

# Role of Retail Channel Management Strategy – In Context of Indian Automobile Dealerships Satisfaction

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## ABSTRACT

Maintaining high-quality standards is crucial for dealerships to ensure ongoing business success since they play a critical role in promoting manufacturers in the marketplace. The study's objective is to highlight areas where Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM)-Dealers relationships are lacking in relation to crucial business metrics in order to provide practical recommendations for improving OEM-Dealer collaboration. The study utilizes primary data, collected from 141 automobile dealers in Pune using a random sampling technique and structured interviews. Secondary data is gathered in order to reinforce the study's objectives. The study's aims are thoroughly justified through the use of SPSS for primary data analysis (t-tests, ANOVA, regression, and correlation) and Excel for secondary data analysis. Statistical research shows a substantial association between OEM market shares and DSI (dealer satisfaction index), with a Pearson's correlation coefficient = 0.850, signifying a highly significant relationship. Dealers linked to enterprises with larger market shares are more likely to show higher satisfaction ratings. The study emphasizes the significance of Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) participation in policy-making, revealing a strong link (Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.821) between dealer satisfaction and OEM's involvement with policy decisions. The findings emphasize the essential standing of collaboration between OEMs and dealers and provide practical suggestions for improving business partnerships, leading to increased dealer satisfaction and overall success in the automotive sector.

**Keywords--** Automobile, Channel Management, Dealers, Dealer Satisfaction, Strategy

order to ensure successful business growth and decrease the Cost of Quality (COQ) for the dealership. The automotive industry encompasses a diverse array of organizations and businesses engaged in the process of designing, developing, manufacturing, promoting, and selling automobiles (Alam, & Chennubhotla, 2019)<sup>1</sup>

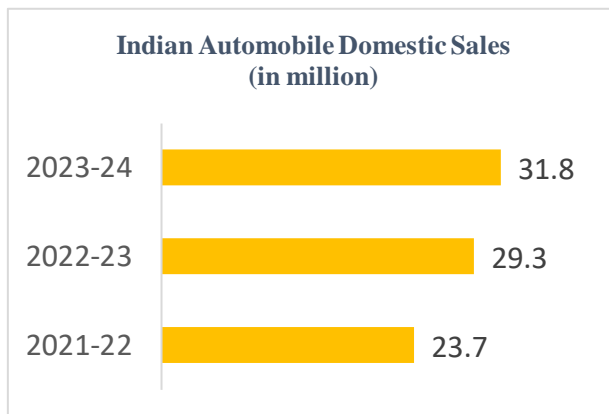
The global economy heavily relies on the automotive industry, which serves as a crucial foundation for numerous countries, including the United States, Japan, Germany, and China. The automotive industry has a history spanning over a century and has shown significant global expansion in the previous two decades, growing at an exponential rate (Guzmán Anaya, & Lugo Sánchez, 2023)<sup>11</sup>. In the automotive industry, there are numerous stakeholders, with the Auto Original Equipment Manufacturer (referred to as Auto OEM) and franchised dealers being the most significant ones. The Auto Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) have the responsibility of developing, designing, and manufacturing vehicles. They then sell the vehicles in bulk to distribution channels for retail purposes (Chang & Chen, 2022)<sup>7</sup>. The dealers serve as a distribution channel and have the responsibility of selling vehicles directly to end customers. They provide a range of responsibilities that encompass sales, service, spare parts, and surveys. The Dealer Satisfaction Index (DSI) is impacted by a range of elements, which can be classified into three categories: "product-related, marketing, and after-sales aspects" (Svensson, et.al., 2023)<sup>22</sup>.

The automotive industry has identified numerous important characteristics that impact dealer satisfaction and confidence. The factors that contribute to dealer satisfaction as well as confidence include the range of products offered by the supplier, the marketing strategies employed, and the level of after-sales assistance provided (Decker, 1999)<sup>8</sup>. In order to increase dealer satisfaction and confidence, it is vital to consider variables such as "customer orientation, sales and service processes, location, facility, and customer satisfaction (Bandyopadhyay & Robicheaux, 1997)<sup>3</sup>. Original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) must prioritize dealer

