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# CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	<p><b>AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT DEALER POINT FOR PURCHASE OF CAR: A QUALITATIVE &amp; SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF LITERATURE</b></p> <p><i>MADHUSMITA CHOUDHURY, Dr. BIDHU BHUSAN MISHRA &amp; Dr. P. K. MOHANTY</i></p>	1
2.	<p><b>A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF AGE, EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS IN RURAL AREAS OF TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT</b></p> <p><i>G. DINESH BABU &amp; Dr. P. JAYABHARATHY</i></p>	8
3.	<p><b>THE INFLUENCE OF KNOWLEDGE SHARING ON SUSTAINABILITY OF SUGAR COMPANIES IN KENYA</b></p> <p><i>ALEX ABONYO AKOKO, Dr. WALLACE NYAKUNDI ATAMBO &amp; Dr. WALTER BICHANGA OKIBO</i></p>	11
4.	<p><b>ONLINE FIELD SURVEY ON AWARENESS OF HEALTH INSURANCE IN TELANGANA STATE</b></p> <p><i>SUDIREDDY NARENDAR REDDY</i></p>	22
5.	<p><b>ESSENCE OF E-WASTE MANAGEMENT IN THE PRESENT SCENARIO: A CASE STUDY OF YOUTHS ON E- WASTE AWARENESS</b></p> <p><i>SUMALATHA &amp; VANITA SHETTY</i></p>	28
	<b>REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK &amp; DISCLAIMER</b>	31

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## AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT DEALER POINT FOR PURCHASE OF CAR: A QUALITATIVE & SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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### ABSTRACT

*India is one of the world's fastest growing automobile markets and is poised to become the third largest passenger's car market by 2020 (Philip, L. 2016, Economic Times). The recorded sales growth of 4 wheelers like passenger car & utility vehicle has also risen up to 7.87 % and 6.25% respectively during April-March 2016 (SIAM, 2015-16). But what makes a car maker like Japan's Maruti Suzuki and Korea's Hyundai enjoys more than 67% of market share while others like US car makers Ford India and General Motors combined market share is just 4-5% (Philip, L.2016, The Economic Times). Sales in the North & East region have evidenced only 5%of changes in the FY16 which is comparatively lower than the west & south region (Khan, A.N,2016, The Economic Times). The Japanese car makers (Honda, Hyundai, Isuzu Motors, Nissan &Toyota) achieved an average of 48.01% of growth till July 2016 having a better stand from the Indian car makers (Hindustan Motors, M&M, M&S, Tata & Force motors) i.e. 6.74% (Autocar Pro News Desk, July 2016). In this study the researcher explored the factors affecting the satisfaction of prospective car buyers and existing car users at dealer point and facilitate dealer to create a brilliant "moment of truth" (Pioneered by JanCarlzon) when a customer encounter with company. (Madge, Davidson & Beaujean, 2006).*


### KEYWORDS

service quality, service recovery, moment of truth, dealer satisfaction, customer satisfaction, brand image.

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### INTRODUCTION

 Success of any business depends on the activity of staff/personnel to satisfy their customer and it is considered as one of the most important business activity. Customer satisfaction measures the goods/services supplied by the marketer and how well it is able to match and exceed customer's expectation.

Now a day's every business race to give best to their customers by offering unique customized services and solution to get customer delightment. The shriveling marketplace enforced organizations to boost-up and upgrade their services for existing customer's to delight them and to create further avenue to by utilizing resources to get potential customers. Several research too mention that the satisfied customers are economic assets who gives high return and the risk is always lower hence company need to invest on customer satisfaction by serving their demands and meeting the expectations. (Fornell, 1992).

Customer satisfaction may be achieved when the service provider exceeds the customer's expectation and serve the customers but when the service provider's service exceeds the minimum customer's expectations the customer will be delighted. In a competitive world where companies luring customers with different schemes; an excellent customer satisfaction seen as a brand differentiator by being a important aspect of business strategy. Attaining high level of customer satisfaction should be the only crucial objective for service provider to get loyal customers as well as persuade the existing customers to use different services provided by the same service provider (Rana, V. S., & Lokhande, M.,2015). Few factors which lead to customer satisfaction enumerated below.

- Customer focused/customized products.
- Personal attention to cater the individual needs of the customer.
- Following up for post purchase services with after sales support too.
- Meeting/Exceeding minimum performance expectations.

