



## Competitive Profile Matrix of Service Companies in the Automotive Sector

*Matriz del perfil competitivo de las empresas de servicio en el sector automotriz*

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### Abstract

The study aims to identify the competitive profile matrix of service companies in the automotive sector, focusing on lubricants, and understand the key factors that influence customer loyalty and repurchase. This sector is crucial for the Ecuadorian economy, generating significant income and employment. However, it faces challenges such as more strategic planning, especially in small and medium-sized companies. The study takes a quantitative and descriptive approach, using surveys to collect customer data. The results show that staff trust and professionalism are the most critical factors, followed by service quality, value for money, location, and response time. These findings allow companies to develop strategies that drive customer loyalty and sustainable growth. The competitive profile matrix (CPM) helps evaluate the performance of companies against the competition and identify areas

that require improvement. Future studies could investigate variations in key factors across different market segments, analyze changes in preferences over time, and explore the impact of digital technologies to improve service. Furthermore, it would be valuable to investigate how government policies affect the sector's competitiveness.

**Keywords:** Transport, Economic Competition, Market research, Entrepreneurs.

### Resumen

El objetivo del estudio es identificar la matriz del perfil competitivo de las empresas de servicios en el sector automotriz, enfocándose en lubricadoras, y comprender los factores clave que influyen en la lealtad y recompra de los clientes. Este sector es crucial para la economía ecuatoriana, generando importantes ingresos y empleo, aunque enfrenta desafíos como

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la falta de planificación estratégica, especialmente en las pequeñas y medianas empresas. El estudio adopta un enfoque cuantitativo y descriptivo, utilizando encuestas para recopilar datos de clientes. Los resultados muestran que la confianza y el profesionalismo del personal son los factores más críticos, seguidos por la calidad del servicio, la relación calidad-precio, la ubicación y el tiempo de respuesta. Estos hallazgos permiten a las empresas desarrollar estrategias que impulsen la lealtad del cliente y el crecimiento sostenible. La matriz de perfil competitivo (MPC) ayuda a evaluar el rendimiento de las empresas frente a la competencia y a identificar áreas que requieren mejoras. Los futuros estudios podrían investigar variaciones en los factores clave según diferentes segmentos de mercado, analizar cambios en las preferencias a lo largo del tiempo y explorar el impacto de tecnologías digitales para mejorar el servicio. Además, sería valioso investigar cómo las políticas gubernamentales afectan la competitividad del sector.

**Palabras clave:** Transporte, Competencia Económica, Estudio de Mercado, Empresario.

## Introduction

This study focuses on identifying the competitive profile matrix of service companies in the automotive sector, particularly for lubricants, and the critical success factors influencing the customer's decision and contributing to greater loyalty and repurchase. The automotive industry has played a crucial role in Ecuador's economy, contributing significantly both directly and indirectly through the export, import, and assembly of vehicles. According to data from the Association of Automotive Companies of Ecuador (AEADE), in 2019, this sector generated taxes of a total of 1,554 million dollars. This figure fell to 1,204 million in 2020 during the pandemic but recovered to 1,432 million in 2021 and reached 1,663 million in 2022, showing sustained improvement in the post-pandemic period (INEC, 2022).

In addition, the automotive industry also has an essential impact on job creation, especially in activities such as vehicle maintenance, lubrication, and repair. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC, 2022), these activities employed 20,564 people in 2021 and

20,788 in 2022, showing slight but constant growth. While the sector primarily employs men, it has also seen an increase in female participation, with 4,071 women employed in 2021 and 4,183 in 2022 (INEC, 2022). These data underline the sector's importance in the local economy and the potential of lubricants as a competitive niche in Guayaquil, where there is a high concentration of registered vehicles, generating a growing demand for maintenance services.

