

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX (CSI) AMONG FOUR WHEELER DEALERS ACROSS KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT: *Automobile Industry has played a major role in the Indian economy during the last decade. The Indian market opening its wings to MNC's, the competition has become severe in terms of product quality and service. This has brought forward the focus on customer satisfaction especially at the dealer level. Satisfied customer's form the foundation of any successful business as customer satisfaction leads to repeat purchase, brand loyalty, and positive word of mouth. Many researches are going on in the field of customer satisfaction for not only retaining the customer but also for repeated business deals. An attempt is made in this paper to highlight the use of customer satisfaction Index as a tool for improving the relationship with the customer.*

KEY WORDS: *Customer Satisfaction, Attributes, Dealer, Loyalty*

1. INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction is the key to business servers. According to a study Customer in India are more concerned with the service that are performed at timely manner with the affordable cost. The Dealer in India must be responsive to all the needs of their customer; simply providing a good product at a good price is no longer enough. Every aspect of their service from the initial sales call to the maintenance of product sold must exceed the expectation of the customer. Dealer service quality is an important aspect influencing customer satisfaction. A customer who has a good experience with the concerned dealer may probably use the same dealer again while the customer who experiences problems with a dealer may not use the same dealer next time. For this reason improving service quality is important for existing customer and for attracting new users.

Customer satisfaction among different dealers has become an important and necessary concept in today's service business world. Due to the importance of repeat business, it is vital for service business to focus on long term relationship with customer. In this paper an attempt is made to demonstrate that customer satisfaction research is not only a tool to measure customer attitude but also to be a proactive tool for managing customer relation with respect to different dealers. Customer satisfaction is the outcome felt by those that have experienced a company's performance

that have fulfilled their expectations. Many researchers and academicians highlight the importance of customer satisfaction. Many researchers see that customer satisfaction has positive effects on organizations profitability. Empirical evidence also shows the positive connection between customer satisfaction, loyalty and retention. Nowadays all companies are realizing the significance of delivering and managing service quality, which leads to customer satisfaction.

According to Hansemark and Albinson (2004) "Satisfaction is an overall customer attitude towards a service provider, or an emotional reaction to the difference between what customers anticipate and what they receive, regarding the fulfillment of someone's needs, goals or desire". Customer loyalty on the other hand refers to a deeply held commitment to re-buy a preferred product or service in the future despite situational influences and marketing effort having potential to cause switching behavior (Oliver1977).

This paper deals with Customer satisfaction of four wheeler dealers. This gives an insight on how customer satisfaction index for service sector like Automobile Industry is computed. Customer satisfaction index in dealers are initiated into customer requirement that in terms will be translated into measurable targets which provides an easy way to monitor the measurement of attributes. This in turn will help in the improvement of customer satisfaction

index. Responses to questions are grouped under five different factors that have been provided weightage in accordance to priority of the customer provided by the service dealer.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Dealer service quality is one aspect markedly influencing customer satisfaction. Building on its longstanding work to improve the quality of service that affects customer well being, the Customer satisfaction of four wheeler dealers across Karnataka has developed a customer satisfaction index. Successful consumer models used by industries to ensure customer service and satisfaction can be applied effectively to improve the quality of services among different dealers across Karnataka.

In the study of 2012 Dealer satisfaction with Automotive manufacturers Arora mentioned that overall dealer satisfaction is determined by examining nine factors: Marketing and sales activities, product, vehicle ordering and delivery, sales team, parts, warranty claims, after-sales team training and support from the manufacturer.

This review of literature suggest finding out the factors affecting customer satisfaction with service quality of four wheeler dealers across Karnataka. In this article the researchers will be concerned about the different factors namely: Service Initiation, service advisor, service quality. These factors are given below.

3. SERVICE INITIATION: This includes

- Ease of arranging service visit (Through telephone, SMS, etc. This includes the length of time to speak to someone).
- Flexibility to accommodate customer schedule for service.
- Appearance and cleanliness of dealer's workshop.
- Appearance and cleanliness of customer lounge.
- Timeliness of handover process (time waiting to be greeted, time conferring with service advisor, time to hand over keys and complete initial work). “

4. SERVICE ADVISOR

- Courtesy and Friendliness of service Advisor to take vehicle for service
- Able to understand the problem and helpful for customer
- Explain service requirement cost and time
- Was vehicle ready at promised time.
- Thoroughness of explanation, and Service brand building.

