

A Study on Customer Perception Towards Selecting Marketing Mix of Maruti Suzuki Arena, Raipur (C.G.)

Dr. Apoorwa Mishra, Sanskar Agrawal

Amity Business School, Amity university Chhattisgarh

Amity Business School, Amity University Chhattisgarh

Abstract

In today's competitive automotive industry, customer perception plays a critical role in shaping marketing strategies and business success. The present study focuses on understanding the customer perception regarding the marketing mix elements—Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence—specifically in the context of Maruti Suzuki Arena in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. Maruti Suzuki, being India's leading automobile manufacturer, has established a strong presence across the country, and the Arena outlets are designed to offer a more modern and engaging car-buying experience. However, the effectiveness of its marketing strategies at the local level requires a focused assessment to identify areas of strength and improvement.

This study aims to evaluate how customers perceive each element of the marketing mix and how these perceptions influence their purchasing decisions. A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from 100 respondents who have either purchased or visited Maruti Suzuki Arena in Raipur. The research explores the extent to which product quality, pricing strategies, promotional campaigns, dealership location, employee behavior, delivery process, and showroom ambiance impact customer satisfaction and brand preference.

Findings from the study indicate that customers place high importance on the product's quality and fuel efficiency, reflecting Maruti's strong value proposition. Competitive pricing is also a key factor influencing purchase decisions. The dealership's location in Raipur, being easily accessible and well-connected, adds to the convenience of customers. Promotional strategies like festive offers, digital campaigns, and test-drive initiatives have a moderate influence on customer engagement. However, customer perceptions are highly sensitive to the attitude of sales personnel and the transparency of the buying process. Physical attributes of the showroom such as cleanliness, layout, and technological integration also contribute significantly to the overall experience.

The study concludes that while Maruti Suzuki Arena in Raipur performs well in terms of product and pricing, there is scope for enhancing promotional effectiveness and refining interpersonal interactions. The insights gained can assist the dealership in optimizing its marketing mix to align better with customer expectations and improve competitive advantage. Future research can expand on this by comparing customer perceptions across multiple cities or dealerships to develop a broader marketing strategy framework for Maruti Suzuki.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary business environment, understanding customer perception has emerged as a vital component in developing successful marketing strategies. Especially in the highly competitive automobile industry, where customers are presented with multiple choices, their preferences and perceptions play a decisive role in shaping the marketing mix of any organization. The marketing mix, commonly referred to as the 7Ps—Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence—is a fundamental framework that guides marketers in strategizing their offerings to match customer expectations. In this context, Maruti Suzuki, India's largest automobile manufacturer, has consistently maintained its leadership through customer-centric innovations and a robust marketing approach.

Maruti Suzuki Arena is the company's modern dealership format, introduced to offer a seamless and technologically advanced car-buying experience. These showrooms are designed to enhance customer engagement through digital interactions, personalized services, and a well-trained workforce. The Arena outlets not only display Maruti Suzuki's wide product range but also serve as a key touchpoint for brand interaction, making the study of customer perception toward the marketing mix especially relevant. Raipur, the capital of Chhattisgarh, has shown steady economic growth and rising consumer interest in automobiles, making it an ideal location for conducting this research.

The objective of this study is to assess how customers in Raipur perceive various elements of the marketing mix offered by Maruti Suzuki Arena and how these perceptions influence their purchasing behavior. It seeks to analyze customer attitudes towards the quality and variety of vehicles (Product), affordability and payment options (Price), location and accessibility of the showroom (Place), advertising and promotional strategies (Promotion), behavior and professionalism of staff (People), ease of buying and service process (Process), and the overall ambiance and physical presentation of the dealership (Physical Evidence).

This study gains significance as it provides localized insights into consumer behavior, allowing Maruti Suzuki Arena in Raipur to fine-tune its marketing strategies. In a market driven by brand loyalty, emotional connect, and practical value, understanding the regional nuances of customer perception can help the dealership not only retain existing customers but also attract new prospects. Furthermore, the findings can contribute to enhancing customer satisfaction, improving dealership performance, and sustaining long-term brand loyalty.

In conclusion, the study bridges the gap between theoretical marketing principles and their practical application in the real-world automotive retail sector. By focusing on Raipur's customer base, this research endeavors to provide actionable recommendations to refine Maruti Suzuki Arena's marketing mix, thereby boosting its competitiveness and market share in the region.