In the context of the *Competitive Profile Matrix of Service Companies in the Automotive Sector*, many companies face challenges in identifying and applying key success factors to maintain customer loyalty and encourage repurchase (Wang et al., 2020). These factors are especially problematic for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), which often need more effective strategic planning to identify and capitalize on these factors (Gallegos-Eraza & García-Hinojosa, 2019). The lack of strategic planning makes it difficult to identify critical factors and hinders the development of adaptive business models that respond to changing consumer demands (Gallegos-Eraza & Gavilanes-Gómez,

2023; Casas et al., 2020). This deficiency affects operational efficiency and causes customer loss, negatively impacting sales volume and competitiveness (Li & Lai, 2021). Problems managing inventory (Riadi et al., 2023), product offerings, and sales processes aggravate the situation, creating barriers to growth (Rahatulain, 2019).

Lack of understanding of critical success factors leads to poor implementation of loyalty strategies, affecting repurchase rates (Farhikhteh et al., 2020). The absence of reliable data and appropriate analytics limits the ability of these companies to identify the causes of declining customer retention (Suhanda et al., 2022). Historical sales and repurchase data show decreasing patterns, indicating a trend toward lower loyalty (Randhawa, 2018). Furthermore, the lack of specific customer satisfaction metrics makes it difficult to correlate loss of loyalty with particular service problems (Sciascia, 2022; Akhmedova et al., 2020), preventing companies from implementing practical improvements in their operations (Kanaan et al., 2023). This phenomenon is aggravated by the lack of a competitive profile matrix that allows service companies to evaluate their position against the competition, identify opportunities, and design strategies that foster customer loyalty (Capps et al., 2019).

The competitive profile matrix (CPM) is a crucial tool for identifying, evaluating, and comparing key success factors in the automotive sector. According to Shuplyakov et al. (2021), it provides a clear structure for analyzing a company's competitive position against its direct competitors. In automotive service companies, MPC is especially useful for lubricants, facing increasing competition, where customer retention and repurchase are critical challenges (Suhanda et al., 2022).

Identifying critical success factors (KSF) in this sector is complex due to the multiple variables influencing purchasing decisions. Cifuentes-Suárez & Moreno-Gavilanes (2021) and Chávez & Fárez (2023) highlight the importance of quality, safety, value, design, style, and innovation. Guachamín & Yunga (2023) also show that price is decisive for 95.7% of those surveyed in their study.

The MPC provides a framework for assessing companies' position on these factors. Each company receives a weighted score based on its performance in service quality (Prasetya & Sianturi, 2019), pricing strategy, location, visibility in promotions and advertising, and trained staff. Weighted scoring allows companies to accurately identify areas requiring improvement and prioritize changes based on their potential impact on customer loyalty and repurchase. This analysis allows companies to be compared directly with their competitors and find areas for improvement (Shuplyakov et al., 2021).

Implementing the MPC is vital to identify aspects that directly affect customer repurchase and loyalty. Ballou et al. (2004) note that understanding repurchase trends allows companies to adjust their inventory (Riadi et al., 2023) to meet demand. Heller et al. (2003) and Ramírez & Almeida (2020) highlight that repurchase reflects customer satisfaction and their experience in the transaction (Wijaya et al., 2022).

Applying CPM in automotive services would allow a clearer perspective of the strengths and weaknesses of a company compared to the competition. Identifying critical success factors and comparing them to best practices is essential for lubricants to develop strategies that drive loyalty.

alty and repurchase, ensuring sustainable growth in a highly competitive market.

This research seeks to identify the competitive profile of lubrication services companies in Guayaquil and analyze the critical success factors influencing customer retention. The following question is raised: What are the critical success factors that affect customer retention and repurchase in lubrication companies in the automotive sector in Guayaquil, and how can they be used to develop effective competitive strategies? Given the significant impact of the automotive sector on the Ecuadorian economy, identifying these factors will contribute to improving company strategies and promoting sustainable growth in a competitive market.