## I. INTRODUCTION

Dealerships are crucial in facilitating and maintaining the relationship between the buyer and the automobile manufacturer in the automotive industry. Dealerships serve as intermediaries between automobile makers and buyers, maintaining contact long after the automobile has been purchased. Therefore, it is crucial for a dealership to uphold the highest quality standards in

satisfaction and loyalty by enhancing the customer experience, customizing services and goods, and developing new offerings as part of their channel management strategies (Lütkemeyer Filho, et.al. 2015)14. Additionally, (OEMs) must reconsider their operational framework to become more adaptable and focused on customer needs. This is because the customer experience now plays a crucial role in all aspects of the business, such as product development, information technology, quality control, and procurement (Meena & Sarmah, 2012)15. The DSI and OEM channel management strategies are influenced by a range of criteria that include features such as product, promotion, after-sales, and customer experience. These factors are essential in improving dealer satisfaction and confidence in the automobile industry (Gassenheimer, & Ramsey, 1994)99.



**Chart 1: Indian Automobile Sales**

The automotive industry has identified numerous important characteristics that impact dealer satisfaction and confidence. The factors that contribute to dealer satisfaction as well as confidence include the range of products offered by the supplier, the marketing strategies employed, and the level of after-sales assistance provided (Decker, 1999)8. In order to increase dealer satisfaction and confidence, it is vital to consider variables such as "customer orientation, sales and service processes, location, facility, and customer satisfaction (Bandyopadhyay & Robicheaux, 1997)3 Original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) must prioritize dealer satisfaction and loyalty by enhancing the customer experience, customizing services and goods, and developing new offerings as part of their channel management strategies (Lütkemeyer Filho, et.al. 2015)14. Additionally, (OEMs) must reconsider their operational framework to become more adaptable and focused on customer needs. This is because the customer experience now plays a crucial role in all aspects of the business, such as product development, information technology, quality control, and procurement (Meena & Sarmah, 2012)15. The

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The marketing channel's incentive scheme is frequently utilized as a highly effective method to encourage dealers to act more cooperatively (Ojha, et.al., 2021)19. There is a vast array of aspects that impact OEM channel management strategies and the dealer satisfaction index (DSI). These characteristics are vital for successful collaboration as well as optimization in the OEM-dealer network (Van Riel, et.al., 2011)24. Among these factors are things like the efficacy of communication, the quality and dependability of products, the services provided to support them, incentive schemes, the effectiveness of the supply chain, management of inventory, initiatives for development and training, methods for resolving conflicts, the financial performance of dealers, changes in market demand, analysis of the competitive environment, advancements in technology, compliance with regulations, and the complete strategic alignment within original equipment manufacturers (OEM) and dealers (Golara, et.al., 2021)10. For original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to develop effective channel management strategies that increase dealer satisfaction, build long-term partnerships, boost sales performance, improve operational efficiency, and achieve sustainable competitive advantage, they must understand and address these factors.

The Dealer Satisfaction Index (DSI) is a comprehensive measure used to evaluate and quantify the degree of satisfaction that automotive dealerships feel when interacting with manufacturers or OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) in the automotive industry (Meinig, 1998)16. It includes multiple facets of the dealer-manufacturer association, such as communication, assistance, product quality, and the whole experience at the dealership. The DSI (Dealer Satisfaction Index) plays a crucial role in assessing the efficacy of Original Equipment Manufacturers' (OEM) strategies, assistance mechanisms, and interaction with their dealership networks. High Dealer Satisfaction Index (DSI) values show that manufacturers are effectively satisfying the needs of their dealerships, resulting in content and satisfied partners (Wella, et.al., 2023)25. In contrast, lower scores can indicate areas that need improvement, helping manufacturers refine their rules and support procedures in order to raise dealer satisfaction. In essence, a favorable DSI is essential for cultivating robust partnerships between OEMs and dealerships, hence enhancing the overall prosperity and efficiency of the automotive industry.

The study is important in the automotive industry as it reveals the complex relationship between

