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### **Study of service quality, trust and perceived value on customer loyalty in Iran automobile industry**

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#### **Abstract:**

This study intends to explore the impact of service quality, trust and perceived value in automotive after-sales service and how it influences the level of customer loyalty towards Iranian heavy vehicle industry. Each service industry carries different characteristics of consumer behaviour and thus, an industry-specific measure of service quality to capture the uniqueness of different service setting is required. In relation to that, this study has evaluated service quality in automotive after-sales service as a second-order construct which allows for identification of the relative importance of each dimension in influencing the level of customer loyalty.

A quantitative approach was employed, using 32-item, five-point Likert-scaled questionnaire administered to 368 participants. Data were analysed using exploratory factor analysis, Cronbach's internal consistency and  $\gamma$  test to, respectively, measure scale suitability, usability and strength/direction of association. The data then was analyzed with lisrel and spss. as the result all of the hypothesis were approved.

**Key words:** quality service, trust, perceived value, loyalty

### 1.introduscion

The loyal customer is the life for a business organization. Without the loyal customer, it is not possible for any business organizations to succeed [1]. Studies have proven that one of the reasons for the loyal customer to return is the high quality of service [2][3][4][5][6]. However, the unique features of service have made it difficult for the marketers to satisfy the customers and make them return especially under stringent competition and the high expectation on the maximum value for money. Certain characteristic of the industry, for example automotive after-sales service, has made it further difficult to measure service quality as it combines the equal parts of tangible products and intangible services [6]. Additionally, recent studies on service quality have also advocated a more dynamic measure for service quality which is more contexts specific to enhance the higher level of customer loyalty [7][8][9].

Therefore, this paper aims to examine how the new paradigm of service quality along with trust and perceived value with the industry specific dimension influences customer loyalty towards Iranian automobile service.

Besides selling cars, the automotive industry also provide free service, maintenance, and repair for each new vehicles sold. The free warranty period offers automatic existing customers and after-sales service should be the best platform to gain existing customer's loyalty from that, the after-sales service is also regarded as an important stage to enhance more business opportunity because the repeated service appointments during the period of free warranty for at least three years opens up

the opportunity to develop closer long-term high relationship which promotes long-term business success [12]. However, issues pertaining to poor quality of after sales service are still unresolved in some sites and industry, and that has given poor perception towards Iranian automobile industry.

this paper attempts to examine on two things; firstly, the influence of industry service quality, trust and perceived value towards customer loyalty and secondly to investigate which one needs more focus in gaining the higher level of customer loyalty. Subsequently, the next section of this paper discusses the literature review related to the constructs under evaluation and followed by the discussion on research model and hypotheses development. The next sections deal with the explanation of the research method used and an assessment of the construct validity and reliability. This is followed by an explanation of data analysis and hypothesis testing. The last section is the discussion and conclusion on the findings and ends up with suggestions for future research.

## 2. Literature Review:

### 2.1 Customer Loyalty

Vehicle manufacturers are the business organizations that offer a tangible product (vehicle and spare parts) and intangible service (after-sales service). Each new vehicle sold is given certain warranty coverage for service, maintenance, and repair, so that each vehicle under warranty period of coverage will be sent to the manufacturer for at least three years. As such, this industry offers existing customers for the after sales service if they are able to hold the customer after the warranty period expiry. Accordingly, studies have proven that maintaining the existing customer is five to six times more profitable than acquiring the new one [14] that justified the importance of customer loyalty in automotive after service. That also explained the concept of customer loyalty in after-sales service where it concerned on two fold; firstly, willingness to stay loyal to the existing service provider after the expiry of vehicle's service warranty tenor, and secondly, faith in the brand that resulted in recommendation and promotion of national makes vehicle [15]. Recent studies in after-sales service have also advocated on the importance of customer loyalty in after-sales service [16][15][6]. Its importance has made it an interesting subject to be researched further especially related to the complexities of its definition, concept and dimension. The review of the literature shows that evaluation on customer loyalty can be operationalized in many ways; uni-dimensional, bi- dimensional,

