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## Customer Handling Challenges and Marketing Solutions – A Case of Vishnu Cars Pvt. Ltd

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### ABSTRACT:

In the modern automotive market, where product differentiation is minimal and competition is intense, the true battleground for customer loyalty lies in after-sales service. This article provides a marketing-centric field study based on observations at Vishnu Cars – Maruti Suzuki Authorized Service Center located in Ramapuram, Chennai the aim is to ascertain how customer handling practices affect brand perception, and to reveal the barriers and challenges that are likely to arise during service interactions. Additionally, the article discusses the implications of not overcoming these barriers and challenges (e.g., reduced customer retention, negative online reviews, reduced long-term brand equity). On the flip side, it offers strategic solutions by referencing lots of service marketing concepts via better CRM systems, improved proactive service communications, employee training in soft skills, and more robust feedback loops. The analysis of barriers and the practical marketing solutions to those barriers in this paper demonstrates that service centers are not just repair facilities; they are also sites of handling the customer experience and the customers' loyalty.

### 1.Introduction

The customer's journey in today's highly competitive automotive industry does not end with the purchase of a vehicle as much as it begins with it. As technology in cars advances, and customer expectations become more refined, after-sales service has become an important marketing differentiator. The service centre, whether they are completing a normal service of a car, or addressing a specific customer complaint, is the first contact that drives a customer's ongoing long-term interactions with the brand. It is the first point of engagement that a customer has with the brand after the purchase of their vehicle.

As part of my field visit and observations at Vishnu Cars - Maruti Suzuki Authorized Service Center in Chellammal Nagar, Ramapuram Chennai, I was able to see first-hand how the brand engages and deals with customers beyond the showroom.

### 2. Company Overview

**Vishnu Cars Pvt. Ltd.** is an authorized dealer and service provider for **Maruti Suzuki India Ltd.**, one of the most trusted automobile brands in India. Located in **Ramapuram, Chennai**, the Vishnu Cars service center is a fully equipped workshop that caters to a large volume of Maruti Suzuki vehicle owners from the surrounding neighborhoods, including Ashok Nagar, Porur, KK Nagar, and beyond.

Established with the aim of delivering high-quality vehicle maintenance and customer satisfaction, Vishnu Cars offers a wide range of **after-sales services**, including:

- **Routine General Services** (scheduled maintenance)
- **Accident Repairs and Body Shop Services**
- **Express Service for Quick Jobs**
- **Insurance Renewal and Claim Assistance**
- **Pickup and Drop Facility for Service**
- **Wheel Alignment, Balancing, and Tyre Services**
- **Battery and AC Services**
- **Extended Warranty and Maruti Genuine Accessories**

The workshop also uses **digital tools and customer relationship platforms**, including SMS updates, online job cards, and the Maruti Suzuki Rewards app, to enhance customer communication and transparency.

### 3.Challenges in Customer Handling at Vishnu Cars

A service center like Vishnu Cars plays a critical role in shaping the brand image of Maruti Suzuki long after the car is sold. While the technical team maintains a strong standard in service, my field visit revealed that **challenges in customer handling are silently eroding customer satisfaction**. These are not due to incompetence, but mostly due to high customer volume, limited personalization, and underutilized marketing strategies. Below are the major challenges I observed and analyzed from a marketing perspective:

#### 3.1 Delay in Service Updates and Communication Gaps

One of the most visible pain points was the **lack of timely updates provided to customers about their vehicles**. For example, a customer who had left his car in the morning for general service expected an update by lunchtime. However, due to the workload on service advisors, he received no call and had to follow up multiple times himself. This led to frustration and complaints.

From a marketing perspective, this is a **service breakdown in communication**, which affects the **customer's trust** in the brand. In today's era of instant messaging, customers expect service centers to **proactively communicate**, not leave them in the dark. Lack of updates creates doubt, and that doubt weakens brand loyalty. Even if the technical work is perfect, the **experience feels incomplete without transparency**.

#### 3.2 Lack of Personalization in Customer Interaction

Another key observation was the **absence of personalized engagement**. Service advisors were polite and efficient, but their interactions were highly procedural and lacked emotional connection. Even regular customers were handled with the same tone as first-timers.

In marketing, **relationship building is everything**. When a customer is treated like a one-time visitor instead of a valuable member of the family, the chance for loyalty is reduced. Small actions like recalling their last service, offering tailored advice, or recognizing returning customers could significantly improve satisfaction. Without such personalization, the service feels transactional, not relational.

#### 3.3 Underutilization of Digital Engagement Tools

Maruti Suzuki has a range of digital tools — including online service booking, live vehicle status tracking, and the Maruti Rewards App. However, during my visit, I noticed that **very few customers were actively using these features**, and most were still dependent on physical receipts and direct calls.

This highlights a **digital disconnect**. While the tools exist, they are not marketed well at the service desk. Advisors rarely encourage their use or help customers install and navigate these apps. This is a **lost opportunity in digital relationship marketing**. In a world where digital interaction can build trust and convenience, failure to promote tech tools puts the brand at a disadvantage.

#### 3.4 Inconsistent Post-Service Follow-Up

Once the vehicle is delivered to the customer, **the service experience ends rather abruptly**. In most cases, there were no meaningful follow-up calls, thank-you messages, or feedback collection efforts. A few customers received automated SMS feedback requests, but they felt impersonal and easy to ignore.

From a service marketing point of view, this is a **critical gap**. The post-service phase is a golden window to:

- Measure satisfaction,
- Offer promotional loyalty benefits,
- Resolve any leftover concerns before they turn into public complaints (like online reviews),
- And build emotional continuity with the brand.

By not taking advantage of this stage, the service center misses out on turning satisfied customers into **brand advocates**.