factors that affect dealer satisfaction index and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) channel management strategies. Comprehending and enhancing dealer contentment is essential for manufacturers since it immediately influences the overall effectiveness and market accomplishment of automotive dealerships. The case study, based on the Pune region, offers contextual observations that can be generalized to improve strategy in a diverse business environment. Manufacturers and dealers can obtain a competitive advantage in the automotive market by identifying and understanding these key elements. This allows them to develop successful channel management strategies, leading to improved customer happiness, dealership performance, and overall competitiveness. The study's findings would have both academic and practical significance for industry stakeholders in the automotive industry who are seeking to understand and manage the complex dynamics of dealer satisfaction and channel management.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomena of components of dealer satisfaction are important to the core of measuring the level of performance of dealers in specific areas in the context of OEM channel management strategies. In these consequences, it is important to discuss that there is a cordial nexus between the dealer satisfaction index and synergizing channelizing in the context of the dynamics of globalization. In the case of dealer satisfaction, the study of **Lai (2007)**<sup>Error! Reference source not found.</sup> showed that process, determinants, and consequences of satisfaction can be defined as the investment of wishes and abilities in the process of production of goods and services in automotive dealerships. These consequences enhance the level of confidence among dealers in the sense of a positive approach in the process of marketing automotive products in the market-based economy in the consequences of globalization. Therefore, it was realized that the entire process and function of marketing is based on the direct penetration of the result of globalization in the market. The study of **Kariapp and Akv (2016)**<sup>Error! Reference source not found.</sup> showed the function of synergizing channelizing, findings of the study gave a critical approach to conducting an in-depth analysis of the process and function of channelizing associated with dealer satisfaction. Therefore, the methodology of the study was based on the critical analysis of the subject matter of factors influencing dealer satisfaction index and synergizing channelizing in automotive dealerships. Likewise, the study of **Aziri (2011)**<sup>Error! Reference source not found.</sup> showed that the decision-making process is an important phenomenon in the case of the study of measuring dealer satisfaction because it is well-known that

dealers decide based on satisfaction under the approach of cost and benefit analysis of strategies of marketing. From these perspectives, it is also realized that both economic and non-economic phenomena play an important role in the formation of behavioral reflection of automotive dealers in the market in the consequences of globalization. Therefore, this study forwards a manner regarding conducting an in-depth analysis concerning the satisfaction and strategies of marketing. In these perspectives, **Hill and Brierly (2017)**<sup>122</sup>, gave a functional-based approach to the study of the level of satisfaction index and synergizing analysis in the market of the automotive dealership in a market-based economy. However, the study also revealed an approach-based study with a better analysis of satisfaction index, and OEM channel management strategies but the entire debate of the study was not given a little bit of information about the process, determinants, and consequences of satisfaction index and synergizing analyzing in automotive dealerships in India. In the case of India, this study gives a base for developing an understanding of conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

**Balasooriya, et.al., (2023)**<sup>2</sup> examined how the dynamics of a franchise dealer network affect the design of product selection by an automotive original equipment manufacturer (OEM). The study conducted a comprehensive analysis of the key elements that impact the response of the dealer network, including dealer density, diversity of the dealer networks, and the complexity of consumer choice. Likewise, **Poturak, et.al., (2022)**<sup>200</sup>, discovered that automotive industries typically regard customer satisfaction as a vital determinant of customer retention. A crucial factor for the enduring profitability of an organization is customer satisfaction. The objective of the qualitative study was to examine the elements that impact client loyalty at car dealerships, from the perspective of the dealer principals. In addition, many physical elements pertaining to the facility, customer-centric aspects, factors relating to products and services, finance-related considerations, and the existence of marketing were considered. **Nänzén & Josephson (2020)**<sup>18</sup> sought to propose enhancements to improve Dealer Simplicity. An overview of the novel concept "Dealer Simplicity" was created to achieve a specific goal, and obstacles hindering its implementation were discovered to find ways to enhance it.

On the other hand, **Bozic & Heger, (2021)**<sup>5</sup>, explored that, in order to gain a competitive edge, automobile importers and dealerships should prioritize collaboration to enhance company performance. The study aimed to improve understanding of "automotive supply chain collaboration" by examining factors that influence collaboration between importers and dealerships. The application of agency and the theory of stewardship provided a comprehensive understanding of factors,

influences, and relationships. The study indicated that trust, communication, and commitment positively impact dominance, performance management, and coherence. The study by **Mugambi, G. K. (2019)**<sup>17</sup>, aimed to ascertain the impact of operational strategies on customer satisfaction among automotive parts manufacturers in Nairobi County. The specific objectives of the study were to examine the impact of excellence, cost reduction features, speed of delivery, flexibility, and advancement on customer satisfaction. The study by **Song, X. (2018)**<sup>21</sup>, discovered that in order to ensure a high level of marketing channel efficiency in a constantly changing market, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) must establish effective internal controls and use a more systematic approach to revising dealer marketing targets. The study aimed to present an overview of the current state of channel marketing in the automotive industry. It identified conflicts that arise in the cooperation between marketing channels, analyzed the stakeholders involved in these channels to identify the key factors that influence them, and developed a more rational methodology for adjusting the "Marketing, Engineering, Research, and Training (MERT)" process.