## Materials and Method

The research identifies the factors influencing customers repurchase decisions and their preferences for lubricants in Guayaquil. The study adopts a quantitative and descriptive approach with a field and cross-sectional research design. A survey was administered as the primary tool to collect data, and the application was carried out directly on-site. This methodology is supported by the research of Yulianto (2022), who highlights the critical role of perceived value in repurchase intention. His study also employs surveys to understand how product descriptions affect customer satisfaction and repurchase decisions.

Furthermore, Irnaldi et al. (2023) show the relevance of marketing strategies and service quality in the repurchase decision, reinforcing the importance of including questions that address these aspects in surveys. The associative analysis used in

that study provides a solid basis for understanding the relationships between these factors and their impact on customer loyalty (Irnaldi et al., 2023). The study by Lovato et al. (2023), which focuses on Guayaquil, demonstrates that the quality of customer service is essential for the economic development of microenterprises and the strengthening of marketing strategies. Like the present study, this research is based on a quantitative, descriptive, and transversal approach, validating the relevance of well-structured surveys to measure customer satisfaction and preference (Lovato et al., 2023).

The survey consists of 21 questions that explore various dimensions that can influence customers repurchase decisions, such as product quality, staff knowledge, and speed of service, among others. Each question allows the respondent to express their level of agreement on a five-point scale, ranging from *Strongly agree* to *Strongly disagree*. The surveys were reviewed and validated by experts in the field, and a pilot test was carried out to verify the internal and external validity of the instrument. This review ensures that the questions are understandable, relevant, and appropriate in measuring the factors they are intended to investigate.

A systematic and quantitative process was followed to calculate the weights of the variables based on the survey responses. Here are the specific steps taken.

### Assignment of Scores to Answers

Numerical values were assigned to each response category to reflect their degree of agreement with the statement made in the survey. The weights assigned were the following:

- Strongly agree: 2 points.
- Agree: 1 point.
- Moderately agree: 0.5 points.
- Disagree: -1 point.
- Strongly disagree: -2 points.

These weights were chosen to adequately differentiate between levels of agreement and disagreement, giving more significant influence to responses that indicate strong agreement.

### Calculation of Weighted Averages

A weighted average was calculated for each relevant variable in the survey. This calculation was done by multiplying the number of responses in each category by the weight assigned to that category and adding these products. The result was then divided by the total number of responses for that specific question to obtain an average reflecting the agreement weight based on the severity of the responses.

### Weight Normalization

After calculating the weighted averages for each variable, the results were normalized to ensure that the sum of all weights equaled one. This step allows the variables to be compared equitably, reflecting their relative importance in percentage.

This methodology guarantees that the weights obtained represent the perceived importance of each variable in the repurchase decision at lubricants based on the opinions expressed by customers in the survey.

## Results and discussion

The analysis of the survey carried out on Lubricenter clients reveals fundamental aspects of the configuration of the competitive profile of these companies in the auto-

motive sector of Guayaquil. In light of the data collected and the revised theoretical framework, it is observed that factors such as product quality, brand, and quality-price ratio are essential for customer repurchase and loyalty, aspects that are crucial given the relevance economic and social of the sector in Ecuador.

The survey administered to lubricant customers reveals several key trends in consumer preferences and behaviors regarding the factors influencing their repurchase decision. Firstly, product quality is the most valued factor, with 61% of respondents expressing *totally agree* that this aspect is essential when deciding to buy again and 36% indicating they *agree*. These results underscore product quality as a critical factor in customer loyalty. This finding is consistent with research by Wang et al. (2020), which highlights that service and product quality are critical factors for customer retention in the automotive sector. As an analytical tool, the Competitive Profile Matrix (CPM) would allow lubricants to evaluate their performance in this aspect compared to their competitors and adjust their strategies to improve the perception of quality among consumers.