Customer Satisfaction is the result of evaluation between the customer cognition and affection based on the actual perceived performance by meeting specific standards. The companies need to gain insights on the consumer behavior and how to satisfy the customer which may enable long term client-customer relationship (Paterson et al., 1997). The markers of products should listen customer effectively to meet their demand and expectation to satisfy their latent needs. A company can survive & sustain for long only if the company would be adaptable for the changing customer needs (Takala et al., 2006)

Customer satisfaction can be measurable by the financial performance of the company and its effects on sale. Every organization identified the dire needs to change looking at the global economic perspectives which lead their notion of existence which are purely based on customer satisfaction. Kotler (2000) said it is very crucial to amplify customer's level of satisfaction periodically because 95% of dis-satisfied customers do not complain at all; they prefer to switch between the brands to experience the difference and it can't be measured if organization does not have any measurement model to check customer satisfaction level.

The main issue in measuring the customer satisfaction is depending on the accurate listing of every item from the identified factor. The customer normally rate on the overall performance of the product measuring in different dimension leading to macro level rating of their experiences but the marketers need micro level experiences to measure the macro level satisfaction. The moment marketers decided to go with micro level items to evaluate consumer satisfaction, many dimensions of the product engineering cannot be well understood to the general (lay-man) customer (Oliver 1997). Hence it is the responsibility of the researchers in

the field of customer satisfaction to make a transaction between the marketer and the customers and the marketer's requirement and customers' parameter to evaluate any product during the period of measuring customer satisfaction.

The J.D power customer satisfaction index (CSI) of 2017 gives the overall ratings of customer satisfaction of each company's cars sold in India. This survey is based on a 1000 point scale and the maximum satisfaction was achieved by Hyundai with 923 CSI followed with Maruti Suzuki India limited & Tata with 893 scores (Figure 1) with different factors comprising overall satisfaction of customers where we found that the major satisfaction factors is Service quality of car at the dealer place with 43% followed with Vehicle pick-up & Dropping services (17%), Service facility offered & Service advisor (14%) and the initiation taken by Service advisor at dealer point while receiving customer is 11%. (Figure 2)

FIGURE 1

**J.D. Power  
2017 India Customer Service Index (Mass Market) Study<sup>SM</sup>**

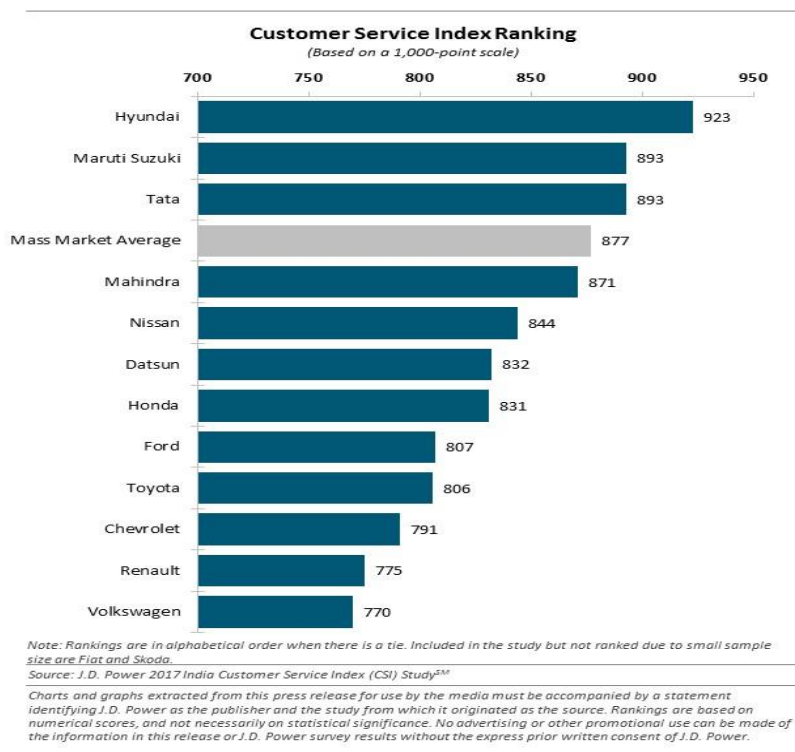
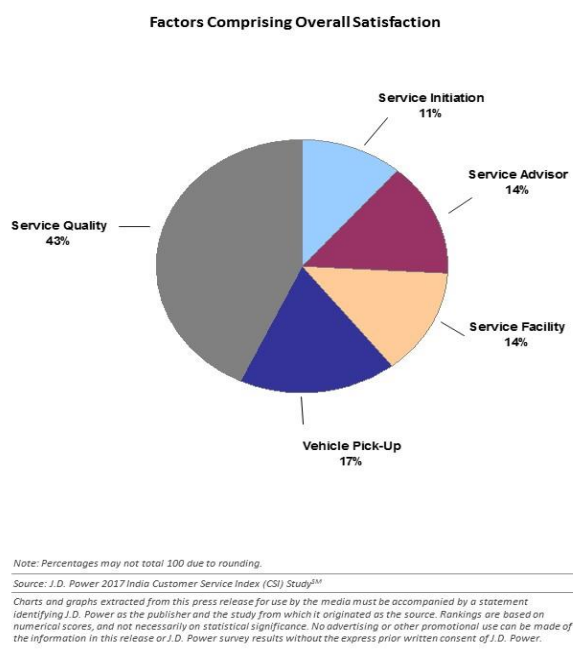


