfaction was influenced by the one-dimensional and attractive attributes, and negatively affected by customer complaints.
- 8) Feng-Cheng Tung found their research Perceived expectations, Perceived quality, Perceived value, Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use have a major positive effect on customer satisfaction with mobile services. The researcher also finds that Customer Satisfaction has a positive direct impact on customer loyalty.
- 9) Marsha L. Richins & Peter H. Blotch (1991), The customers satisfaction level is declined with high product involvement compared with low product involvement customers after two months purchase of products. The disconfirmation in these changes was investigated. It was found that benefits and problems disconfirmation need to be measured separately in satisfaction research.
- 10) **Michael Finney (2017)**, in Consumer Reports surveys say that most of the car owners whatever the brand of the small cars, would feel to buy back or stay with the same brand for their continuous usage. This shows their commitment towards the particular brand of the cars. The loyalty arises only because these customers are satisfied with the concerned manufacturer.

**Research Gap:**

The present study is undertaken to explore the difference between expectation and satisfaction level of customers in automobile industry. Many scholarly journals find the gaps between expectation & perception and perception & satisfaction. In this article the researcher finds the gap between expectation and satisfaction with reference to four wheelers in Chennai city. There are many journals conveys about customer expectations and satisfaction about Four wheelers but they have not mentioned special and specific things about small cars.

**Objective Of The Study:**

To identify the gap between customer expectation and satisfaction levels among four wheeler customers in Chennai, focusing on attributes like appearance, comfort, cost, and technology.

**Hypothesis:**

Ho: There is no significant difference between expectation and satisfaction of Four wheeler customers.

H1: There is significant difference between expectation and satisfaction of Four wheeler customers.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. The research is empirical in nature. The major part of the research is based on primary data collection. According to Chennai corporation, the zones are divided into Fifteen. The researcher applied convenience sampling method to collect the response from the customers from each Zone.

**Data Collection:**

The researcher applied convenience sampling method in the sense that approaching the consumers who are using four wheelers. The researcher collected 150 responses consisting of 10 responses from each zone from four wheeler customers.

**Data Analysis:**

The researcher used both in- variate and multi-variate statistical techniques namely Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Linear Multiple Regression Analysis.

**ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section the researcher intended to determine predominant gap that exists between customer expectation and satisfaction. Therefore in both the cases of expectation and satisfaction, the researcher applied factor analysis for both expectation and satisfaction. The results of factor analysis is clearly presented below.

Table 1 <b>KMO and Bartlett's Test</b>		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.669
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1153.962
	df	45
	Sig.	.000

**Table 1** :The above table conveys that the variables of expectation and satisfaction are normally distributed with appropriate and required cumulative variance. The number of factors derived for customer expectation and satisfaction can be identified from the following table.

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.893	28.934	28.934	2.893	28.934	28.934
2	1.627	16.274	45.209	1.627	16.274	45.209
3	1.295	12.950	58.158	1.295	12.950	58.158
4	.845	8.454	66.612	.845	8.454	66.612
5	.791	7.913	74.525			
6	.732	7.322	81.847			
7	.555	5.546	87.392			
8	.547	5.470	92.862			
9	.393	3.931	96.793			
10	.321	3.207	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Table 2:** The above table express that the expectation and satisfaction consists of four factors respectively, they are

1. Appearance
2. Comfort
3. Cost and
4. Technology

These factors grouping are found same in the case of customer expectation and satisfaction. Therefore, the researcher applied independent t-tests to find the gap between customer expectation and satisfaction.

Table 3 T-test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t-VALUE	P-VALUE
Pair 1	AWA1 - PRE1	-.10242	1.06274	.04586	-2.233	.026
Pair 2	AWA2 - PRE2	-.26816	1.08017	.04661	-5.753	.000
Pair 3	AWA3 - PRE3	-.21415	1.13655	.04905	-4.366	.000
Pair 4	AWA4 - PRE4	-.17132	1.13150	.04883	-3.509	.000

**Table 3:** From the above table it can be ascertained that the t-values computed for the difference between customer expectation and satisfaction. All the t-values are statistically significant at 5% level. The mean comparison indicates the mean value of customer expectation is more than the mean value of customer satisfaction. This shows that the customers of four wheelers in Chennai city are always expecting more from the brands of four wheelers but they are not able to get equal amount of satisfaction as expected. The following table indicates the influence of demographic variables of 4 wheeler customers on their factors of expectation.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
APPEARENCE	Between Groups	4.561	4	1.140	6.934	.000
	Within Groups	74.168	451	.164		
	Total	78.729	455			
COMFORT	Between Groups	.778	4	.195	1.391	.006
	Within Groups	63.104	451	.140		
	Total	63.883	455			
COST	Between Groups	1.787	4	.447	2.608	.035
	Within Groups	77.250	451	.171		

	Total	79.036	455			
TECHNOLOGY	Between Groups	1.711	4	.428	2.666	.032
	Within Groups	72.359	451	.160		
	Total	74.069	455			

**Table 4:** From the above table it can be clearly ascertained that the demographic variables gender, age, income and educational qualification are found to influence the customer expectations of four wheelers. The same type of influence of demographic variables on customer satisfaction is estimated in the following table.

**Table 5 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.565	.247		6.345	.000
	IN	.271	.070	.178	3.872	.000
	EDU	.056	.027	.097	2.086	.038
	GEN	-.003	.101	-.001	-.030	.976
	AGE	.070	.041	.078	1.699	.090

a. Dependent Variable: satisfaction

**Table 5:** From the above table it can be ascertained that out of ten demographic variables only income and education qualification are found to influence the factors of customer satisfaction on four wheelers.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- Customers expect more than they get in all four factors
- Demographic variables influence expectations, but only income and education affect satisfaction.
- Significant gaps exist between expectation and satisfaction, impacting customer loyalty. The study reveals a significant gap between customer expectations and satisfaction levels among four wheeler owners in Chennai. The analysis highlights that customers expect more than they get in terms of Appearance, Mileage, Cost, and Comfort & Convenience. Demographic variables like income and education influence satisfaction levels, indicating that manufacturers should tailor their strategies to meet the needs of diverse customer segments. To bridge the expectation-satisfaction gap, four wheeler manufacturers should focus on delivering value-for-money features, enhancing comfort and convenience, and managing customer expectations effectively. By doing so, they can improve customer satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately, their market standing

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