

A STUDY ON ANALYSIS OF CUSTOMER PREFERENCES TOWARDS UNAUTHORIZED TWO-WHEELER SERVICE PROVIDERS WITH REFERENCE TO PALAYAMKOTTAI, TIRUNELVELI DISTRICTS

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Abstract—The two-wheeler has become an important mode of personal transportation in India because of its affordability, convenience, fuel efficiency, and suitability for both urban and semi-urban travel. Along with the growth in two-wheeler ownership, the demand for maintenance and repair services has increased. Customers can obtain after-sales services either from manufacturer-authorized service centres or from independent and locally operated workshops that are not affiliated with the vehicle manufacturer. The present study examines customer preferences towards unauthorized two-wheeler service providers with special reference to Palayamkottai in Tirunelveli District. The study focuses on the major factors influencing customers' preference for independent service providers, including service cost, quality of repair, convenience, turnaround time, mechanic expertise, trust, personal attention, and availability of spare parts. The study is designed around a sample of 150 respondents. A structured questionnaire is proposed as the primary data collection instrument. Percentage analysis, weighted-average analysis, reliability analysis, and chi-square testing are used to examine customer preferences. For the model statistical presentation, the illustrative results indicate that lower service cost, convenient location, quick service, mechanic expertise, and personal attention are important considerations. The illustrative reliability coefficient is high, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.967. The weighted-average results suggest that customers give comparatively high importance to repair quality, affordability, and willingness to revisit or recommend the service provider. The illustrative chi-square results indicate no statistically significant association between gender, age group, service frequency and the primary reason for choosing an unauthorized service provider at the 5% level. The study concludes that independent two-wheeler service providers can remain competitive by combining affordable pricing with reliable repair quality, transparent communication, timely delivery, skilled mechanics, and customer-oriented service. The findings can assist local service providers in understanding customer expectations and improving their competitive position.

Keywords: Two-wheeler service, customer preference, unauthorized service provider, automobile after-sales service, service quality, customer satisfaction, Palayamkottai.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The automobile service sector is an important component of the wider automotive industry because vehicle ownership creates continuing demand for maintenance, repair, spare parts, inspection, and other after-sales activities. For two-wheeler owners in particular, regular servicing is closely associated with vehicle reliability, operating cost, safety, fuel efficiency, and longevity.

In India, customers generally have two broad alternatives when their two-wheelers require maintenance or repair. The first is the manufacturer's authorized service network. The second is the independent workshop, commonly operated by local mechanics or small businesses without formal affiliation with the vehicle manufacturer. In this study, the term unauthorized two-wheeler service provider refers to an independent workshop that is not an officially authorized service centre of the vehicle manufacturer. The term does not necessarily imply that the workshop is illegal or unsafe.

Independent workshops compete with authorized service centres primarily through affordability, accessibility, flexibility, personal interaction, and familiarity with customers. Industry evidence has shown that independent workshops constitute meaningful competition for authorized two-wheeler service networks. A J.D. Power India two-wheeler customer service study reported that 22% of customers had visited an independent workshop during the warranty period, while cost, work quality, timely delivery, and proximity were identified as important elements of the service experience.

Service quality is also a major determinant of customer satisfaction in automobile after-sales services. Previous research has examined dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibility in automobile service environments. Yadav and Joseph (2017), for example, found that service-quality dimensions had significant positive relationships with customer satisfaction in the Indian automobile after-sales context.

More recent automobile after-sales research has emphasized the importance of employee behaviour, service lead time, service quality, service processes and service cost in shaping customer satisfaction. Gupta and Raman (2022) found that after-sales service interactions substantially influence customer satisfaction.

Palayamkottai is an important urban area of Tirunelveli District with a substantial population of students, employees, traders, professionals and other two-wheeler users. Customers in the area have access to both authorized service centres and numerous independent repair workshops. Therefore, examining why customers prefer unauthorized service providers is useful for understanding local consumer behaviour.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Two-wheeler owners require regular servicing and occasional repairs to maintain vehicle performance and safety. While authorized service centres provide manufacturer-linked service facilities, independent service providers are also available to customers.

Customers may select independent providers because of factors such as:

- Lower service charges
- Convenient location
- Faster service
- Flexible service arrangements
- Availability of mechanics
- Familiarity and trust
- Personalized attention
- Spare-parts availability
- Ease of communication
- Perceived quality of repairs

However, the relative importance of these factors may vary among customers according to their age, occupation, income, type of two-wheeler, ownership period and frequency of servicing.