FIGURE 2

**J.D. Power  
2017 India Customer Service Index (Mass Market) Study<sup>SM</sup>**



**RESEARCH PROBLEM**

According to **Bitner & Hubbert 1994**; Earlier studies of customer satisfaction are based on either on purchase (single factors by sharing remarks on a single occurrences) or on the overall approaches (customer experiences during purchase process by sharing their overall impression). Through a critical review on the literature, it has been identified that studies done on cumulative approaches rather than single factors purchase is strategic decision dealer should take (**Fornell et al 1996**). The cumulative approach to customer satisfaction doesn't study the factors related satisfaction at dealer point during sales/services. The current study has focused to explore the influencers of satisfaction at dealer point while the customer's interaction for sales or services.

Customer satisfaction cannot be achieved at single point; it related with various service encounters by a customer at sales/services. Customer satisfaction includes total experiences of the customer during the process; it may be goods/services, an experience, a purchase decision, a salesperson/ Service advisor, store/workshop, service provider or may be any attribute from this (**Renoux, 1973**).

The existing satisfaction models are based on overall experiences such as ACSI, ECSI etc. provide a general score for industry comparison which fails to give more information and insights on the decision making factors to achieve total customer satisfaction. The existing model would be more useful if it provides various attributes to dealers when a customer encounters at dealer point for sales/services. The existing customer satisfaction models calculate the level of satisfaction with overall purchase experiences of customer but it doesn't provide any guidelines to dealer to improve the satisfaction level of its customers. The factors of customer satisfaction are context specific and would be different as per the different demographic factors and it demands different studies for each demographic factors.

Customers normally re-think their purchase experiences when their involvement (purchase involvement means the personal relevance of the decision to the individual in terms of their values, self-concepts & goal; **Hawkins et al 2007** during the process is very high (**Oshikawa 1969**). The purchase of a 4-wheeler is a high involvement product where the customers invest more time before making a decision to meet both social & psychological expectations to the full life span and value for money (**Abramson & Desai 1993**). Importance of the product to the prospective, High risk (Perceived/Functional/Psychological) and emotional value attached to the product are the major reasons customers wants their involvement to be high during sales/services. (**Laurent & Kapferer 1985**).

Service recovery means actions and safety measures taken by any company in the case of failure in service in order to change customer's perception and dissatisfaction. In the case of new strategy to recover service the management of the company should support and facilitate the service recovery plan to make customer delighted (**Lewis & McCann, 2004**). Failure in services everyone knew leads to negative effect on the customers and lower CSI compared to other competitors. A successful recovery depends upon the actions, decision making powers and the judgment of employees. Service recover process is also very important for the automotive industries too. An effective service recovery plan will control the service failures, minimize customer dissatisfaction and strengthen the bonding and relationship with customers leading to also brand evangelism (**La & Kandampully, 2004**).

