



# Customer Satisfaction and Brand Loyalty in Royal Enfield: A Mixed Methods Study of Consumer Perceptions

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Brand loyalty, repurchase behavior, and long-term market sustainability are all significantly influenced by customer satisfaction, especially in traditionally dominant industries like motorcycles. The multifaceted effects of customer satisfaction on Royal Enfield, a legendary motorcycle brand known for its emotional consumer engagement and heritage value, are examined in this study.

**Objectives:** This study aims to (1) analyze the impact of customer satisfaction on brand loyalty and repurchase intent, (2) examine how product quality, after-sales service, pricing, and emotional connection influence customer experience, and (3) explore customer narratives to understand underlying expectations and satisfaction gaps.

**Methodology:** An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was adopted, beginning with structured surveys of 250 Royal Enfield customers analyzed using descriptive statistics. This was followed by semi-structured interviews with a purposive subsample to contextualize quantitative findings, with insights interpreted through thematic analysis.

**Key Findings:** The study reveals a strong emotional attachment to the Royal Enfield brand among young adults, driven by lifestyle alignment and brand identity. However, satisfaction levels are moderated by concerns regarding engine reliability, service accessibility, and maintenance costs. Cross-analysis indicates that customers who feel a stronger community affiliation are more likely to recommend the brand, despite moderate functional dissatisfaction.

**Significance:** This research offers a comprehensive view of how customer satisfaction shapes brand outcomes in legacy motorcycle brands. Academically, the study contributes to mixed methods research in consumer behavior, and practically, it supports strategic decision-making for customer-centric innovation at Royal Enfield.

**Key Words** - Customer Satisfaction, Brand Loyalty, Consumer Behavior, Royal Enfield, Motorcycle Industry

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's hypercompetitive marketplace, customer satisfaction has emerged as a critical determinant of business sustainability, brand loyalty, and consumer advocacy. Particularly in the automotive sector, where purchase decisions are often influenced by emotional appeal, lifestyle alignment, and performance expectations, understanding the drivers of customer satisfaction is vital for maintaining long-term market relevance. For Royal Enfield which is a heritage motorcycle brand with a cult-like following customer satisfaction holds a central place in determining both commercial success and brand resonance across diverse consumer segments.

Royal Enfield occupies a unique position in the Indian and global motorcycle market, blending retro design with a sense of identity, community, and aspirational value. While the brand has successfully cultivated emotional loyalty among consumers, it continues to face scrutiny over issues such as ride quality, service consistency, spare parts accessibility, and maintenance costs. These challenges are further compounded by increasing competition from newer entrants and legacy brands offering technologically advanced motorcycles at comparable price points. As a result, Royal Enfield's ability to balance traditional brand values with evolving consumer expectations is under growing pressure.

Few studies provide an integrated perspective that captures both the quantitative trends in customer experience and the qualitative nuances of consumer sentiment, particularly in the context of a brand like Royal Enfield, despite the large body of literature on customer satisfaction in the two-wheeler industry. Furthermore, a comprehensive examination of how satisfaction affects not only referrals and repeat business but also the development of emotional ties and a sense of community affiliation is frequently lacking in the literature.

By using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design to examine the complex relationship between customer satisfaction and Royal Enfield's brand loyalty and market performance, this study aims to close this gap.

The study intends to identify the functional and emotional aspects of satisfaction that influence consumer behavior by examining survey data from 250 customers and interviewing a chosen sample of respondents in-depth. The results will offer practical advice for Royal Enfield's customer engagement programs, strategic positioning, and service delivery enhancements in both established and developing foreign markets.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Customer satisfaction has long been recognized as a strategic determinant of brand success, influencing repeat purchase behavior, word-of-mouth referrals, and long-term customer loyalty (Oliver, 1999). In the context of the automotive and two-wheeler industries, satisfaction is not merely a function of product performance, but an interplay of service quality, emotional engagement, and brand identity (Kumar & Kaushik, 2021).