5. SERVICE QUALITY

- Fix problem on first visit and ability to diagnosis problem properly.
- Cost deviation and Time deviation.
- Repair quality and washing quality.
- Fairness of charges for routine maintenance.
- Feedback call from dealer regarding service.

- Addressing repeat complaints and attending to it on priority basis.
- Service reminder from dealer to the customer.
- Repair quality and cleanliness of vehicle while returning it to the customers. (Undamaged, controls and position unchanged).
- Overall rating of the dealer.

After going through the literature it has been found that many researchers have studied some of the attributes of the dealer satisfaction with automotive manufacturers, dealers satisfaction with online buying service, dealer satisfaction and performance in motor industry, but studies with respect to the satisfaction of customers related to the dealers, especially on Karnataka automotive industry are rarely available and the major factors affecting their satisfaction level as per dealer view by using Index method. Thus, the present study is an attempt to find the satisfaction level of the customer on any particular dealer.

6. FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

From literature review, there are many factors that affect customer satisfaction. Such factors include friendly and courteous employees, knowledgeable and helpful employees, accuracy of billing, billing timeliness, competitive pricing, service quality, good value, billing clarity and quick service (Hokanson, 1995). From the studies carried out in many countries, factors like: service quality, and perceived value, are the key constructs affecting the customer's satisfaction with mobile services. Studies also point out that customer satisfaction results ultimately in trust, price tolerance, and customer loyalty. Therefore, building customer relationship is a backbone for all organizations in general, and companies in service industries in particular. Issues like: customer satisfaction, service quality, customer perception, customer loyalty, are the main concerns of service companies, which improves organization's performance and translates into more profits.

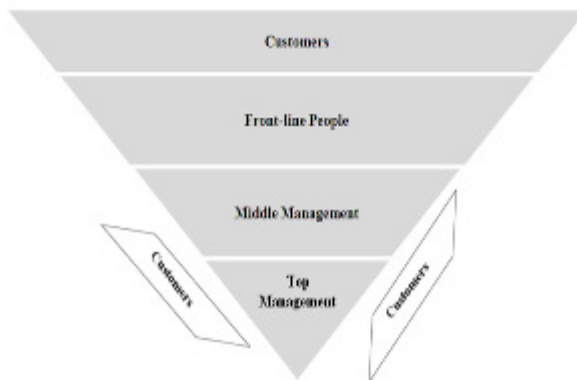
7. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Customer Satisfaction has been a central concept in marketing literature and is an important goal of all business activities. Today, companies face their toughest competition, because they move from a product and sales philosophy to a marketing philosophy, which gives a company a better chance of outperforming competition (Kotler, 2000). Overall customer satisfaction translates to more profits for companies and market share increase. The importance of customers has been highlighted by many researchers and academicians. The principal concern of marketing is to connect with customers by building a strong customer relationship in order to meet their expectations.

Companies that are successful follow a model which has the customers at the top. Next according to the importance are front-line people who meet, serve, and satisfy customers, under them are middle

managers, whose job are to support the front-line people so they can serve customers well, and at the base is top management, whose job is to hire and support good middle managers. For customer-centered companies, customer satisfaction is both a goal and a marketing tool. Therefore, companies need to be concerned about the customer satisfaction level. Otherwise with the extensive use of the internet technology; the quick spread of bad word of mouth marketing, as well as good word of mouth information will percolate to the rest of the world.

Figure 1: Modern Customer-Oriented Organization Chart



Source: Kotler et al. (2000)

Researchers have tried to define customer satisfaction and they have defined it as transaction process. Oliver (1981) defined satisfaction “as a summary of psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with the consumer's prior feelings about the consumption experience”. Kotler (2000) defined satisfaction as: “a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations”. According to Hansemark and Albinsson (2004) “satisfaction is an overall customer attitude towards a service provider, or an emotional reaction to the difference between what customers anticipate and what they receive, regarding the fulfillment of some need, goal or desire”.