**RESEARCH GAP**

1. The existing customer satisfaction indexes such as American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), Swedish Customer Satisfaction Barometer (SCSB), etc. rates the overall experiences of customer satisfaction.
2. The overall satisfaction approach doesn't provide any detail and real source or reason of customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction during sales/service.
3. The existing customer satisfaction models doesn't provide any guidelines to the dealer/ organizations to follow and implement model to delight its customers once such customers are dissatisfied/ less satisfied.
4. The existing model doesn't consider each element or attributes that constitute a customer's satisfaction during the product purchase/service and usage. There would be few variables where the customers are fully satisfied and where with some other variables the customers are less satisfied.
5. Overall satisfaction of customer is the task of all trade-off (**Parasuraman et al 1994, Teas 1993**). But the present model doesn't consider each trade-off specific satisfaction in order to find out overall satisfaction.
6. Some consumer satisfaction index and models have considered comparatively more number of attributes influencing the customer's satisfaction. They asked the customers to prioritize attributes which they considered more important to them (UKCSI, MUSA). But normally customers may have, almost, common priorities with respect to a product. For e.g. the priority for buying a passenger car is to ride comfortably for the customers' personal use. These are the basic requirements of such products. Now a day, customers' expectations are changed and they are looking for certain attributes beyond the core function of the product (**Kano et al., 1984**). Each invisible but influential determinant to the customers' satisfaction evaluations should be diagnosed for ensuring inclusive satisfaction.

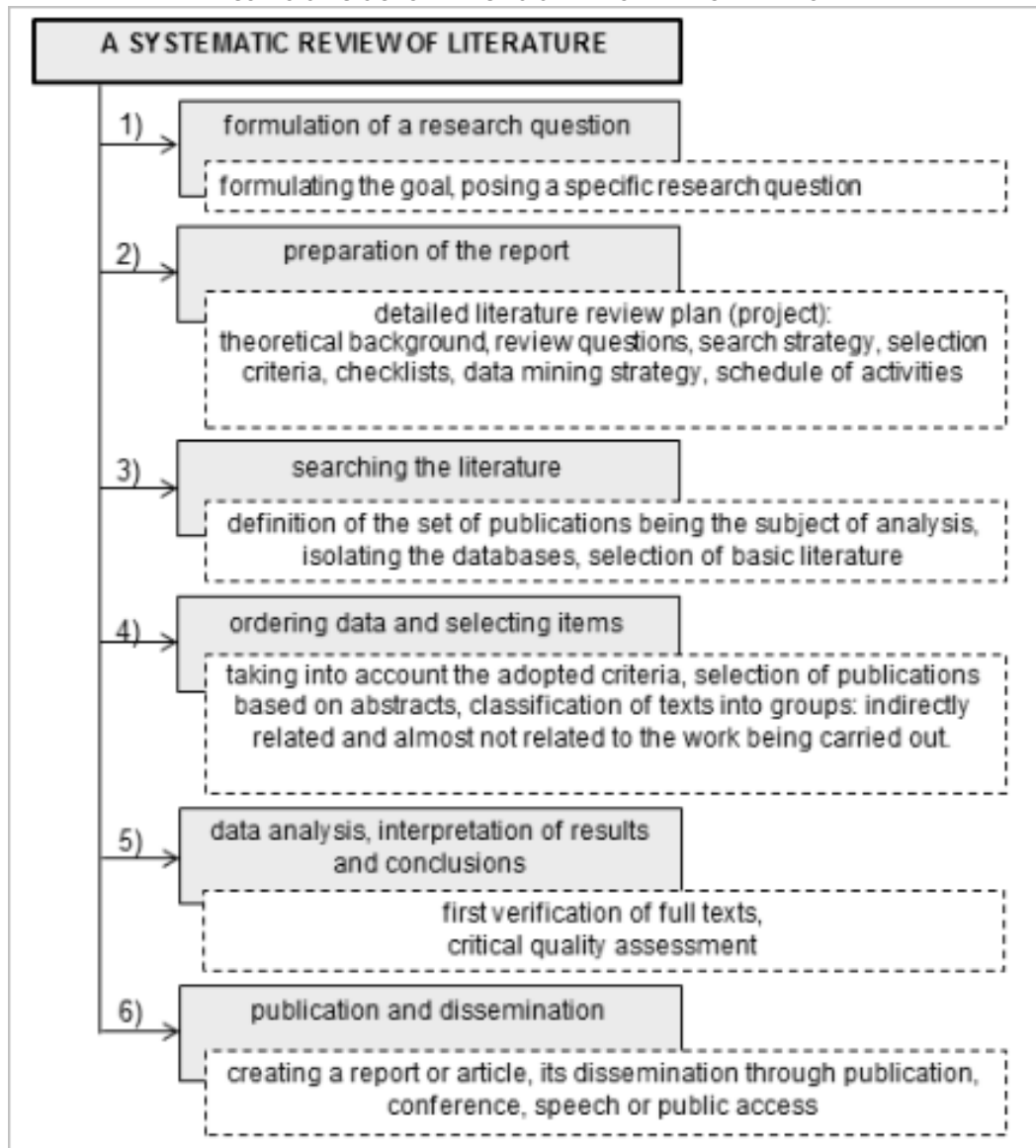
**RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To develop a satisfaction model for dealer to satisfy their customer.
2. To find out the major variables of customer satisfaction in automotive sector.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This paper is based on Literature review and the variables identified by the researcher need to be further studied. In particular, the consideration was focused on the new parameters of customer satisfaction. The following process were adopted from a similar study and followed here too.