### III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- What are the various key factors that influence the satisfaction level of dealers and the understanding gap in OEM - Dealership relationships?
- What are the actionable insights for stakeholders for enhancing business partnership between OEM and Dealers?

#### Objectives

- To identify gaps that impact OEM-Dealer partnership across all key business aspects.
- To provide actionable insights that OEMs & dealers can work together in enhancing their business partnership.

### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary data is acquired using a structured Interview schedule with random sampling as well as with a pre-determined sample size of 141 participants among automotive dealers in the Pune region. Chart 2

Secondary data, on the other hand, is collected according to a predetermined sample size. Both types of data are utilized in this study endeavor. In addition, secondary data is utilized to interpret the nature of the study as well as its objectives. Within the framework of analysis, the t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), regression, and correlation are utilized to evaluate main data through SPSS. On the other hand, Excel is utilized to examine secondary data. Consequently, an improved

justification of the objectives can be obtained by the utilization of both primary and secondary data, taking into consideration the type and scope of the present research paper. This research paper's study area lies in the Pune region of Maharashtra. It is commonly understood that Pune is the economic center of Maharashtra due to the role it plays in the establishment of businesses and means of subsistence.

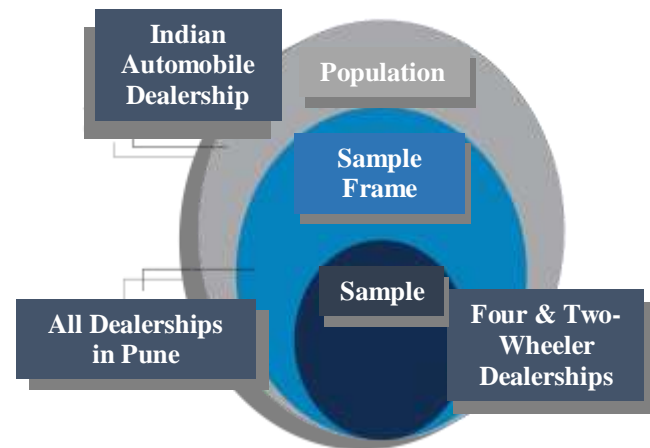


Chart 2: Sample Design

### V. DATA ANALYSIS

- To identify gaps that impact OEM-Dealer partnership across all key business aspects.

**H1: OEM Market Share Is Highly Correlated with Dealer Satisfaction Index.**

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
<b>Dealer Satisfaction</b>	141.2482	15.15923	141
<b>Market Share</b>	22.1418	2.92912	141

In above **Error! Reference source not found.**, we define the descriptive statistics of the significant difference between various Dealer Satisfaction and Market Share. Descriptive statistics represent the mean values of the variables. According to table 1, the mean value of Dealer Satisfaction is 141.2482 and the mean value of the Market Share is 22.1418.

Below **Table 2. Correlations Market Share** is the Correlations table which shows the correlation between the Dealer Satisfaction and Market Share. According to



table 2, there is a significant relationship between Dealer Satisfaction and Market Share, as the significant value is .000 which is smaller than 0.05.

**Table 2. Correlations Market Share**

		Dealer Satisfaction	Market Share
<b>Dealer Satisfaction</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.821**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		.000
	N	141	141
<b>Dealer Involvement in Policy Decisions</b>	Pearson Correlation	.821**	1
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	
	N	141	141

**\*\*Correlation Is Significant at the 0.01 Level (2-Tailed).**

The result based on the above hypothesis testing showed that The Dealers who are associated with the company for a long period of time (i.e., u years and above) are More Satisfied than others, as they are highly satisfied based on market share and OEM manpower support alternative hypothesis is accepted.

b. To provide actionable insights that OEMs & dealers can work together in enhancing their business partnership.

**H2: Involvement in Policy Decisions by OEMs results higher satisfaction among Dealers.**

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics - Policy Decision**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
<b>Dealer Satisfaction</b>	141.2482	15.15923	141
<b>Involvement in Policy decisions</b>	17.4113	2.30239	141

In the above **Table 3**, we define the descriptive statistics of the significant difference between various Dealer Satisfaction and Involvement in Policy Decisions. Descriptive statistics represent the mean and standard deviation values of the variables. According **Table 3** to, the mean value of Dealer Satisfaction is 141.2482 and the mean value of the Involvement in Policy Decisions is 17.4113.