### 2.1 Functional Drivers of Customer Satisfaction

Several recent studies emphasize that core product attributes such as engine performance, durability, and fuel efficiency continue to be foundational in shaping customer satisfaction. Nagalakshmi and Krishnaveni (2023) found that customers of Royal Enfield in Tirupattur Town expressed high satisfaction with mileage and vehicle style, but noted service-related inefficiencies as a deterrent to complete satisfaction. Similarly, Sheeri and Lamani (2020) highlighted the post-sales service as a decisive factor, suggesting that lapses in staff responsiveness and spare part availability were key dissatisfaction triggers in Hubli–Dharwad.

Service infrastructure, in particular, has shown to significantly affect customer loyalty in two-wheeler ownership. Giri and Thapa (2016), using Kano Model analysis in the Kathmandu Valley, concluded that after-sales service attributes such as technician behavior, spare parts supply, and service responsiveness are more influential than core maintenance activities. Their study found Royal Enfield users to be among the most satisfied when supported with competent service touchpoints.

### 2.2 Emotional and Symbolic Dimensions

Beyond functionality, contemporary literature increasingly explores the emotional and symbolic aspects of customer-brand relationships. Rani and Catherine (2017) identified that Royal Enfield owners often express not just satisfaction, but *obsession*—a term denoting deep emotional attachment tied to identity, social status, and lifestyle. This is consistent with Amoncar and Deacon (2023), who framed Royal Enfield's consumer base within the meta-modernist marketing paradigm, where brand tribalism, symbolic rituals, and heritage storytelling shape customer satisfaction in non-utilitarian ways.

Vivek (2019) and Singh (2023) both reported that younger consumers in urban areas associate Royal Enfield ownership with personal identity, prestige, and community belonging. These emotional factors significantly impact satisfaction and intention to recommend the brand, even when functional drawbacks exist.

### 2.3 Comparative Market Context

Studies comparing Royal Enfield to competitors highlight a rising expectation for hybrid value—where tradition must be balanced with innovation. Angel and Alagirisamy (2019) found that while Royal Enfield was preferred for style and prestige, competitors such as Honda and Bajaj were favored for affordability and low maintenance. Shaik (2018) further demonstrated that customer satisfaction was highest among PG-educated professionals using Honda and Hero, while Royal Enfield ranked moderately due to service inconsistencies.

Market trends indicate that modern consumers expect a blend of emotional value, technical performance, and digital engagement. Sarathy et al. (2019) showed significant variation in satisfaction drivers between rural and urban markets in India, suggesting that Royal Enfield must regionalize its strategies to maintain customer satisfaction across diverse user groups.

### 2.4 Synthesis of Findings and Research Gap

The reviewed literature establishes that customer satisfaction in the two-wheeler industry is influenced by a matrix of tangible (performance, service quality, price) and intangible (brand identity, emotional connection, lifestyle alignment) factors. While Royal Enfield consistently performs well in symbolic appeal and emotional branding, recurring concerns persist around service accessibility, maintenance cost, and product consistency.

Notably, most existing studies rely on either quantitative surveys or anecdotal insights, failing to integrate both perspectives into a cohesive framework. Furthermore, many investigations are region-specific and do not account for emerging global markets or the brand's evolving digital presence. There is also limited exploration of how satisfaction translates into brand loyalty, advocacy, and community affiliation.

## 2.5 Linking Literature to Current Study

This study addresses the identified research gap by employing a mixed methods approach that combines broad quantitative data (n=250) with rich qualitative insights to explore both the functional and emotional determinants of satisfaction among Royal Enfield customers. It moves beyond basic satisfaction ratings to examine how and why customers form lasting bonds—or dissatisfactions—with the brand. The objective is to develop a more nuanced understanding of customer satisfaction's role in shaping brand loyalty, market performance, and strategic differentiation in an increasingly competitive landscape.

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## 3. METHODS

### 3.1 Nature of the Study

This study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design, combining the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a holistic understanding of customer satisfaction and its impact on brand loyalty in the context of Royal Enfield. The study is limited to customer perspectives and does not include internal business operations or financial analysis. The mixed methods approach is particularly well-suited for this research, as it enables not only the measurement of satisfaction levels across diverse customer segments but also the exploration of the underlying factors, perceptions, and experiences driving those responses. The sequential design allows the findings from the quantitative phase to inform and shape the qualitative inquiry, thereby deepening the explanatory power of the results.