FIGURE 3: STAGES OF CREATING A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF LITERATURE



**Menon, B. (2017)** in his research mentioned that customer satisfaction of a chosen model is the outcome of the re-sale value, comfort while driving the car & technology used in the car in another research during 2018 he mentioned that After sales service has a positive influence on the purchasing behavior. **Menon, B and V.P. Raj, (2013)**, conducted a study on satisfaction level of people of passenger car and found that if Technology, security and safety is there than the customer gets satisfied with the existing model which they have selected. Brand image has a significant effect on the customer satisfaction in e-banking, landline, mobile phone, bank, and in supermarket industry (**Gronholdt, L., Martensen, A. and Kristensen, K. (2000)**).

Customer satisfaction positively contributes to future purchase decisions of a buyer was report in the year 1973 by **Newman & Werbel**. The satisfaction of car owners had been studied by **Dharmaraj in 2010**, along with brand choice based on majorly four dimensions such as Information factors, psychological factors, socio-economic factors and product factors. In 2011, psychological factors had further been studied by **Peters, Anja, Gutscher, Heinz and Scholz, Roland, 2011**. **Parasuraman & Zeithaml** further showed in their studies in 1996, that happy customers future purchases are preferably based on the branded products that they have already used before. In 2000, **Reynolds and Arnold** further stated that a satisfied customer recommends the buying of their already used brands through appreciation and recommendation. A highly satisfied customer very unlikely to be receptive towards the offerings of competitor's, was 1998 stated by **Fitzell**. Repetitive purchase of a customer demonstrates their loyalty towards the brand was stated by **Ball, Simoes-Coelho and Macha's in 2004**.

In automotive industry, a high degree of customer loyalty is very important because the company can make profits from the vehicle maintenances & repairs which is much higher than the new car sales. Hence customer satisfaction post sales are highly required (**Leventhal & Zineldin, 2006**). **Wolfendale et al (2012)** studied the impact of car noise sources on customer satisfaction and concluded that customers had diverse approach for noise with diverse eminence attributes. They improved the noise source for each vehicle, and with that, also customer satisfaction increase. **Dominici et al (2016)** utilized this model and they found the value of Internet of Things (IoT) technologies in the automotive industry, with the "driver-friendly" technologies are attractive to drivers. **Yadav et al (2017)** argued that exterior design (**Liu, D., & Xuan, B.,2008; Bikash, R. D., & Pravat, S. K., 2010; Fariborz, K., 2012; Menon, B.,2017; Menon, B.,2018**) & attractive qualities of Car's must include family-orientated, modern (**Sedzro, K. M., Amewu, G., Darko, J., Nortey, E. N. N., & Dasah, J. B.,2014**), youthful and elegant. Service quality is one of the important factors in determining customer satisfaction as well as to improve customer satisfaction too (**Cronin, brady, & Hult, 2000**) and one of the major factors of CSI conducted by J.D.Power and a satisfied customer is always a loyal customer (**Rust & Zahorik, 1993**). **Nyadzayo and Khajehzadeh (2016)** talked about the customer relation management of an automobile dealer and the outcome proved that customer satisfaction can moderate the relationship between the customer's relations and their loyalty. **Thuan (2018)** and colleague mentioned that if 5% of the existing customers are maintained, then profit of the company will certainly increases by 25~85%. The cost of developing a new customer is 4 to 5 times more than maintaining an existing customer (**Fornell 1992**). Hence the service provider should put all efforts, create a service recovery to satisfy an existing customer for more customer loyalty and increased in firm's profit as well as cost savings too.