composite, and multi- dimensional approach [17]. The uni-dimensional only evaluate customer loyalty from one side; either one of behavioural or attitudinal whereas for bi-dimensional, customer loyalty was evaluated using both attitudinal and behavioural dimension separately. For composite loyalty, it integrates attitudinal and behavioural dimensions together. The multi-dimensional customer loyalty involves more than two dimensions which are measured separately. Even though there were studies that only focused on repeat purchase behaviour [18], however, the combination of both behavioural and attitudinal loyalty known as composite loyalty is the most selected conceptual definition to describe customer loyalty in consumer researches [19][20][21]. In the same vein, the true loyalty can only be achieved by combining repurchase behaviour and positive attitude towards the product [22].

### 2.2 SERVQUAL

SERVQUAL is a name which is originated from the combination of the first letters of Service Quality. In this scale, service quality is determined by the discrepancy between a customer's expectations of a service offered and the perceptions of the same customer's about the service he/she received, by asking the customer questions about both his/her perceptions and expectations (23).

servqual measure is differentiated from satisfaction because it uses the term perceived in place of the actual service received. SERVQUAL is a valid, reliable and applicable survey for the services sector and it is ready for the use of the companies and organizations that work in the services sector. Measuring quality in services is more difficult than production thus the importance of the SERVQUAL is mainly a result of its capability to measure the quality of the services provided. Results are determined by customer perceptions, so the customers and providers of a service may differ in terms of their perceived level about the services' quality. SERVQUAL is the most popular survey for measuring the service quality in the literature. There are other alternatives; nevertheless, neither of them is used as much as SERVQUAL. The scale has 22 questions on five dimensions; the full questionnaire in two versions as expectation and perception formats is reported by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988).

Literature has many examples of developed versions of the SERVQUAL applied in various industries. One such sector is online services where different scales have been generated to measure service quality in electronic services, a very recent example being the E-S-Qual scale extended to online banking services (24). In the area of airline transportation, SERVQUAL has been extended to measure customer satisfaction from e-ticketing on airlines' websites (25). In a recent review article (26) state that "SERVQUAL has been used in hundreds of studies, including numerous studies in the hospitality and tourism industries". (27) has extended the model to measure quality in higher education settings and also offered a solution for the main criticism of SERVQUAL in terms of the use of difference scores. In some studies, the exact SERVQUAL items are used but in some the elements are changed, Blesic, Cerovic and Dragicevic use 15 original questions and 9 new questions in their study on service quality of hotels (2011). While it is true that recent studies using SERVQUAL focus on hospitality sector (28) there is one recent study by Cho et al. (2016) that applies a SERVQUAL like questionnaire in order to build a House of Quality for the electronic services sector. The number of questions used is equal to the SERVQUAL questionnaire (22) although they are adapted to electronic after sales services (actually the adaptation could be valid for any after sales service).

(29) inform about another advantage of SERVQUAL. They state that this method signals the companies the perceptions and needs of the customers apart from measuring the quality. (30) evaluate SERVQUAL as having the purpose of identifying the gap between customer perceptions and expectations. Lastly, (31) explain the importance of employee opinions with respect to customer expectations. The most popular service quality measurement scale after SERVQUAL in the literature is ServPerf (32) introduced the ServPerf scale as an opposition to the researchers who were studying on the SERVQUAL scale. The conceptual basis of the scale was questioned and they stated that SERVQUAL was confusing directly with the

concept of service satisfaction. Then, the expectation (E) component of SERVQUAL is not used in this new scale and the performance (P) component is used alone. This new scale is named as ServPerf scale in the literature and the assessment procedure was adapted to the case of travel agencies and also a fuzzy ServPerf model combined with ELECTRE III was used to comparatively evaluate service quality of international airports in Sicily (33).