Hence, the study seeks to examine **what factors influence customer preference towards independent two-wheeler service providers in Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli District.**

3. NEED FOR THE STUDY:

The study is useful because it can:

1. Identify the major factors influencing customer preference.
2. Understand customer expectations from independent service providers.
3. Examine customers' perceptions of service quality.
4. Identify the role of service cost in workshop selection.
5. Examine the importance of location and convenience.

6. Study customer perceptions regarding repair quality.
7. Identify factors influencing repeat visits.
8. Examine customers' willingness to recommend the service provider.
9. Provide practical suggestions to independent service providers.
10. Contribute local evidence from Palayamkottai to the literature on two-wheeler after-sales service.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

Primary Objective

1. To study the demographic characteristics of customers using independent two-wheeler service providers.
2. To identify the factors influencing customers' selection of independent service providers.
3. To examine customers' perceptions regarding service quality.
4. To analyse the influence of service charges on customer preference.
5. To examine the role of convenience and accessibility in service-provider selection.
6. To assess customers' satisfaction with independent two-wheeler service providers.
7. To examine the relationship between selected demographic characteristics and customer preferences.
8. To determine the factors influencing customers' intention to revisit the service provider.
9. To examine customers' willingness to recommend independent service providers to others.
10. To provide suggestions for improving independent two-wheeler service facilities.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

The study may address the following questions:

1. What are the major reasons customers choose independent two-wheeler service providers?
2. How important is service cost in the selection of a service provider?
3. How do customers perceive the quality of repairs?
4. Does convenience influence service-provider selection?
5. Does customer satisfaction influence intention to revisit?
6. What factors influence customers' willingness to recommend a service provider?
7. Do customer preferences vary according to demographic characteristics?

6. HYPOTHESES:

These can be tested after collecting the data.

H01=There is no significant association between demographic characteristics and customer preference towards independent two-wheeler service providers.

H02=There is no significant relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction.

H03=There is no significant relationship between perceived service charges and customer satisfaction.

H04=There is no significant relationship between convenience and customer satisfaction.

H05=There is no significant relationship between customer satisfaction and intention to revisit the service provider.

H06=Service quality, cost, convenience, reliability and customer service do not significantly influence overall customer preference **towards independent two-wheeler service providers.**

The final hypotheses should be adjusted to match the statistical tests and sample size actually used.

7. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

You can present the research model as:

Independent Variables

- Service Quality
- Service Cost
- Convenience
- Reliability
- Repair/Technical Quality
- Spare-Parts Availability
- Customer Relationship
- Communication
- Turnaround Time

8. Scope of the Study

The study is geographically restricted to Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli District.

The study focuses on customers who have experience with independent or unauthorized two-wheeler service providers. The study concentrates on customer preference rather than mechanical evaluation of vehicles.

The major variables considered are:

- Cost
- Quality
- Convenience
- Speed
- Mechanic expertise
- Trust
- Personal attention
- Spare-part availability
- Communication
- Revisit/recommendation intention

9. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research Design

The study will adopt a **descriptive and analytical research design**.

Study Area

Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu.

Population

The population will consist of two-wheeler owners/users who have obtained servicing or repair services from independent two-wheeler service providers in the study area.

Sampling Method

A Study on Analysis of Customer Preferences towards Unauthorized Two-Wheeler Service Providers with reference to Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli Districts

A **convenience sampling method** may be used if a complete sampling frame of customers is unavailable.

Alternatively, **purposive sampling** can be used by selecting respondents who satisfy the criterion of having used an independent two-wheeler service provider.

Sample Size:

The sample size of the study is 200 in the study area; it will be completed by the convenience of the customer.

Sources of Data

Primary Data

Collected directly from respondents through a structured questionnaire.

Secondary Data

May include:

- Research articles
- Books
- Industry reports
- Government publications
- Official company/service-industry publications
- Previous academic studies

10. Statistical Tools

Depending on the actual dataset, the following tools can be used:

Objective	Suggested statistical tool
Demographic profile	Frequency analysis
Reasons for choosing provider	Percentage analysis
Service-factor preferences	Weighted-average analysis
Scale reliability	Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis
Demographic association	Chi-square test
Relationship between variables	Frequency analysis
Factors affecting satisfaction	Multiple regression
Differences between groups	t-test / ANOVA
Overall preference	Descriptive statistics

The weighted average is interpreted using the following scale:

Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00–1.80	Very Low
1.81–2.60	Low
2.61–3.40	Moderate
3.41–4.20	High