Customer Satisfaction is the result of evaluation between the customer cognition and affection based on the actual perceived performance by meeting specific standards. The companies need to gain insights on the consumer behavior and how to satisfy the customer which may enable long term client-customer relationship (Paterson et al., 1997). The markers of products should listen customer effectively to meet their demand and expectation to satisfy their latent needs. A company can survive & sustain for long only if the company would be adaptable for the changing customer needs (Takala et al., 2006)

Customer satisfaction can be measurable by the financial performance of the company and its effects on sale. Every organization identified the dire needs to change looking at the global economic perspectives which lead their notion of existence which are purely based on customer satisfaction. Kotler (2000) said it is very crucial to amplify customer's level of satisfaction periodically because 95% of dis-satisfied customers do not complain at all; they prefer to switch between the brands to experience the difference and it can't be measured if organization does not have any measurement model to check customer satisfaction level.

The main issue in measuring the customer satisfaction is depending on the accurate listing of every item from the identified factor. The customer normally rate on the overall performance of the product measuring in different dimension leading to macro level rating of their experiences but the marketers need micro level experiences to measure the macro level satisfaction. The moment marketers decided to go with micro level items to evaluate consumer satisfaction, many dimensions of the product engineering cannot be well understood to the general (lay-man) customer (Oliver 1997). Hence it is the responsibility of the researchers in the field of customer satisfaction to make a transaction between the marketer and the customers and the marketer's requirement and customers' parameter to evaluate any product during the period of measuring customer satisfaction.

Adele Berndt (2009) talked about in his article that the auto industry plays a very crucial part in the economy development of South Africa, as for both GDP and employability generation. Service quality is a principal part of service arrangement, and this is particularly the case with motor vehicles, where considerable benefits are created in the servicing of vehicles. The ramifications of this investigation are that the customer sees the manner by which the service is rendered as very crucial basic in assessing service quality.

Sharma and Patterson (1999) formulated that dealers had been re-orienting their advertising and marketing approach, to properly role themselves, via satisfactory enhancement and carrier transport programs. Research recommended that in many instances, businesses make all efforts to remedy the court cases from their disgruntled customers. Resnik and Harmon (1983) stated that many automobile dealer managers are keen to run the extra mile, to fulfill patron expectations and to win them over. White (2004) discussed the relevant determinants, which affected vehicle-shoppers' picks and referred to that people expected to negotiate with sellers, over rate reductions, gives and occasional-hobby payment plans. the growing and decisive significance of social networking and digital brand communities, thru group messaging via the medium of net, are riding consumers to use online gear to contact fellow purchasers, for information sharing. Menon 2018, dealers and display room enjoy has a superb impact on the auto buy selection of clients.

Peters, A., Gutscher, H., & Scholz, R. W. (2011) in their study examined 302 (39.61% of response rate) respondents since 2002 in German & French speaking area of Switzerland with simple random sampling technique and studied the environmental behavior of customers consisting the construct of social norms, perceived behavioral control (PBC), Personal norm, Response efficacy, problem awareness, symbolic motive, fuel efficient vehicles. The dealer when visited by customer need to emphasis on the mentioned above criteria for maximum satisfaction.

Menon, B and V.P. Raj, (2013), conducted a study on influencing factors of dealer selection to buy passenger car and they mentioned that experience of the customer while visiting the Dealer/Showroom is the major factor because the customer feel car is prestige factors and how the dealer offers you on the chosen model based on your prestige car selection.

Narteh, B., Odoom, R., Braimah, M., & Buame, S. (2012) in their study mentioned besides, outer impacts were additionally observed as a key the determinant of vehicle brand decision and is likewise reliable with past studies (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004; Vogel, V., Evanschitzky, H., & Ramaseshan, B., 2008; Wang and Yang, 2008; Schiffman and Kanuk, 2009) who accentuated on the pretended by outside impacts in brand decisions. As indicated by Keller (1993), cultural differences, for example, social values could clarify consumer for selection of brands. Also to outer impacts, openness was likewise a main consideration which is considered via vehicle buyers when making car buys. For most Ghanaian auto purchasers, not exclusively should the auto be accessible at the different dealer showrooms, yet should additionally have areas where access to save parts and upkeep administrations are accomplished. Some prior examinations (Lin and Chang, 2003; Kim et al, 2008) have discovered the noteworthy part played by availability as a forerunner to purchaser comfort in mark decisions. In harmoniousness with past ponders on brand mindfulness (Lin and Chang, 2003), it is reasonable to additionally place that consciousness of an auto brand essentially impact buy in Ghana. The research was started to explore the drivers of purchaser brand decision in Ghana. Utilizing the review technique, information was gathered from 1020 vehicle proprietors in Ghana. The current examination makes a commitment to the writing on car promoting and will be of criticalness to car makers and dealers who are entering creating nations, for example, Ghana as a market development procedure. The examination found that the determination of car brands in Ghana depends on the variety of components, with some specifically ascribed to the brands while others are outer signals related to the brands. This implies makers of cars must enrich them cars with the important purchaser highlights, for example, style, outline, solace, and wellbeing. Endeavors must be made to elevate these distinctions to shoppers through advertisements, presentations, and exchange appears with a specific end goal to make solid inclination for the brands.