2. Literature Review:-

The concept of the marketing mix has evolved significantly since its inception. Initially developed by McCarthy (1964) as the 4Ps—Product, Price, Place, and Promotion—it was later expanded to 7Ps by Booms and Bitner (1981) to include People, Process, and Physical Evidence, especially to suit service-based industries. In the context of the automobile industry, where products are high-involvement and service delivery is critical, the 7Ps model provides a comprehensive framework to evaluate marketing effectiveness.

Product plays a central role in shaping customer perception. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), a product must meet the functional and emotional needs of consumers. Maruti Suzuki has built its reputation on reliability, fuel efficiency, and affordability—features that resonate well with Indian consumers. Studies by Kaur & Singh (2020) found that the brand image and product quality significantly influence customer loyalty in the automobile sector.

Price is another vital determinant. According to Zeithaml (1988), perceived value is influenced by both the actual cost and the perceived benefit. In India, price sensitivity is high, and customers often evaluate vehicles based on total cost of ownership. Research by Sahu & Patel (2019) revealed that Maruti Suzuki's competitive pricing strategies, such as EMI schemes and festive discounts, enhance purchase decisions.

Place refers to the distribution and accessibility of products. The automobile industry relies heavily on dealership networks. A study by Thomas (2021) highlights that proximity and dealership infrastructure impact consumer choice. Maruti Suzuki Arena's wide reach and accessible locations provide a strong advantage, especially in Tier-2 cities like Raipur.

Promotion includes all activities aimed at informing and persuading customers. Kumar (2022) emphasizes that in the digital era, promotions through social media, test-drive campaigns, and influencer marketing have become essential. Maruti Suzuki's promotional strategies are aligned with both traditional and digital platforms, increasing brand visibility.

People refer to the employees who interact with customers. Research by Sharma & Mehta (2018) suggests that courteous and knowledgeable staff create a lasting impression on customers. In the case of Maruti Suzuki Arena, trained sales representatives and service staff play a pivotal role in building trust and satisfaction.

Process includes the procedures and flow of activities through which the service is delivered. According to Grönroos (2001), a smooth and transparent process can enhance customer experience. Maruti Suzuki's digital tools for booking, tracking, and servicing vehicles contribute positively to this dimension.

Physical Evidence involves the tangible aspects of service delivery such as showroom ambiance, layout, cleanliness, and brand displays. Bitner (1992) noted that physical cues influence customers' assessment of service quality. Maruti Suzuki Arena showrooms are designed with a modern layout and digital displays, enhancing the premium feel.

In summary, previous literature underscores the importance of a holistic marketing mix strategy to meet and exceed customer expectations. While many studies provide a macro-level understanding, this study specifically contextualizes the marketing mix in Raipur's local market, offering focused insights for strategic improvements at the dealership level.

3. Research Methodology

The research methodology adopted in this study is descriptive in nature, aiming to systematically analyze customer perceptions regarding the marketing mix elements of Maruti Suzuki Arena in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. A descriptive research design was chosen to capture and interpret the attitudes, opinions, and preferences of existing and potential customers visiting the dealership.

Data Collection Methods:

Both **primary** and **secondary data** sources were utilized.

- **Primary data** was collected through a structured questionnaire designed to evaluate the seven elements of the marketing mix—Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" to measure customer responses.
- **Secondary data** was gathered from academic journals, published research papers, company websites, brochures, and industry reports to build the theoretical framework and support the analysis.

Sampling Technique:

A **non-probability convenience sampling** method was adopted due to easy accessibility and limited time. The sample consisted of **100 respondents** who were either current customers or showroom visitors at Maruti Suzuki Arena, Raipur.

Target Population:

The target population includes male and female customers aged between 20 to 60 years who have purchased or shown interest in purchasing a vehicle from Maruti Suzuki Arena in Raipur.

Data Analysis:

The collected data was tabulated and analyzed using simple statistical tools such as percentages and graphical representations (bar charts and pie charts). This helped in interpreting trends and deriving meaningful insights.

Scope and Limitations:

The study is limited to one geographic location—Raipur—and may not reflect the perceptions of customers in other regions. Despite this, it provides valuable localized insights for dealership-level marketing improvements.