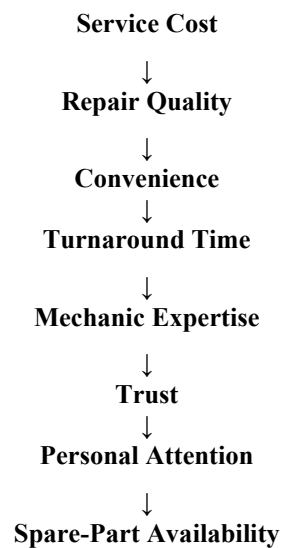
4.21–5.00	Very High
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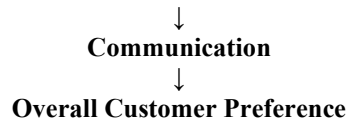
11. Review of Literature

- Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed SERVQUAL as a framework for evaluating perceived service quality through dimensions including tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. These dimensions have been extensively applied to service-quality research.
- Yadav and Joseph (2017) examined after-sales service quality in the Indian automobile industry using SERVQUAL dimensions. Their findings indicated positive relationships between service-quality dimensions and customer satisfaction.
- Gulhane et al. (2019) examined service quality and customer loyalty in the automobile sector using the SERVQUAL model and reported a relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty.
- Babu and Vetrivel examined service quality in automobile service centres in Tamil Nadu using the five SERVQUAL dimensions and emphasized relationships among service quality, customer satisfaction, trust and loyalty.
- Gupta and Raman (2022) investigated after-sales service experiences in the Indian automobile industry and identified employee behaviour, service lead time, service quality, service processes and service cost as important components of the customer experience.
- Singh et al. (2023) argued that automobile after-sales service-quality measurement can benefit from context-specific dimensions, including service failure and service recovery, in addition to traditional SERVQUAL dimensions.
- J.D. Power's India two-wheeler customer service research has consistently highlighted the importance of service quality, service communication, convenience, service facility, advisor interaction and timely completion. Independent workshops have also been identified as an important source of competitive pressure on authorized service networks.
- A previous study specifically examining two-wheeler buyer preferences in Palayamkottai demonstrates that two-wheeler consumer research has already been undertaken in the locality, although its focus was on brand preference rather than service-provider preference.

Conceptual Framework

The study proposes that customer preference towards an unauthorized two-wheeler service provider is influenced by:





These factors collectively influence the customer's intention to continue using and recommend the independent service provider.

12. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Important note: The following statistical tables are **illustrative results based on a model/simulated dataset of 150 respondents**. They demonstrate how the completed analysis can be presented. They must be replaced with calculations from actual questionnaires before the manuscript is submitted as an empirical study.

12.1 Gender-wise Classification

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	111	74.0
Female	39	26.0
Total	150	100.0

Interpretation

The illustrative distribution shows that 74% of respondents are male and 26% are female. This indicates that male respondents constitute the larger share of the model sample.

12.2 Age-wise Classification

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18–25 years	63	42.0
26–35 years	45	30.0
36–45 years	27	18.0
46 years and above	15	10.0
Total	150	100.0

Interpretation

The 18–25 age group represents 42% of the illustrative respondents, followed by 26–35 years at 30%. Younger two-wheeler users therefore constitute a substantial proportion of the model sample.

12.3 Monthly Income

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
Below ₹15,000	42	28.0
₹15,000–₹25,000	57	38.0
₹25,001–₹40,000	33	22.0
Above ₹40,000	18	12.0
Total	150	100.0

Interpretation

The largest illustrative group earns ₹15,000–₹25,000 per month, representing 38% of respondents. Price sensitivity may therefore be relevant when customers select an independent service provider.

13. Reasons for Choosing Unauthorized Service Providers

Primary Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Lower service cost	51	34.0
Convenient location	30	20.0
Quick service	27	18.0
Trusted mechanic	24	16.0
Personal attention	18	12.0
Total	150	100.0

Interpretation

Lower service cost is the leading illustrative reason, accounting for 34% of respondents. Convenient location is second at 20%, while quick service accounts for 18%. Trusted mechanics and personal attention account for 16% and 12%, respectively.

This suggests that independent service providers may attract customers through a combination of economic value and relationship-based service.

14. Frequency of Service Visits

Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Monthly	12	8.0
Once in 2–3 months	42	28.0
Twice a year	54	36.0
Once a year	42	28.0
Total	150	100.0

Interpretation

The largest group in the illustrative sample visits an independent workshop twice a year. This indicates that independent service providers may have opportunities to develop recurring relationships with customers.