### 4. Marketing Based Solutions to Improve Customer Handling

After identifying the customer handling challenges at Vishnu Cars service center, marketing can play a big role in improving the overall customer experience. These are not operational fixes – they are relationship building strategies to increase customer loyalty, trust and satisfaction.

Here are practical marketing-based solutions for each of the challenges:

#### ***4.1 Proactive and Real Time Communication System***

To address the issue of delayed updates, Vishnu Cars should have a real-time, automated communication platform integrated with the service workflow. Customers should get automatic updates (via SMS, WhatsApp or app) at every stage: vehicle intake, job card creation, service progress, estimated time of completion and vehicle ready status. Each service advisor should have a standard response protocol for updates and queries. A dedicated “Customer Update Executive” can also be deployed during peak hours. From a marketing perspective this will make the customer feel taken care of and boost brand reliability and positive word of mouth.

#### ***4.2 Appointment Based Scheduling with Slot Management***

To reduce waiting time and manage customer flow better, the center should encourage prior service appointments through Maruti Suzuki website, mobile app or call center. A **slot-based system** (like how diagnostic labs operate) would allow customers to choose specific time slots, spreading out the footfall.

This would also enable the center to:

- Prepare job cards in advance,
- Allocate technicians efficiently,
- And reduce congestion at the front desk.

From a marketing point of view, this aligns with the “**service as convenience**” trend — which is a major factor in customer retention, especially among time-sensitive customers.

#### ***4.3 Build a Personalized Service Culture***

To overcome the impersonal tone of interactions, the service center can adopt **basic CRM (Customer Relationship Management) practices**, such as:

- Greeting repeat customers by name,
- Referring to previous service history,
- Offering specific maintenance suggestions based on past visits,
- Maintaining personal notes like preferred pickup times or AC complaints.

Even simple gestures — such as a “Welcome back Mr. Kumar” — can leave a **lasting emotional impression**.

From a marketing angle, this strengthens **relationship marketing** and increases the chances of turning a satisfied customer into a brand loyalist.

#### ***4.4 Promote and Support Digital Tool Adoption***

To bridge the digital disconnect, advisors should actively **educate and onboard customers onto digital platforms** like the Maruti Suzuki Rewards App. This can be done by:

- Demonstrating how to track service status on the app,
- Sending links for app download during job card creation,
- Providing printed guides on digital services.

#### ***4.5 Structured Post-Service Engagement Strategy***

Instead of relying on auto-generated SMS messages, the service center should implement a **structured post-service follow-up system** that includes:

- A thank-you call or message from the advisor,
- Personalized feedback collection (voice or app-based),
- A follow-up within 7–10 days to ask if the customer is facing any issues,
- Sharing maintenance tips or next service reminders.

Additionally, customers who leave 4–5-star feedback could be added to a **loyalty program**, with exclusive offers or early slot access.

This strengthens **post-service touchpoints**, which are essential in **customer relationship lifecycle marketing**.

#### 4.6 Weekend Priority or Express Lane for Repeat Customers

To manage heavy weekend footfall, Vishnu Cars can introduce:

- **Priority Lanes** for customers with prior appointments,
- **Express Service Bay** for jobs under 90 minutes,
- And a **Repeat Customer Token** system (like fast-track) for those with loyalty points.

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### 5. Conclusion

Vishnu Cars—an authorized service dealer for Maruti Suzuki—makes it clear how after-sales care has come to define the perceptions of modern brands. While the technical skills of the service team are impressive, and consistent with Maruti's recognized standards, ultimately customer satisfaction is based less on repairs/maintenance, but rather, the quality of interaction, emotional reassurances, and the management of any customer journey. During my field-based investigation, I found myself repeating "while there was nothing wrong with the mechanical aspects of my visit, the areas of communication, personalization, and digital interface were glaring." Flaws in these three areas are not inconsequential frustrations: they are marketing issues that exist to erode trust, depress return visits, and ultimately fortify a brand's reputation in a competitive marketplace.

As service customers have been exposed to more choices, their standards get progressively higher and their patience gets lower for price and service differences, speed, empathy and ease are becoming requisites. Service stations are required to look broader than just the routine flows, they are also required to approach service interactions with much more consideration of the customer's long-term relationship with the brand, rather than just the job card number.

In today's service landscape, where customers have higher expectations and lower patience, **efficiency, empathy, and convenience are non-negotiable**. Service centers must go beyond routine workflows and embrace strategies that view customers not just as job card numbers but as **long-term brand relationships**. That's where marketing-led service design comes in.

To significantly improve customer experience at Vishnu Cars, there's a growing need for:

- **Proactive communication systems**, where customers are kept in the loop about service status in real time.
- **Use of CRM tools and customer data** to personalize service recommendations, remember preferences, and follow up meaningfully.
- **Digital engagement initiatives**, such as app-based service tracking, loyalty rewards, or appointment scheduling, which cater to tech-savvy users.
- And most importantly, a culture of **consistent post-service follow-up**, where satisfaction is tracked not just through SMS ratings but through real human conversations.

These aren't just operational enhancements — they are **strategic marketing actions**. Each one reinforces the brand promise of Maruti Suzuki — reliability, care, and value — in a way that feels real and personal to the customer. It is crucial to understand that **brand loyalty is not built inside showrooms alone**. It grows through every handshake, every update call, every follow-up message, and every small gesture that shows the customer they are valued **even after the sale is made**. In fact, the **service environment is where brand relationships are tested, strengthened, and most often, redefined**. In essence, **every interaction post-sale is a marketing moment**. It's an opportunity to build trust, deliver value, and create emotional connections that go far beyond the vehicle's lifespan. For Vishnu Cars, embracing this perspective will not only help improve customer handling but also position them as a service center that truly understands the evolving needs of modern car owners.

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