### 2.3. trust

Morgan and Hunt in (34) stated that "trust exists only when one party has confidence in an exchange of partner's reliability and integrity". Furthermore, trust is defined as a condition when one of the parties involved in the exchange process is convinced of the other party's reliability and integrity. Consumer confidence is basically the consumers' entire knowledge and conclusions made on objects, attributes, and benefits (35)

### 2.4. perceived value

Kotler (36) states that "Customer perceived value is the difference between the prospective customer evaluation of all the benefits and all the costs of an offering and perceived alternatives". Zeithaml (37) proposed 4 criteria of perceived value definition; i.e. low prices, things on products desired by consumers, quality obtained from products based on the prices offered, and what consumers receive from what they give (benefit and sacrifice).

## 3. Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as following:

1. To investigate the influence of service quality, perceived value and trust on customer loyalty in Iran heavy vehicle industry
2. To probe the influence of service quality on customer's perceived value.
3. To examine the influence of service quality on customer's trust.
4. To examine the effect of perceived value of customer's loyalty.
5. to examine the effect of trust on customer's loyalty

## 4. Problem statement

Zeithaml (37) contended that perceived value provides the basis customer's relationship with a given vendor. If products or services do not meet customer's perceived value, then all plans of the firm are in vane. In the Iranian setting, there is a need to identify industry perception of customer's perceived value. Specifically, the need to identify the level of managerial awareness and anticipation of their customers perceived values.

Although numerous studies have established the impact of service quality on loyalty and customer perceived value and loyalty. Yet, no study have established the impact of service quality, customer perceived value and trust

on customer loyalty in the context of Iranian heavy vehicle and transport industry.

### 5. conceptual framework

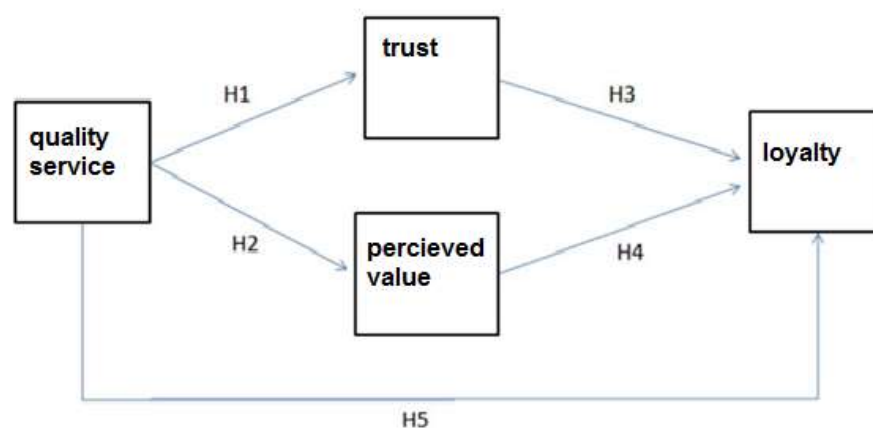


Fig1. Conceptual framework

### 6. Research questions

1. is there a relationship between service quality, perceived value and trust on customer's loyalty?
2. Is there a relationship between service quality and perceived value in Iranian heavy vehicle services industry?
3. Is there a relationship between service quality and customer trust in Iranian heavy vehicle services industry?
4. Is there a relationship between customer perceived value and customer loyalty in Iranian heavy vehicle services industry?
5. Is there relationship between trust and customer loyalty in Iranian heavy vehicle services industry?

### 7. Significance of the study

Generally, companies in the services industry work closely with their customers to determine competitive pricing indicators; service quality indicators along with other anticipatory factors that help determine future need and services. However, in iran there are numerous complaints that the services sector is no match to that of united arab emirates, Saudi arabia, Europe, china or other industrial economies. Hence, this research will help determine key factors contributing to such perception in an attempt to

highlight probable causes. And whether managers in the services industry are aware of consumer's perceptions regarding key value determinants, such as awareness of current market position, segmentation, service quality, and reactions to such perceptions in order to improve customer perceived value, trust and service quality.

### 8. Hypotheses

There are five hypotheses that are defined by the relations between variables identified in the framework.

H1: There is positive relationship between service quality and perceived value.