Parasuraman et al. (1988) distinguish service quality and satisfaction: “perceived service quality is a global judgment, or attitude, relating to the superiority of the service, whereas satisfaction is related to a specific transaction”. Customer satisfaction as an attitude is like a judgment following a purchase act or based on series of consumer-product interactions (Yi, 1989).

Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on an organization's profitability. The more customers are satisfied with products or services offered, the more are chances for any successful business. Customer satisfaction leads to repeat purchase, brand loyalty, and positive word of mouth advertising. Customer

satisfaction leads to repeat purchases, loyalty and to customer retention (Zairi, 2000).

Satisfied customers are more likely to repeat buying products or services. They will also tend to say good things and to recommend the product or service to others. On the other hand dissatisfied customers respond differently. Dissatisfied customers may try to reduce the dissonance by abandoning or returning the product, or they may try to reduce the dissonance by seeking information that might confirm its high value (Kotler, 2000).

Companies need to develop strategies of how to handle dissatisfied customers. Businesses cannot afford under any condition to lose customers, because the cost of replacing the lost customer with a new customer is bigger. Therefore, companies must find ways of winning back the unsatisfied customers by designing special programs for service recovery. Companies should handle customer complaints with care and not seeing them as time consuming.

8. SERVICE

Service industries are playing an increasingly important role in the overall economies of the countries of developed and developing countries. Researchers have tried to define service and to explain what service constitutes. There are many definitions regarding the concepts of service. Services are deeds, processes, and performances (Parasuraman et al. 1985). Gronroos (1983) defined service as: “An activity or series of activities of more or less intangibles nature that normally, but not necessarily, take place in interactions between the customer and service employees and/or physical resources, goods or systems of service provider”. Service is: “Any primary or complementary activity that does not directly produce a physical product - that is, the non-goods part of the transaction between customer and provider” (Payne, 1993). Whereas Kotler et. al.(1999) defined service as any activity or benefit that one party offers to another which is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything, and it may or may not be tied to a physical product.

9. SERVICE QUALITY

Service quality has become a major area of attention during the past few decades for managers, researchers, practitioners because of its huge impact on business performance of firms. Brown and Swartz (1989) think that customers prefer and value companies that provide high service quality. Thus, the attainment of quality in products and services has become a prime concern of the 1980s. Customers judge service quality relative to what they want by comparing their perceptions of service experiences with their expectations of what the service performance should be. Marketers described and measured only quality with tangible goods, where as quality in services was largely undefined and un-researched (Parasuraman, et.al. 1985).

Quality in a service business has become a measure of the extent to which the service provided meets the customer's expectations. Companies have found that in order to increase profits and market share, they should pay much attention to service quality. Service quality has become a key strategic factor for companies to differentiate their products and services from other competitors by using service quality as a process that customers evaluate. Many researchers suggest that customers assess service quality by comparing what they feel a seller should offer and compare it against the seller's actual service performance (Gronroos, 1982). The importance of quality to firms and customers is unequivocal because of its benefits contributing to market share and return on investment (Parasuraman, et al. 1985).

The search for service quality is no doubt the most important consumer trend of the new era, as consumers now are demanding higher quality in products and services than ever before. The fierce and intense competition and rapid deregulation have made many businesses in the service sector to seek profitable ways and become competitive. Delivering high service quality is a good strategy for businesses to succeed.

Quality has been recognized as a strategic tool for attaining efficiency and business performance. With service assurance, companies not only retain their existing customers but increase chances of getting and attracting new customers. Service quality presents 'the consumer's overall impression of the relative inferiority / superiority of the organization and its services'. Therefore, service quality is a key for survival to all service providing companies.

Measuring the quality of goods is easier because it can be measured objectively with indicators like durability and number of defects, but service quality is an abstract item. According to Parasuraman et al., (1988), service quality has three features which are unique; intangibility, heterogeneity, and inseparability of production and consumption. Therefore, they suggest that in the absence of objective measures, an appropriate assessment of the service quality of a firm is to measure consumers' perceptions of quality.

10. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the core of the research problem customer satisfaction index among four wheeler dealers across Karnataka, the information from the customer perspective play an important role. Quantitative data collection methods were used to obtain all the necessary data needed for answering the core research questions and problems of the research.