15. Weighted-Average Analysis

The following factors are measured on a five-point scale.

Preference Factor	Weighted Mean	Rank	Interpretation
Quality of repair work	3.53	1	High
Willingness to revisit/recommend	3.49	2	High
Affordable service charges	3.48	3	High
Personal attention	3.47	4	High
Availability of spare parts	3.47	5	High
Trust in mechanic	3.43	6	High
Quick turnaround time	3.41	7	High
Clear explanation of work	3.40	8	Moderate
Convenient location	3.39	9	Moderate
Mechanic expertise	3.35	10	Moderate

Overall weighted mean	3.44	—	High
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Interpretation

The overall illustrative weighted mean is 3.44, indicating a high level of preference across the selected factors.

Repair quality receives the highest mean score of 3.53. This suggests that customers do not select independent workshops merely because of low prices; they also expect effective repair work.

The willingness to revisit or recommend the workshop has a mean of 3.49, indicating potential customer retention.

Affordable service charges rank third with a mean of 3.48. This reinforces the importance of price competitiveness.

Mechanic expertise records a comparatively lower mean of 3.35, suggesting that independent workshops could strengthen customer confidence by improving technical credibility, explaining repairs clearly, and demonstrating professional competence.

16. Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha is used to assess the internal consistency of the customer-preference scale.

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Customer Preference Scale	20	0.967	Excellent

Interpretation

The illustrative Cronbach's alpha of 0.967 indicates excellent internal consistency among the 20 preference items. A coefficient above 0.70 is generally considered acceptable for exploratory research, while a value above 0.90 indicates very high internal consistency.

However, this coefficient is based on the **model/simulated response matrix**, not actual field responses. The alpha value should be recalculated after the real 150 questionnaires are entered into SPSS, Excel, R, or another statistical package.

17. Chi-Square Analysis

Hypothesis 1

H01: There is no significant association between gender and the primary reason for choosing an unauthorized two-wheeler service provider.

Chi-Square Result

Test	Value
Pearson Chi-Square	2.781
Degrees of Freedom	4
p-value	0.595
Significance Level	0.05

Decision

Since $p = 0.595 > 0.05$, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Interpretation

The illustrative result indicates that there is no statistically significant association between gender and the primary reason for selecting an unauthorized service provider.

Hypothesis 2

H02: There is no significant association between age and the primary reason for choosing an unauthorized two-wheeler service provider.

Test	Value
Pearson Chi-Square	13.730
Degrees of Freedom	12
p-value	0.318
Significance Level	0.05

Decision

Since $p = 0.318 > 0.05$, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Interpretation

The illustrative analysis indicates that age group does not have a statistically significant association with the primary reason for selecting an unauthorized service provider.

Hypothesis 3

H03: There is no significant association between frequency of service visits and the primary reason for choosing an unauthorized two-wheeler service provider.

Test	Value
Pearson Chi-Square	6.455
Degrees of Freedom	12
p-value	0.891
Significance Level	0.05

Decision

Since $p = 0.891 > 0.05$, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

Interpretation

The illustrative result suggests that frequency of service visits is not significantly associated with the primary reason for choosing an unauthorized service provider.

18. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Chi-Square	df	p-value	Decision
H01: Gender $\times$ reason	2.781	4	.595	Not significant
H02: Age $\times$ reason	13.730	12	.318	Not significant
H03: Service frequency $\times$ reason	6.455	12	.891	Not significant

At the 5% significance level, none of the three illustrative chi-square tests is statistically significant.

19. Additional Relationship Analysis

As an optional extension, the model data indicate a strong positive association between overall service-quality preference and customer satisfaction.

Variables	Pearson Correlation
Service preference and satisfaction	0.925

The illustrative correlation of 0.925 indicates a very strong positive relationship. In practical terms, customers who perceive better service quality are likely to report higher satisfaction.

This result should not be treated as an actual empirical finding until it has been calculated using the real questionnaire responses.

20. Major Findings

Based on the illustrative analysis, the major findings are:

1. Male respondents constitute the majority of the model sample.
2. The 18–25 age group forms the largest age category.
3. The ₹15,000–₹25,000 income category represents the largest income group.
4. Lower service cost is the most frequently reported primary reason for choosing an independent service provider.
5. Convenient location is the second major reason.
6. Quick turnaround time is another important consideration.
7. Trust in the mechanic contributes to customer preference.
8. Personal attention is an important advantage of local service providers.
9. Repair quality receives the highest weighted-average score.
10. Willingness to revisit or recommend the service provider receives a high score.
11. Affordable service charges receive a high weighted-average score.
12. Mechanic expertise requires continued improvement because its illustrative score is comparatively lower.
13. The illustrative reliability coefficient indicates excellent internal consistency.
14. The illustrative chi-square tests do not show significant associations between gender, age, service frequency and the main reason for selecting an unauthorized workshop.
15. The illustrative correlation indicates a strong positive relationship between service preference and satisfaction.