### 3.2 Rationale for Method Selection

A purely quantitative study would have captured surface-level satisfaction metrics but failed to explore the emotional and symbolic dimensions associated with Royal Enfield ownership. Conversely, a purely qualitative study would lack generalizability. Hence, a mixed methods approach was justified to quantify trends and contextualize insights, ensuring methodological triangulation and robustness. The quantitative phase establishes patterns and relationships among satisfaction variables, while the qualitative phase interprets *why* these patterns exist.

### 3.3 Data Collection Method and Sources

#### 3.3.1 Quantitative Phase

The study employed a self-constructed questionnaire developed around validated dimensions of customer satisfaction, including performance, price, after-sales service, emotional connection, and brand perception. A total of 250 Royal Enfield customers participated in the survey. Purposive sampling was utilized to ensure respondents had prior experience with Royal Enfield motorcycles, while snowball sampling helped extend the reach through rider communities and interest groups. Data collection was conducted both online and offline using Google Forms, email, and physical copies distributed at select dealerships and service centers. The study examined product quality, service quality, pricing perception, emotional attachment, and community feeling as independent variables, while overall satisfaction, likelihood to recommend, and brand loyalty were considered the dependent variables.

#### 3.3.2 Qualitative Phase

A semi-structured interview guide, developed based on preliminary quantitative findings, was used to conduct the qualitative phase of the study. Twelve participants were selected from the quantitative sample through maximum variation sampling to ensure a diverse representation in terms of demographics and experiences. In-depth interviews were carried out via phone and zoom, each lasting between 20 to 30 minutes. Ethical considerations were carefully observed, with informed consent obtained from all participants, assurances of anonymity provided, and interviews recorded only with explicit permission.

### 3.4 Tools and Techniques Used for Analysis

#### Quantitative Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel and Google Sheets. Descriptive statistics such as mean, percentage, and frequency distribution were employed to summarize the data. Cross-tabulation techniques were used to examine relationships between demographic variables and customer satisfaction. Additionally, a satisfaction index was constructed by aggregating weighted Likert scale scores to generate dimension-specific satisfaction scores.

#### Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data was analyzed using Thematic Analysis following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involved transcribing the interview data, conducting initial coding, and subsequently generating and categorizing themes. The key themes identified included emotional connection, value perception, brand identity alignment, dissatisfaction with service, and loyalty factors.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Overview of Quantitative Findings

The quantitative phase of this study surveyed 250 Royal Enfield customers using a structured questionnaire measuring satisfaction across five major dimensions: product quality, service experience, pricing perception, emotional connection, and brand loyalty. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale and analyzed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulations.

### 4.2 Descriptive Statistics

#### Performance Satisfaction:

61% of respondents rated the motorcycle's performance positively (scores of 4 or 5), whereas 18% expressed dissatisfaction (scores of 1 or 2), with the remaining 21% providing neutral ratings. This suggests that although the core appeal of Royal Enfield's retro engine design continues to resonate with customers, concerns related to performance aspects such as vibrations and fuel efficiency still influence overall customer perception.

#### After-Sales Service:

Only 45% of customers reported satisfaction with after-sales service, while nearly 30% remained neutral and 25% expressed dissatisfaction. The lower satisfaction levels are likely due to factors such as service delays, inconsistent technician expertise, and the unavailability of spare parts.

#### Pricing and Value Perception:

54% of respondents agreed that the pricing is justified by the brand's value proposition, while 28% were neutral and 18% disagreed. This indicates that although the retro styling and heritage factor validate the premium pricing for many customers, younger, price-sensitive consumers tend to compare the brand's offering with more modern alternatives.

#### Emotional Connection:

A significant 68% of participants reported feeling an emotional connection to the brand, highlighting factors such as community engagement, the brand's story, and alignment with personal identity. This suggests that emotional satisfaction serves as a strong buffer, helping to mitigate the impact of moderate dissatisfaction with functional aspects.

#### Overall Satisfaction and Recommendation:

62% of respondents indicated high overall satisfaction, and 59% expressed a willingness to recommend Royal Enfield to others. This suggests that while satisfaction strongly influences customer advocacy, it is still moderated by their functional experiences with the product.