Common Attributes have been used for all dealers across Karnataka to measure customer satisfaction index. In order to make the study more useful and informative descriptive statistics have been applied. Weightage is given for the desired attributes: 1) service Initiation, 2) service advisor and 3) Service

quality. The customer satisfaction index represents the overall satisfaction of customer towards dealer, usually as a percentage. Plotting this satisfaction index of the customer against different dealers show exactly how well the dealer is accomplishing the task of customer satisfaction over a period of time.

Since the survey feedback comes from many respondents in one organization, the bias due to the individual perception needs to be accounted for. This can be achieved by calculating the satisfaction index.

The data is to collect the information of customers of four wheelers across Karnataka who will get their vehicle serviced from authorized service centers. The Dealers are of TATA MOTORS across Karnataka. Data have been collected from both primary and secondary sources. For the primary data a questionnaire survey was used. Moreover, different local and internationally published articles were reviewed to strengthen theoretical backgrounds of the study.

Then the respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction by using a 5 point Likert scale (from 1= strongly dissatisfied to 5= strongly satisfied). For the purpose of the study 10 TATA dealer outlets were selected 3 from Bangalore, , and one each from Mysore, Mangalore Shivmoga, Hubli, Belgaum, Hassan and Mandya. For every dealer the sample was fixed as 100 Customers. To analyze the data, index method was used. Survey was done for Tata Indica and Tata Indigo customer's s who have owned their car for a minimum period of 12- 18 months.

11. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

1000 questionnaires were distributed among the 10 TATA DEALERS across Karnataka. 910 questionnaires were found fully completed and used for further analysis.

12. SERVICE INITIATION

a. Service Centre Location

- Around 767 customers (84.28%) were satisfied due to the proximity to access the service centre.

- 40 Customers (4.39%) were found to be dissatisfied in Bangalore .This is due to the fact that they were located far away from the service point and no pick up and drop facility is available from the dealer.

- 103 Customers (11.31%) are Neutral because they were getting the service even when they were away from their own dealer, OR their Driver would take the vehicle and get the service done.

b. Ease of Getting Appointments

- Around 728 Customers (80%) are satisfied of getting appointments with great care through (Phone, Mails, etc.,)

- Around 182 Customer (20%) are dissatisfied due to time taken to get appointment.

C.Appearance and Cleanliness of Dealer Workshop

Around 480 Customers are satisfied (52.74%) with the Appearance and Cleanliness of Dealer Workshop.

- Around 230 Customers (25.27%) are very highly satisfied. However 200 Customers (21.97%) remain Neutral as they are either not worried about the appearance OR they have seen better layouts and better workshops.

d. Appearance and cleanliness of customer lounge

- 350 Customers (38.46%) are satisfied by the appearance and cleanliness of Customer lounge.
- 240 Customer (23.37%) are Neutral due to the fact that they do not wait at the customer lounge (Because they leave the vehicle in the morning for service and get back in evening to take delivery after the service).
- 100 Customers (10.98%) are Dissatisfied because of the poor maintenance.
- Remaining 180 Customer (19.78%) are Highly dissatisfied due to poor maintenance and non availability of Air conditioners in Customer lounge

e. Service openings and closing Time

- 750 Customer (82.41%) are satisfied with the opening and closing time of the service centers.
- 160 Customers (17.58%) are dissatisfied because they are seldom able to make it to the service center to collect their vehicle before the service centre closes.

13. SERVICE ADVISOR

a. Waiting period for service Advisor to take the vehicle for service.

- A majority of 423 customers (46.48%) are very highly satisfied with lesser waiting period to meet the service advisor.
- 181 customers (19.89%) are dissatisfied due as it takes longer time to meet the service advisor.
- Around 119 customers (13.07%) are neutral because they had not taken any appointment and directly walked in to the dealer. At that time service advisor was attending to other customers.

b. Able to understand the customer problem

- 732 customers (80.43%) were satisfied with service advisors capability to understand the problem with the vehicle.
- Around 100 customers (10.98%) were dissatisfied with service advisor and not felt they were not helpful.
- 78 customers (8.57%) were neutral.

c. Information about Cost and Time.