**Table 4: Correlations Policy Decision-making**

		Dealer Satisfaction	Market Share
<b>Dealer Satisfaction</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.850**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)		.000
	N	141	141
<b>Market Share</b>	Pearson Correlation	.850**	1
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	.000	
	N	141	141

**\*\*Correlation Is Significant at the 0.01 Level (2-Tailed).**

**Error! Reference source not found.** shows the correlation between the Dealer Satisfaction and Involvement in Policy Decisions. According to table 4, there is a significant relationship between Dealer Satisfaction and Involvement in Policy Decisions, as the significant value is .000 which is smaller than 0.05.

## VI. FINDING'S & CONCLUSION

A study on automotive dealers in the Pune region uncovered significant findings about the factors that impact OEM-dealer partnerships. The statistical analysis shows a substantial association between OEM market share and DSI, using a Pearson correlation coefficient of around 0.850, signifying a highly significant relationship. Dealers linked to enterprises with larger market shares are more likely to show higher satisfaction ratings. The study emphasizes the significance of Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) participation in policy-making, revealing a strong link (Pearson correlation coefficient = 0.821) between dealer satisfaction and OEM involvement with policy decisions. The results highlight the important role of collaboration between OEMs and dealers and provide practical suggestions for improving business partnerships, leading to increased dealer satisfaction and overall success in the automotive sector.

Dealerships have a significant impact on representing manufacturers in the market by engaging with customers effectively. **Teli & Murumkar's (2018)23** study found that dealerships lose a minimum of 60% of service revenue beyond the warranty period. Therefore, it is crucial to manage customer relationships effectively to minimize the cost of quality. 89% of firms consider customer experience crucial for fostering client loyalty and retention. Acquiring a new customer is approximately five times more expensive than retaining a current one. Therefore, it is crucial for dealers to uphold high quality

standards to sustain and grow their business. Similarly, **Bruijl (2018)148**, found that more than 40% of clients consider product expertise to be the most crucial aspect of the auto dealer consultation. The notion of product knowledge applies to the purchasing of a second-hand car, often known as a pre-owned or used car. Customers prefer receiving guidance and assistance from professionals with whom they have a deep relationship based on past services. This has led auto dealers to invest in training sales personnel to become trusted advisors. Similarly, the commoditization of sales assistance may persist as consumers seek knowledge from other sources, and online car sales become more prevalent due to the global lockdown caused by the recent pandemic (**Cars.com 2020)148**.

The study Role of Retail Channel Management Strategy – In Context of Indian Automobile Dealerships channel management strategies in the Pune region's automotive sector provides significant insights for improving collaborations between OEMs and dealerships. An unambiguous association exists between OEM market share and DSI, showing that dealers collaborating with companies with larger market shares tend to have greater levels of satisfaction. The study emphasizes the importance of OEM participation in policymaking, demonstrating a strong connection between the satisfaction of dealers and this participation. The findings underscored the crucial importance of cooperation between Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and dealerships, providing practical suggestions for strengthening business relationships and optimizing performance in the automotive industry.

Dealerships are crucial in promoting manufacturers in the market, highlighting the necessity of upholding high-quality standards for long-term business expansion. The study shows that dealerships experience a substantial decrease in service revenue after the warranty period, emphasizing the importance of efficient customer relationship management to lower quality costs. Customer experience is seen as a crucial factor in fostering loyalty and retention, as organizations focus on it to reduce the expenses associated with obtaining new consumers. Utilizing IT tactics in automobile retail helps maintain consumer loyalty, especially in places such as Western Saudi Arabia.

Maximizing profits in automobile retail involves optimizing inventories and product mix throughout various periods using Closed-Loop Supply Chain (CLSC) arrangements, highlighting the significance of effective supply chain management. Relationship marketing is becoming more important in the service business, as customers appreciate product knowledge and seek guidance from trusted experts, particularly when buying used vehicles. The rise of online automobile purchases,

spurred by worldwide lockdowns, poses problems that require dealerships to adjust and invest in training sales staff to become trusted consultants in order to negotiate the changing market landscape successfully.

In conclusion, the study's findings provide a substantial contribution to comprehending and handling the complex mechanics of dealer satisfaction as well as channel management within the automobile sector. By focusing on crucial elements that impact dealer satisfaction and promoting cooperation between OEMs and dealerships, stakeholders may strengthen business relationships, promote customer satisfaction, and stimulate sustainable growth in the automobile industry.

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