The exploration by Nayeem, T. (2012) uncovered that Asian-born customers are brand cognizant and see European brands, for instance, BMW and Mercedes, to be predominant. Asian-born customers might search for a social endorsement from others, particularly when making exceedingly noticeable or high inclusion buys, for example, vehicles. In this manner, organizations need this at the top of the priority list and attempt to advance their vehicles for Asian-born buyers with procedures that feature the centrality of status and glory. Showcasing messages/data for Asian-born buyers could center intensely around the social endorsement and high eminence which customers can pick up by buying cars. In connection to speaking with Asian-born buyers, vehicle organizations require. to utilize Dealers as a critical wellspring of data. Dealers could be prepared (or from the same social foundation, if conceivable) to invest energy clarifying product highlights and advantages in full with Asian-born buyers and their loved ones whom they are probably going to bring along before settling on the last the choice to buy. This could be a fruitful approach if took after when creating systems for Asian-born buyers. The exploration demonstrated that Australian-born purchasers utilize the web as the most favored data source. In this manner, as far as speaking with Australian-born purchasers, advertisers may use the web as a communication or marketing strategy for dispersing car data and to underline the forefront, imaginative parts of their products.

The research by Gupta, S. (2013) in her paper has uncovered that the reference bunch assumes an imperative part in purchasing choice of passenger cars. Companions, family and relatives reference has been found to have the huge wellspring of data and influencers in the passenger car purchasing. Additionally, Price-off among the special offers and fuel proficiency in the passenger cars by different dealers are observed to be the premier purposes behind the inclination of the clients. The investigation additionally strengthened the relationship between the respondents' age and the fundamental influencer in purchasing a passenger car. In addition, the companions, family and relatives as principle influencer.

Najeemudeen. et. al. (2014) discussed buyer behavior towards the dealer selection for passenger car purchase in Malappuram district. The objective of the study was to ascertain the socio-economic profile, rating the dealer and reasons for choosing a particular dealer for the purchase of cars in Tirur of Malappuram district of Kerala. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. 250 questionnaires were distributed and 201 valid filled questionnaires were received from the respondents. The findings of the study were that respondents went to a particular dealer because of good earlier experience, good after sales service and easy availability of spares, ready availability of desired color and model of car, and high resale value for exchange of cars. Very few respondents went to a particular dealer due to discounts and offers. Word of mouth and friends and dealers also played a key role in deciding a particular dealer. The author has concluded that the dealer is the link between manufacturers and customers. Hence good sales / service and customer relations matters in getting future business from the same customers or their friends and relatives.



FIGURE 4



Source: Authors Extensive Literature Review

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

31 variables identified here to satisfy customer which need to follow religiously by dealer to satisfy the customer and boost sales during all time of the year. The purchases of 4-wheelers accommodate all stages of buying process. The conceptual model developed through literature review, exploratory study & personal interview to understand customer psychology. If the recommended model would be validated during this study it would be more generalizable by other dealers too with a successful service recovery plan.

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In this age of Commerce, Economics, Computer, I.T. & Management and cut throat competition, a group of intellectuals felt the need to have some platform, where young and budding managers and academicians could express their views and discuss the problems among their peers. This journal was conceived with this noble intention in view. This journal has been introduced to give an opportunity for expressing refined and innovative ideas in this field. It is our humble endeavour to provide a springboard to the upcoming specialists and give a chance to know about the latest in the sphere of research and knowledge. We have taken a small step and we hope that with the active co-operation of like-minded scholars, we shall be able to serve the society with our humble efforts.

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