- Around 800 customers were satisfied (87.91%) with the explanation given by the service advisor regarding cost and time of service.
- 100 customers (12.08%) are dissatisfied with the explanation given by the service advisor.

d. Intimation of the completed service by the service advisor.

783 customers are satisfied with the service advisor (86.04%) because they call after the service is completed.

- 113 customers are dissatisfied (12.41%) as the service advisor had not bothered to call the customer even when the vehicle was ready.

e. Detailed explanation of work carried out

- Around 330 customers (36.26%) are satisfied with the Explanation provided by the advisor on the work done.
- Around 235 customers are dissatisfied (25.82%) due to the lack of explanation by the service advisors.
- 185 customers are highly dissatisfied (20.32%) the way service advisor explained.
- Another 160 customers (17.58%) are Neutral

f. Was vehicle ready at the promised time?

- 586 customers (64.39%) are satisfied with the service advisor as the vehicle was ready at promised time
- 324 customers are (35.60%) highly dissatisfied as the advisor did not get the vehicle ready as promised.

14. SERVICE QUALITY

a. Fixing the problem during first visit/ability to diagnose the problem properly.

- Around 783 customers (86.04%) are satisfied with the dealer diagnosis of the problem at the first instance.
- 113 Customers are dissatisfied (12.41%).
- 14 customers are highly dissatisfied.

b. Repair quality and Washing quality.

- 300 customers are satisfied (32.96%) with repair quality and washing quality.
- 350 customers are dissatisfied with (38.46%) washing quality but happy with repair quality
- Remaining 260 are highly dissatisfied (28.57%) with washing quality and repair quality

c. Cost deviation and Time deviation.

- 280 Customers (30.76%) are satisfied with both as there is no Cost/time deviation.
- 346 Customers are (38.02%) are dissatisfied with Cost deviation.
- 169 Customers are (18.57%) are highly dissatisfied with time deviation .
- Remaining 105 customers (11.53%) are neutral.

d. Fairness of charges for routine maintenance.

- 519 customers are satisfied (57.03%) with the fairness of charges made.
- 391 customers are highly dissatisfied with (42.96%) charges done by dealer

e. Was the feedback call given by the dealer regarding impending service?

- 876 customers very satisfied (96.26%) with the service calls from the dealership.
- Remaining 34 customers dissatisfied (3.73%) as they did not get the call .

f. Was repeat complaints attended on priority basis?

- 234 customers are satisfied (25.71%) as repeat complaints were attended on priority
- 180 customers are dissatisfied (19.78%) due to delay in attending to the repeat complaints.
- Remaining 496 customers (54.50%) are neutral.

g. Was repeat complaint solved completely?

- 284 customers are satisfied (31.20%) with the dealer as the problem was fully solved.
- 130 customers are highly dissatisfied (14.28%) as repeat complaints were not solved completely.
- Remaining 496 customers (54.50%) are neutral.

h. Reminder about the upcoming service

- 714 customers are satisfied (78.46%) because they get service reminders from the dealers.
- Remaining 196 customers (21.53%) are dissatisfied as they are not getting service reminders.

i. Overall rating of the dealer.

- 669 customers are very satisfied (73.5%) with the dealer due to the service extension at any time
- 131 customers are satisfied (14.39%)
- 60 customers are neutral (6.59%).
- 50 customers are dissatisfied (5.49%) due to non availability of warranty.

The study was conducted at 10 dealerships across Karnataka. This study has been conducted with three main variables namely a. Service Initiation, b. service Advisor, c. Service quality, which were found to be the most relevant parameters at the present time. The questionnaire was developed covering these variables and the same were administered to customers at all dealerships across Karnataka. The data collected were analyzed and several findings emerged. The finding of this survey could now be grouped into two categories namely satisfied and dissatisfied with the dealer according to the perception of the customer who responds to the questionnaire.