### 4.3 Cross-Tabulation

#### 4.3.1 Satisfaction by Ownership Duration

Ownership Period	Highly Satisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)
Less than 1 year	48%	15%
1–3 years	65%	10%
More than 3 years	71%	7%

**Table 1.** Cross-tabulation of Satisfaction by Ownership Duration

Satisfaction increases with longer ownership, suggesting that brand attachment strengthens over time, possibly due to increased emotional association and adaptation to brand quirks.

#### 4.3.2 Satisfaction by Income Level

Monthly Income (INR)	Value for Money (%)
Below ₹20,000	38%
₹20,000–₹50,000	58%
₹50,000 and above	72%

**Table 2.** Cross-tabulation of Perceived Value for Money by Income Level

Perceived value rises with income. Higher-income customers are more tolerant of the premium pricing, while lower-income customers are more sensitive to maintenance costs and fuel economy.

#### 4.4 Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI)

A CSI was calculated by assigning weights to five satisfaction dimensions and averaging Likert-scale scores.

##### Satisfaction Index Scale:

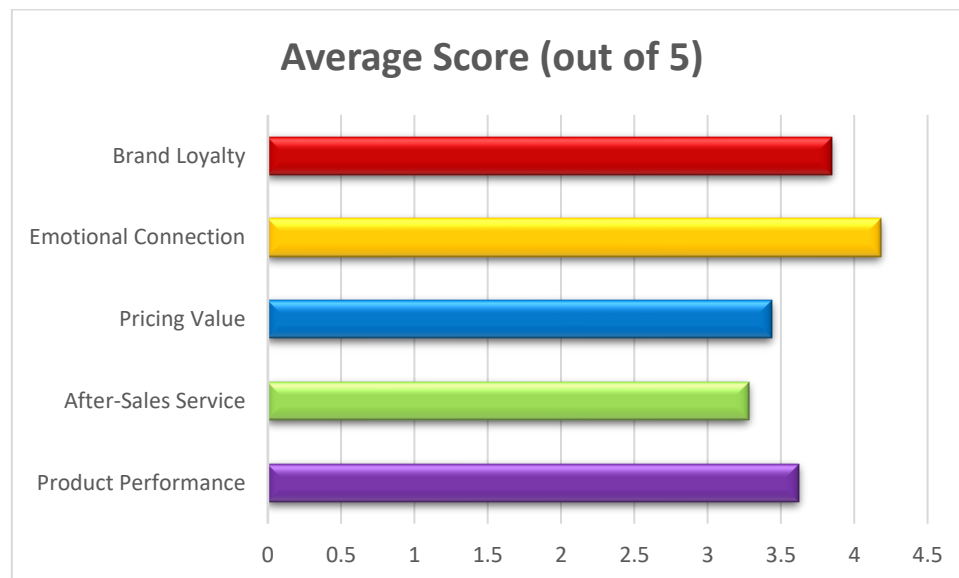
- 4.0 = Highly Satisfied
- 3.0–4.0 = Moderately Satisfied
- < 3.0 = Dissatisfied

Dimension	Average Score (out of 5)
Brand Loyalty	3.85
Emotional Connection	4.18
Pricing Value	3.44
After-Sales Service	3.28
Product Performance	3.62

**Table 3. Customer Satisfaction Index Across Five Key Dimensions**

**Overall Satisfaction Index: 3.68**

Royal Enfield customers are moderately satisfied, with emotional connection being the strongest contributor and after-sales service the weakest.



**Figure 1. Bar Chart: Customer Satisfaction Index by Dimension**

#### 4.5 Qualitative Findings (Thematic Analysis)

Twelve in-depth interviews were conducted with participants from the survey to explore satisfaction dimensions more deeply. Thematic analysis identified the following five major themes:

##### Theme 1: Symbolic Ownership

Participants described the bike as a symbol of status, masculinity, and individuality. Quotes like *"It's not just a bike; it's a statement"* reflect deep emotional investment. This aligns with high ratings in the "emotional connection" dimension.

##### Theme 2: Service Experience Variability

While some praised personalized attention at local service centers, others complained about long wait times and untrained mechanics. The phrase *"They treat you well until you buy the bike, then forget you"* appeared more than once, suggesting inconsistency in post-purchase care.