21. Suggestions

21.1 Maintain Competitive Pricing

Independent service providers should maintain reasonable and transparent service charges. Since affordability is a major reason for choosing local workshops, unnecessary increases in labour charges could cause customers to shift to competitors.

21.2 Improve Repair Quality

Lower price alone cannot guarantee customer retention. Mechanics should focus on completing repairs correctly the first time and reducing repeat complaints.

21.3 Improve Technical Expertise

Independent mechanics should regularly update their knowledge of electronic systems, fuel-injection systems, sensors, diagnostic equipment, braking systems and newer two-wheeler technologies.

21.4 Provide Transparent Billing

Customers should receive an itemized bill showing labour charges, spare-part costs and other charges. Transparency can improve trust.

21.5 Offer Service Guarantees

Where commercially feasible, workshops could provide limited guarantees on selected repairs or replacement parts. This may reduce customer concerns about service reliability.

21.6 Improve Communication

Mechanics should clearly explain:

- The problem identified

- The repair required
- Estimated cost
- Expected delivery time
- Parts that need replacement
- Additional work discovered during servicing

Communication is particularly important because industry research has found that gaps in communication can negatively influence two-wheeler service satisfaction.

21.7 Maintain Customer Records

Workshops should maintain basic digital or physical service records containing:

- Customer name
- Vehicle model
- Registration details
- Service date
- Previous repairs
- Parts replaced
- Next service recommendation

21.8 Improve Workplace Cleanliness

A clean and organized workshop can improve customer confidence and the professional image of the business.

21.9 Improve Spare-Part Management

Frequently required spare parts should be maintained in stock to reduce service delays.

21.10 Build Long-Term Customer Relationships

Independent workshops can use service reminders, follow-up calls and customer feedback to encourage repeat visits.

22. Conclusion

The study examines customer preferences towards unauthorized two-wheeler service providers in Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli District. The topic is significant because independent workshops represent an important alternative to authorized service centres and compete through price, accessibility, speed, flexibility and personal relationships.

The model analysis indicates that customer preference is influenced by several interconnected factors. Service cost is an important attraction, but the findings also emphasize repair quality, mechanic trust, convenience, turnaround time and personal attention. Therefore, the competitive advantage of an independent workshop should not be understood simply as low-cost servicing.

The weighted-average analysis indicates that repair quality, willingness to revisit or recommend, affordability and personal attention are particularly important. This suggests that customers expect value for money rather than merely the cheapest possible service.

The chi-square results in the illustrative dataset do not show significant associations between gender, age, service frequency and the main reason for choosing an unauthorized service provider. This implies that service providers should avoid targeting their services solely according to demographic characteristics and instead concentrate on the service attributes valued across customer groups.

Overall, independent two-wheeler service providers in Palayamkottai can strengthen their market position by combining affordable prices with dependable repair quality, skilled mechanics, transparent billing, convenient service, timely delivery and effective communication.

The central managerial implication is that **customer preference is likely to be sustained when affordability is combined with trust and reliable service quality.**

23. Limitations of the Study

1. The geographical scope is limited to Palayamkottai.
2. The proposed sample consists of 150 respondents.
3. Convenience sampling may limit generalization.
4. Customer perceptions may change over time.
5. The study focuses on customer perceptions rather than technical inspection of repair quality.
6. Respondents may provide answers influenced by recent service experiences.
7. Differences among individual workshops are not examined in detail.
8. The illustrative statistical results in this manuscript must be replaced with actual field-data calculations before publication.

24. Scope for Future Research

Future researchers may:

1. Conduct the study with a larger sample.
2. Compare Palayamkottai with other areas of Tirunelveli District.
3. Compare authorized and unauthorized service providers.
4. Examine customer loyalty and switching intention.
5. Study the impact of digital service booking.
6. Examine customer perception of genuine versus aftermarket spare parts.
7. Investigate service recovery and complaint management.
8. Apply regression, factor analysis or structural equation modelling.
9. Study differences across individual two-wheeler brands.
10. Examine how electric two-wheeler service requirements influence independent workshops.

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