H2: There is positive relationship between service quality and customer's trust

H3: There is positive relationship between perceived value and customer loyalty.

H4: There is positive relationship between trust and customer loyalty.

H5: There is a positive relationship between service quality, trust and perceived value on customer loyalty.

### 9. Methodology

The data in this quantitative study were collected from 368 customers of after-sales service branches of oghab afshan company across the country. It is the common goal of any research to collect the data that may represent the population to be studied following this, the selection of different region may indicate the variation in consumer needs and behavior in the whole country manifested the urban and rural consumer characteristics that increase the generalizability of studied population.

The respondents were selected based on systematic sampling in which every first of third customers were approached upon entering the service branches for car service, maintenance, and repair. In the self-administered survey, the questionnaires were distributed to customers who were intercepted using intercept survey method. The data collection was carried out in approximately one month started at the end of march and ended in the month of may 2019.

A quantitative survey research study was conducted to measure the relationships between the variables identified in the literature review. Questions included in the survey were adopted on the bases of how service quality, perceived value and trust influence loyalty (38). The questionnaire was designed base on Likert scale and was adopted from prior research studies with high levels of reliability (CronBach Alpha all above 0.7). The questionnaire was distributed amongst customers of oghab afshan company in different cities of iran. Each respondent was asked to participate in the study by answering the questionnaire based on recent transaction with the service provider. The first part of the survey was classified into four

dimensions. These four dimensions are consisted of Service Quality (SQ), Customer Perceived Value (CPV), Trust (T) and Customer Loyalty (CL). The survey questionnaire design is derived from multiple-item measurement scales. The measuring scale of items was Likert Scale analyses in a Five Point Scale where number 1 stands for strongly disagree (Completely Disagree) and number 5 stands for strongly agree (Completely Agree) and number 3 stands for no opinion or not important (Natural Opinion).

### 11.analysis and discussion Measurement Model Testing (Outer Model)

#### 11.1Convergent narrative

According to fornell and larcker average variance extracted above 0.5 is an indication for convergent narrative and based on the table1 all the factors are convergent.

**Table 1**

Average variance extracted (AVE)	Factor
0.518	Service quality
0.545	Trust
0.631	Perceived value
0.591	Loyalty

**Table2**

Allowed limit	Value	Indicator
Between 1 to 5	3.3	2 /df $\chi^2$ chi square on digree of freedom
Greater than 0.8	0.88	GFI goodness of fit-index
Greater than 0.8	0.84	AGFI adjusted goodness of fit index
Greater than 0.1	0.081	RMSEA Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation
Greater than 0.9	0.97	CFI comparative fit index
Greater than 0.8	0.96	NFI Normed Fit Index
Greater thank 0.8	0.96	NNFI Non-Normed Fit Index
Greater than 0.8	0.97	IFI increasing fit indicator



According to table 2 all the indicators show that the suggested model has a suitable fitness.

The measurement model aims to test the accuracy of the relationship between indicators in a variable in measuring the latent variables. Testing of the measurement model consists of: convergent testing and discriminate validity testing.