4. Findings and Analysis

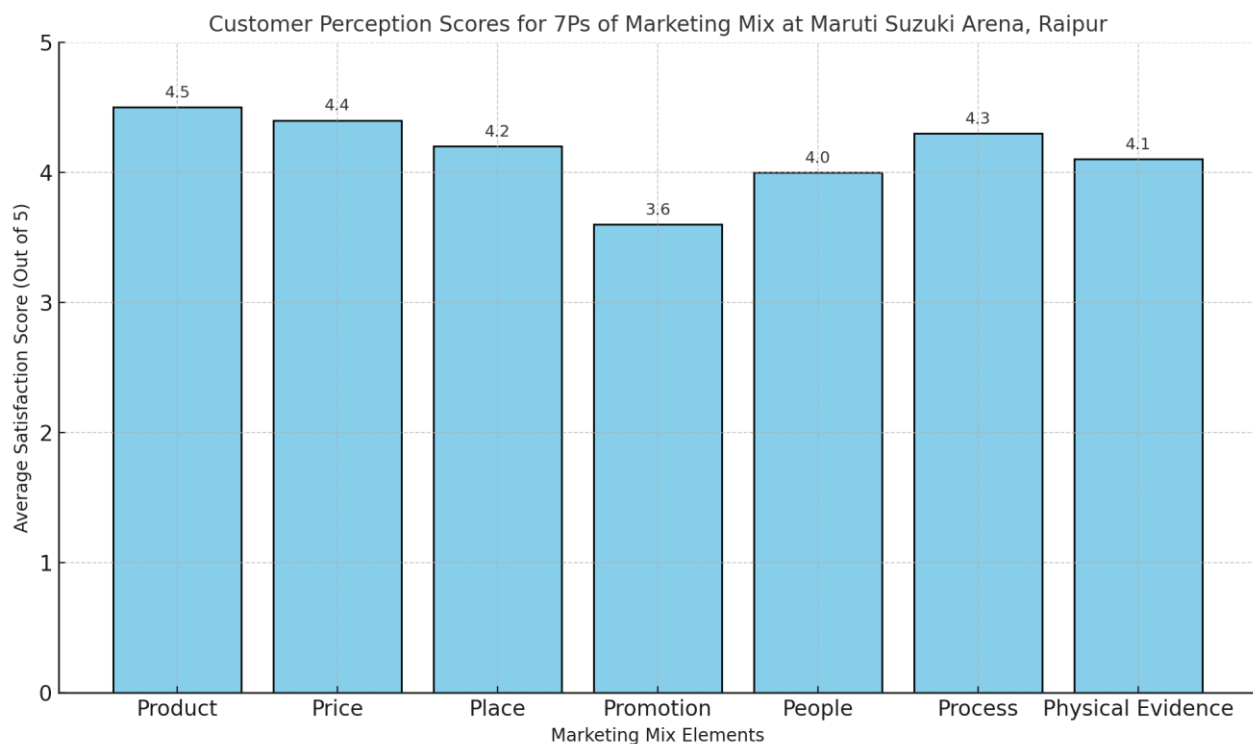
1. Product:

A majority of the respondents rated the quality, reliability, and fuel efficiency of Maruti Suzuki vehicles highly. Customers appreciated the availability of various models that catered to different budget segments and needs. Many respondents specifically mentioned trust in the Maruti brand as a deciding factor in their purchase decision. The presence of modern features in newer models such as infotainment systems and safety features was also positively acknowledged.

2. Price:

Pricing was found to be one of the strongest elements influencing customer preference. Customers perceived Maruti Suzuki vehicles as value for money, especially in terms of maintenance costs and fuel efficiency. Respondents also appreciated the availability of flexible EMI schemes, exchange offers, and festive discounts provided by the dealership.

Figure 1 :



3. Place:

Most respondents were satisfied with the location and accessibility of the dealership in Raipur. The central location, adequate parking, and ease of reaching the showroom contributed to a positive buying experience. Customers also felt that the network of service centers in and around Raipur increased their confidence in after-sales service.

4. Promotion:

Promotional activities like festival offers, social media ads, banners, and showroom events were moderately effective in attracting customer attention. However, some respondents expressed a desire for more interactive or personalized promotional campaigns, such as SMS/email notifications and referral benefits.

5. People:

The behavior and professionalism of the dealership staff played a critical role in customer satisfaction. Most customers were satisfied with the courteous and knowledgeable sales team, though a few highlighted inconsistencies in follow-ups and post-sale support.

6. Process:

The majority of customers found the booking and delivery process smooth and hassle-free. The digital process for selecting models, requesting test drives, and tracking the delivery status was appreciated.