### Theme 3: Heritage vs. Modern Expectations

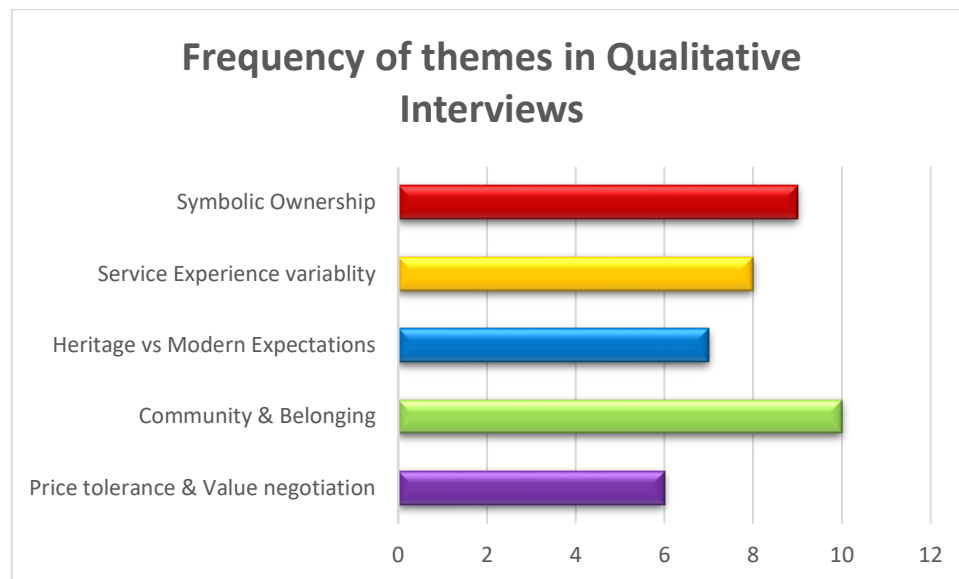
Many riders valued the bike's rugged design and vintage charm, but younger users voiced disappointment over the lack of modern features like Bluetooth, navigation, or smoother engines. There is a clear generational divide in performance expectations.

### Theme 4: Community and Belonging

Events like Rider Mania and local rides were cited as key satisfaction drivers. Riders said they "*felt part of a brotherhood*", enhancing loyalty even when product flaws existed.

### Theme 5: Price Tolerance and Value Negotiation

Respondents with higher income or multi-bike ownership considered Royal Enfield a passion investment, not a rational one. Budget-conscious users, however, questioned the "premium" tag without matching tech specs.



**Figure 2.** Bar Chart: Frequency of Themes in Qualitative Interviews

The findings present a dual narrative. On one side, Royal Enfield enjoys strong emotional brand equity, symbolic value, and community-driven loyalty. On the other, functional dissatisfaction especially in after-sales service and performance reliability poses a risk to long-term customer retention.

While the Satisfaction Index (3.68) indicates moderate overall satisfaction, the data also reveal that emotional and community-based factors mitigate some of the functional shortcomings. This positions Royal Enfield in a unique brand space where experiential satisfaction can partially offset technical limitations but only to an extent.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes how important customer satisfaction is in determining Royal Enfield's market performance, repurchase intent, and brand loyalty. The brand's strong emotional ties, heritage appeal, and devoted community base continue to support it, but functional flaws, especially in engine performance, after-sales service, and pricing justification, moderate overall satisfaction levels. Customers are emotionally invested in the brand and recognize its symbolic value, but they frequently express dissatisfaction with technical consistency and service reliability, according to the mixed-methods analysis.

Overall satisfaction is moderate, as indicated by the satisfaction index (3.68), which is largely driven by brand loyalty (3.85) and emotional connection (4.18), with after-sales service (3.28) and pricing (3.44) lagging behind. Qualitative findings also highlight how many riders view owning a Royal Enfield as a lifestyle or identity marker, but this sentimental attachment does not entirely make up for shortcomings in technological advancement or service quality.

Royal Enfield needs to close this gap between functional expectations and symbolic brand loyalty in order to maintain its leadership in a cutthroat and changing motorcycle market. It will be crucial to improve performance reliability, increase service consistency, and match pricing to perceived value. Furthermore, utilizing customer feedback loops and community-based engagement can improve long-term loyalty and brand resonance. Royal Enfield will be able to meet contemporary consumer expectations while maintaining its iconic legacy by implementing a customer-centric strategy that combines innovation and heritage.

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