The lubricants' manufacturing origin and the brand's importance are also considered relevant, although to a lesser extent. While 54% of participants are positively inclined towards the importance of manufacturing origin, 88% consider the brand relevant in their repurchase decision. This last data highlights the significant influence of the brand on consumer perception. This result aligns with what was argued by Li & Lai (2021) about the need to strengthen the brand to maintain competitiveness. Additionally, 42% of respondents perceive that advertising influences their repurchase



decision, indicating that an effective communication strategy could be crucial to improving customer acquisition and retention.

The breadth of the product portfolio also appears to be a crucial factor, with 53% responding positively, although there was a significant amount of disagreement at 15%. These results indicate a split in the customer base over the importance of variety versus specific factors such as price or quality.

Although 50% of those surveyed consider the price influential, there is a notable dispersion in opinions: 25% are neutral, and 4% disagree. These results indicate market segmentation in terms of price sensitivity. 65% of participants identify the quality-price ratio as a crucial factor, which is in line with the study by Cifuentes-Suárez & Moreno-Gavilanes (2021), highlighting perceived value as a critical component in customer loyalty. Implementing MPC could help companies understand how consumers perceive this balance, allowing adjustments in pricing policy or service improvements to optimize this perception.

Promotions and discount strategies show a moderate influence, with 35% and 32% positive responses, respectively. However, a notable 49% remain neutral regarding promotions, which could indicate the varied effectiveness of these strategies or a possible saturation of offers in the market. While promotions and discounts have a moderate impact on repurchase decisions, it's crucial to understand their effectiveness in the local context. Rahatulain's study in 2019 suggests that improper promotion management can be detrimental if it does not align with customer expectations and preferences. Therefore, understanding the

local context is key, and lubricants could benefit from further analysis to optimize these promotional tactics and ensure they improve the company's perceived value, making the audience feel valued and integral to the decision-making process.

Aspects such as the treatment received, the knowledge of the staff, and the speed of service are highly valued, with more than 85% of the responses affirmative in each case. This underscores the relevance of customer service as a key component of the consumer experience at lube centers, reassuring the audience about their current strategies. Brand loyalty and value for money stand out as determining factors in repurchase, with 74% and 65% positive responses, respectively. This suggests that customers tend to be loyal to brands they consider valuable in terms of cost and quality, reaffirming the audience's focus on these aspects.

Analyzing the weightings of the critical success factors obtained in the survey of customers of lubricant centers in Guayaquil reveals a clear panorama of consumer priorities and expectations in the local automotive sector. Through a careful methodology that normalizes the weights and assigns values to the responses, it was possible to precisely identify the elements that influence repurchase, from the trust and professionalism of the staff to the location and variety of products offered. These findings reflect current market trends and are based on previous studies that highlight the importance of these factors in building customer loyalty and creating competitive strategies, as detailed in Table 1. This analysis provides a comprehensive framework for companies in the sector to adjust their policies and optimize their services by changing consumer expectations, allowing

them to improve their competitiveness in the market.

The survey's weightings of the critical success factors provide a deeper perspective on the elements that influence customer repurchase of lubricants in Guayaquil. The *Trust/Professionalism* factor emerges as the most critical aspect, with a normalized weight of 0.1901, underlining the importance of staff transmitting knowledge and security to consumers. These results align with research such as that of Lovato et al. (2023), which emphasizes the quality of customer service as a pillar in consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

'Service/Attention' also occupies a prominent place, with a weight of 0.1584. This reveals that customers highly value speed and friendly treatment during service, a factor that should invoke a sense of urgency in our audience to provide these qualities. For its part, 'Price' is a relevant consideration, with a weight of 0.1455, evidencing the segmentation of the market in terms of sensitivity towards cost. This reinforces the importance of finding a balance between quality and price, as suggested by Cifuentes-Suárez & Moreno-Gavilanes (2021).

Other factors such as *Location* (0.1340), *Response Time* (0.1309) and *Product Portfolio* (0.1038) are also influential. The location reinforces convenience for the customer, a factor that should make our audience feel the need to ensure their businesses are easily accessible. The response time and the variety of products available demonstrate the need to optimize processes and offer comprehensive solutions, a sentiment that should inspire our audience of business owners, marketing and sales professionals, and researchers in the lubricants industry.