7. Physical Evidence:

The ambiance of the showroom was generally found appealing. Respondents praised the cleanliness, digital displays, vehicle arrangement, and waiting areas. These factors positively influenced their perception of the brand.

In summary, while Maruti Suzuki Arena in Raipur has strong performance in areas like product, price, and process, there is room for improvement in promotional strategies and after-sales support. These insights can guide the dealership in optimizing its marketing mix to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the crucial role the marketing mix plays in shaping customer perception and influencing purchase decisions at Maruti Suzuki Arena, Raipur. Among the 7Ps, **Product** and **Price** emerged as the most positively perceived elements, indicating that customers value the brand's fuel efficiency, reliability, and cost-effectiveness. The **Process** and **Place** elements were also well-received, suggesting that customers appreciate the streamlined booking and delivery system and the convenient dealership location.

However, the **Promotion** component was seen as less impactful compared to others. This indicates a potential gap in promotional effectiveness and suggests that more engaging and personalized campaigns could be implemented to improve brand engagement. Similarly, while **People** were generally appreciated for their professionalism, some customers noted inconsistencies in communication and follow-ups, hinting at a need for better training and service protocols.

Physical Evidence, including showroom ambiance and digital facilities, contributed positively to customer satisfaction, enhancing the overall brand experience. The balanced performance across most elements of the marketing mix demonstrates a strong foundation, but also underlines the importance of continuous improvement, particularly in customer interaction and promotional strategies. Addressing these areas can lead to improved customer loyalty and competitive advantage in Raipur's evolving automobile market.

6. Conclusion

This study on customer perception towards the marketing mix of Maruti Suzuki Arena in Raipur (C.G.) provides valuable insights into how effectively the dealership aligns its strategies with customer expectations. The research reveals that elements such as **Product**, **Price**, **Place**, and **Process** are perceived positively by the majority of customers. These elements reflect Maruti Suzuki's strong market presence, affordability, and customer-centric operational processes.

Customers appreciate the brand's focus on quality, fuel efficiency, and after-sales services, which enhances trust and loyalty. The accessibility of the showroom and the smooth vehicle purchasing process further strengthen the overall customer experience. However, the study also identifies areas that require attention—particularly **Promotion** and **People**. While promotional activities have some impact, there is a need to make them more engaging and targeted. Similarly, though staff are generally appreciated, some inconsistencies in service delivery suggest a need for enhanced employee training and customer handling protocols.

In conclusion, Maruti Suzuki Arena, Raipur is well-positioned in terms of customer satisfaction, but there remains room for improvement in certain areas. By addressing the gaps in promotional strategies and customer interaction, the dealership can further enhance its competitiveness, customer retention, and long-term brand value in the local market.

7. References

- **Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016).** *Marketing Management* (15th ed.). Pearson Education.
– This book offers a comprehensive explanation of the 7Ps of the marketing mix and customer behavior, forming the foundation for evaluating marketing strategies in the automotive sector.
- **Booms, B. H., & Bitner, M. J. (1981).** "Marketing Strategies and Organizational Structures for Service Firms", in *Marketing of Services*. American Marketing Association.
– Introduced the extended marketing mix by adding People, Process, and Physical Evidence, which is vital for evaluating services like those offered at a dealership.
- **Zeithaml, V. A. (1988).** "Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: A means-end model and synthesis of evidence." *Journal of Marketing*, 52(3), 2-22.
– Helps understand how customers evaluate price and perceive value, particularly relevant for Maruti Suzuki's value-based pricing strategy.
- **Sharma, R., & Mehta, K. (2018).** "Impact of People Element on Customer Satisfaction in the Automobile Sector." *International Journal of Business and Management Invention*, 7(2), 45-51.
– Supports findings on the role of dealership staff behavior in shaping customer satisfaction.
- **Kaur, H., & Singh, G. (2020).** "Brand Loyalty and Consumer Perception in Automobile Industry." *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 9(4), 58–66.
– Discusses the impact of product quality and brand trust on repeat purchases in the car industry.
- **Thomas, M. (2021).** "Role of Showroom Location in Automotive Buying Decision." *Journal of Retail Marketing Research*, 6(1), 27–33.
– Provides insight into how place influences the customer decision-making process.
- **Official Website of Maruti Suzuki Arena.** <https://www.marutisuzuki.com>
– Used for gathering information on current dealership services, product offerings, and promotional strategies.