15. SATISFIERS/HIGHLY SATISFIERS

1. Service Initiation
 - a. Service centre location 767(84.28%)
 - b. Easy of getting appointment 728 (80%)
 - c. Appearance and cleanness of dealer workshop 480 (52.74%)&230 (25.27%)
 - d. Appearance and cleanness of Customer lounge 380 (38.46%)
 - e. Service opening and closing time 750 (82.41%)
2. Service Advisor
 - a. Waiting period for Service Advisor to take vehicle for service 187 (20.54%) &423 (46.48%)

- b. Able to understand customer problem 732 (80.43%)
 - c. Explained service requirement Cost and Time 800 (87.91%)
 - d. After completion of work will service advisor call 783 (80.04%)
 - e. Explain detail work done 330 (36.25%)D
 - f. Was vehicle ready at promised time 586 (64.39%)
3. Service Quality
 - a. Fix problem during first visit/ability to diagnosis problem properly 783 (86.04%)
 - b. Repair quality and Washing quality 300 (32.96%)
 - c. Cost deviation and Time deviation 280 (30.96%)
 - d. Fairness of charges for routine maintenance 519 (57.05%)
 - e. Was feedback call given from dealer regarding service 876 (96.26%)
 - f. Was repeat complaint attended on the priority basis 234 (25.71%)
 - g. Was repeat complaints solved completely 284 (31.20%)
 - h. Did dealer inform about the service reminder 714 (78.46%)
 - i. Overall rating of the dealer 131 Satisfiers (14.39%) &669 highly satisfiers (73.5%).

16. DISSATISFIERS /HIGHLY DISSATIFIERS

The Dissatisfiers are found to be

1. Service Initiation
 - a. Service centre location 40 (4.39%)
 - b. Easy of getting appointment 182 (20%)
 - c. Appearance and cleanness of Customer lounge 100 (10.98%)&180 (19.78%)
 - d. Service opening and closing time 160 (17.58%)
2. Service Advisor
 - a. Waiting period for Service Advisor to take vehicle for service 181 (19.89%).
 - b. Able to understand customer problem 100 (10.98%)
 - c. Explained service requirement Cost and Time 100 (12.08%)
 - d. After completion of work will service advisor call 113 (12.41%)
 - e. Explain detail work done 235 (25.82%) &185 (20.32%)
 - f. Was vehicle ready at promised time 324(35.60%)
3. Service Quality
 - a. Fix problem during first visit/ability to diagnosis problem properly 113 (12.41%) & 14 (1.53%)
 - b. Repair quality and Washing quality 350(38.46%) &260 (28.57%)
 - c. Cost deviation and Time deviation 346(38.02) &169 (18.57%)

- d. Fairness of charges for routine maintenance 391 (42.96%)
- e. Did feedback call given from dealer regarding service 34 (3.73%)
- f. Was repeat complaint attended at the priority basis 180 (19.78%)
- g. Was repeat complaint solved completely 130 (14.28%)
- h. Did dealer informed about the service reminder 196 (21.53%)
- i. Overall rating of the dealer 50Dissatisfiers (5.49%).

17. FINDING AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS (CONCLUSION)

In the analysis we have not considered the Neutral category as they are not contributing towards the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with respect to the dealer.

The purpose of this study was to measure customer satisfaction of 10 Dealers across Karnataka. As was mentioned, the three Attributes questions the Service Advisor (S/A), Service Initiation (S/I), and Service Quality (S/Q). Out of 1000 questionnaires, 910 were analyzed using index method in this study.

The empirical findings from the customer's opinion, - Car Users (Indica, Indigo) across Karnataka were satisfied with service offered by the dealer. Findings also showed that satisfied percentage is more than the dissatisfiers. Dealer names are not mentioned as the study aims in finding the Customer expectation and perception towards the TATA Dealers across Karnataka. Thus the dealer is now required to concentrate his efforts on sustaining satisfiers and at the same time there is scope for improvement. Efforts can be put to improve areas which will increase the level of overall customer satisfaction. This will also result in re service with the same dealer and recommendation of the dealership to others.

In conclusion, the companies can benefit from the fact of knowing how customers perceive the service quality and knowing the way of how to measure customer satisfaction. The dealership can use the specific data obtained from the measurement of overall customer satisfaction in their strategies and plan. This will help the companies to better understand various service quality dimension that affect overall dealer customer satisfaction. In this way companies can better allocate resources to provide better service to their customer. Thus, understanding customer satisfaction with dealer service quality is very important and challenging.

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