Lastly, *Promotion* (0.0772) and *Advertising* (0.0601) receive a lower weight but are still relevant. Discounting strategies have a moderate impact, while effective advertising can be vital to reaching new customers. Rahatulain's research in 2019 supports the idea that these strategies must align with customer expectations to be effective.

## Conclusions

The CPM analysis in service companies in the automotive sector, specifically the lubricants in Guayaquil, is a crucial tool. It underscores the importance of critical success factors (CSFs) in customer loyalty.

**Table 1**

*MPC matrix applied to the lubricant sector and critical*

Variable	Normalized Weight	Score from 1 to 5	Core Weighted
Trust / Professionalism	0.1901		
Service / Attention	0.1584		
Price	0.1455		
Location	0.1340		
Response Time	0.1309		
Product Portfolio	0.1038		
Promotion	0.0772		
Advertising	0.0601		

alty and repurchase. This analysis serves as a roadmap, identifying the key factors companies must prioritize to enhance their position in a fiercely competitive market.

The analysis reveals that trust and professionalism are paramount for customer satisfaction and loyalty, emphasizing the critical role of service quality. Companies must prioritize enhancing these attributes to strengthen their market position. Additionally, exceptional service, attention, and a balanced pricing strategy are vital in fostering customer loyalty. While location and response time contribute significantly to the overall customer experience, a comprehensive product portfolio and targeted promotions are also essential. By understanding and effectively applying these CSFs, lubrication companies can develop strategies that retain customers and encourage repurchase, ensuring sustainable growth in a competitive market.

Lubrication companies must use CPM to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses against the competition. They must improve trust, professionalism, service, attention, and pricing policies to position themselves competitively. Effective advertising and personalized promotions tailored to consumer expectations can attract new customers.

The application of CPM provides a comprehensive assessment of the automotive sector's competitive position. Understanding CSFs and aligning them with customer expectations is not just a strategy, but a commitment to customer satisfaction. This will allow lubrication companies to develop strategies that encourage loyalty and repurchase, ensuring sustainable growth in a dynamic market.

Although product quality and brand loyal-

ty are important, price, customer service, and marketing strategies play distinct roles in loyalty and repurchase in the lubricant industry. Adopting CPM in Guayaquil lubricants could help identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for innovation in critical areas such as customer service, brand management, and loyalty. The study's findings offer a valuable basis for developing effective strategies, helping lubrication companies strengthen their position in a highly competitive market. Identifying and effectively applying these CSFs is essential to improve customer retention and repurchase, contributing to the economic growth of the automotive sector in the region.

Based on the results obtained, it is recommended that lubricant center companies in Guayaquil focus on strengthening the perception of product quality, as this is crucial for customer loyalty and repurchase. Implementing continuous improvement strategies and quality certifications can support product excellence. Additionally, brands must develop a solid and trustworthy image, as brand relevance significantly influences repurchase decisions. Marketing campaigns should highlight the manufacturing origin of lubricants, leveraging consumers' positive perceptions. Finally, effectively communicating the quality-price relationship to customers ensures they perceive added value in the services and products offered. The Competitive Profile Matrix (CPM) could be a valuable tool for evaluating and adjusting these strategies, enabling continuous improvement and stronger positioning in the Guayaquil automotive market.

Future studies could focus on understanding variations in critical success factors across different market segments, such as



private and commercial vehicles, to develop differentiated marketing strategies. Conducting longitudinal research to examine the evolution of customer satisfaction, loyalty, and repurchase rates over time would be valuable, as well as exploring the impact of digital technologies like artificial intelligence and data analytics on customer service, inventory management, and marketing. Developing predictive models to anticipate service demand and optimize operations, and examining the influence of government policies and regulations on sector competitiveness, are also important areas for further investigation to drive the sustainable development of lubrication companies in a highly competitive market.

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