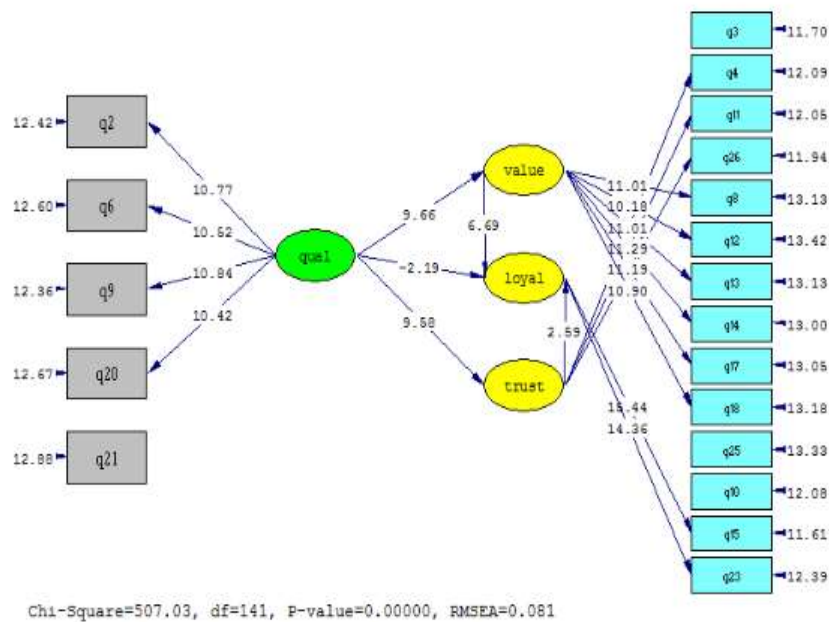


Figure 2. outer model

### 11.2 Validity Test

The validity test aims to measure the accuracy of indicators in measuring the latent variables.

an indicator is considered 95% valid if it has a t value between -1.96 and +1.96. All loading factors of the indicators are above 1.96. hence, it can be concluded that all indicators are valid.

### 11.3 Reliability Test

Reliability of a variable is measured based on the values of cronbach alpha greater than 0.7 (39).

All variables in this research have Cronbach alpha values above 0.7. Thus, all variables in this research are reliable.

Cronbach's alpha	Indicator
0.765	Service quality
0.7016	Trust
0.8058	Loyalty
0.7619	Perceived value

**Table3**

#### 11.4 Structural Model Testing (InnerModel) – Hypothesis Test

The structural model (inner model) in this research consists of three exogenous latent variables (trust, service quality, perceived value) and one endogenous latent variables (loyalty).

Relationship Orientation	Status	R2	T	$\beta$	Hypothesis
Positive	approved	0.76	9.66	0.81	Service quality to perceived value
Negative	approved	1	-2.19	-0.45	Service quality to loyalty
Positive	approved		6.69	1.34	perceived value to loyalty
Positive	approved		2.59	0.33	trust to loyalty
Positive	approved	0.86	9.68	0.78	service quality to trust

**Table 4**

#### 11.5 Hypothesis 1. The Effect of Service quality on perceived value

The effect of service quality on perceived value shows that the t-statistic value of 9.66 is greater than the t-table which is 1.960. This means that service quality significantly affects perceived value, or the first hypothesis is accepted.

#### 11.6 Hypothesis 2. The Effect of service quality on trust

Referring to the second hypothesis test, the effect of service quality on trust shows the t-statistic value of 9.58 greater than the t-table which is 1,960.

This result demonstrates that service quality has a significant effect on trust, meaning that the second hypothesis is accepted.

#### **11.7 Hypothesis 3. The Effect of perceived value on Loyalty**

The third hypothesis test shows that the effect of service perceived value on loyalty (L) variable in the t-statistic value of 6.69 is greater than the t-table which is 1.960. This means that service quality is proven to affect loyalty, or the third hypothesis is accepted.

#### **11.8 Hypothesis 4. The Effect of trust on Loyalty**

The forth hypothesis test highlights that the effect of the trust on the loyalty results

in the t-statistic value of 2.59 greater than the t-table which is 1.960. This means that trust has a significant effect on loyalty or it also indicates that the forth hypothesis is accepted.

#### **11.9 Hypothesis 5. The effect of service quality on loyalty**

The fifth hypothesis test shows that the effect of the service quality on the loyalty shows that the t-statistic value of 2.19 is greater than t-table which is 1.960. This means that service quality affects loyalty and the fifth hypothesis is accepted.

### **12. CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

Trust, Service Quality, and Perceived Value has proven to be able to have a positive impact on customer loyalty. Therefore, oghab afshan company and any other heavy vehicle manufacturer needs more innovation and focus on considering customer loyalty in order to survive among other high quality and excellent competition of automobile industry in Iran.

Other influencing factors can also be examined in further studies by adding other variables, such as price, promotion, discount, and switching cost. Customer relationship marketing can also be investigated.

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