

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN AUTOMOTIVE AFTER-SALES SERVICE: An Integrative Framework Based on Service Quality, Consumer Rights and Customer Satisfaction in Colombia

María Victoria Tapia Ponce¹, Yineima Rodelo Arrieta²

¹ Universidad del Magdalena, Colombia.
Email: mariavictoriatapiaponce@gmail.com
ORCID: 0009-0007-6604-5331

² Universidad del Magdalena, Colombia.
Email: Yiroar@gmail.com
ORCID: 0009-0005-1676-6398

Abstract: This article examines Colombian regulatory compliance in consumer rights, with particular emphasis on Law 1480 of 2011 (Consumer Protection Statute), as a strategic asset for automotive after-sales service management. Drawing on a systematic documentary review that integrates legislative, doctrinal, and jurisprudential sources, the study proposes a conceptual analytical framework linking two variables: (1) regulatory compliance in after-sales service, operationalized through the dimensions of the AutoSERVQUAL model adapted to the consumer rights context, and (2) customer satisfaction, measured through the dimensions of repurchase, retention, and recommendation (3R). The theoretical analysis suggests that regulatory compliance transcends its legal function to become a strategic element of service quality, capable of strengthening consumer trust and fostering long-term relationships, particularly in markets where authorized and unauthorized workshops coexist, such as Colombia. The study concludes that integrating regulatory compliance into after-sales service management not only helps mitigate legal risk but also strengthens customer satisfaction and adds strategic value to the organization.

Keywords: automotive after-sales service; regulatory compliance; service quality; customer satisfaction; consumer rights; AutoSERVQUAL

JEL Classification: L62, K12, M31

Article type: Research-based reflective article

1. INTRODUCTION

Colombia's vehicle fleet has grown steadily. The National Single Transit Registry (RUNT, 2025) reported more than 7.5 million vehicles at the close of 2025, and that growth has brought more than numbers: a rising demand for maintenance, repair, and warranty services, and with it, fiercer competition between authorized and independent workshops. Price alone no longer suffices for differentiation, nor does technical capacity or infrastructure on its own.



Law 1480 of 2011, known as the Consumer Protection Statute, introduced significant changes. It redefined the responsibilities of after-sales service providers, transforming into legal obligations what had previously been, at best, commercial goodwill: providing clear information, ensuring competent repairs, honoring warranties, maintaining cost transparency, and addressing complaints and claims. The issue is no longer simply performing technical work well; it is about complying with the law while performing that work—and that fundamentally changes how service quality must be conceived.

Legal risk management and consumer law scholarship have studied this compliance extensively. What has received far less attention is its other dimension: the possibility that this same compliance may generate organizational value, not merely prevent sanctions. In an automotive workshop, where the customer relationship is built appointment by appointment, repair by repair, this distinction matters. A workshop that complies with the law does not merely protect itself—if done well, it can earn customer trust, sustain long-term relationships, and become more competitive through that pathway.

That is the central argument of this article: regulatory compliance ceases to be a mere obligation when it translates into something the customer notices and values in service quality. To substantiate this claim, scientific literature, the Colombian regulatory framework, and jurisprudence on consumer rights were reviewed, yielding a model that connects the dimensions of AutoSERVQUAL with the rights recognized by Law 1480. The proposition is that these dimensions serve as the visible, observable face of compliance—one that simultaneously drives repurchase, retention, and recommendation—the three expressions of customer satisfaction.

The contribution of this article is neither a new data point about the automotive sector nor an additional validation of AutoSERVQUAL: it is a conceptual framework that reinterprets an already validated instrument—AutoSERVQUAL—in light of a specific regulatory body—Law 1480 of 2011—demonstrating that its five dimensions can be simultaneously read as quality indicators and as observable manifestations of compliance. This reinterpretation is the result that this study offers to the literature on automotive after-sales service and strategic regulatory compliance.

From this foundation emerges the research question guiding this study: *How can regulatory compliance, through service quality, strengthen customer satisfaction in automotive after-sales service?*

2. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Service Quality in Automotive After-Sales Service

Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) defined service quality as the discrepancy between what the customer expects and what the customer perceives having received. It is, at its core, a global judgment that the consumer constructs from tangible and intangible elements throughout the entire service experience. The SERVQUAL model became one of the most widely used instruments for evaluating quality across sectors, precisely because of its broad applicability. However, every industry has its particularities, and this has led to the development of sector-specific adaptations. In the automotive sector, that adaptation is AutoSERVQUAL (Gencer & Akkucuk, 2017): it retains the five original dimensions—Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy—but adds indicators specific to the automotive after-sales cycle, enabling a more precise reading of the customer experience within this type of organization.

2.2. Consumer Rights in Automotive After-Sales Service

Behind consumer rights lies a simple idea: balancing the relationship between providers and consumers. Information, safety, quality, warranty, and comprehensive repair—these are the interests they seek to protect. In Colombia, this framework is established by Law 1480 of 2011, which imposes specific obligations on those who provide goods and services, automotive workshops included.

2.3. Regulatory Compliance as Strategic Value

For a long time, regulatory compliance was understood solely as the mechanisms for observing the law and mitigating legal risk—nothing more. Strategic management offers a different reading: organizational practices generate value when, beyond meeting legal requirements, they contribute to achieving the organization's objectives and strengthen its relationships with stakeholders (Barney, 1991; Kaplan & Norton, 2004). Under this reading, regulatory compliance comes to be understood as the degree to which after-sales service guarantees consumer rights throughout the entire service cycle—and it is precisely there that it acquires strategic value, by translating into quality attributes that strengthen customer loyalty.

2.4. Customer Satisfaction

For Oliver (1980), customer satisfaction is the judgment that the consumer makes after experiencing a product or service, as a result of comparing expectations with perceived performance. Along the same lines, Kotler and Keller (2016) noted that satisfaction corresponds to the degree of pleasure or displeasure experienced by the customer when service performance meets or exceeds expectations. From this perspective, customer satisfaction is understood as the result of a consistent service experience, manifesting through behaviors associated with repurchase, retention, and recommendation (3R), which reflect the continuity of the relationship between the customer and the organization.

2.5. Integrative Conceptual Model

A critical review of the literature reveals something noteworthy: service quality theory, the legal framework of consumer rights, and customer satisfaction theory converge, and that convergence opens the possibility of integrating them into a single conceptual model.

The proposal builds upon AutoSERVQUAL, which already possesses conceptual and psychometric support for evaluating automotive after-sales service quality. What is proposed here is to reinterpret its dimensions in light of the consumer rights enshrined in Law 1480 of 2011, so that each quality attribute simultaneously constitutes a manifestation of regulatory compliance during the service cycle.

Put differently, service quality is the bridge between the normative ideal imposed by the law, what the organization actually does, and what the customer perceives. Regulatory compliance thus ceases to be an isolated legal obligation—it becomes a strategic value that, when made visible through consistent quality practices, strengthens consumer trust and fosters repurchase, retention, and recommendation (3R) as expressions of loyalty.

All of this is grounded in a process of conceptual adaptation and construction of AutoSERVQUAL that preserves its theoretical structure and original dimensions while incorporating the normative content of the Colombian Consumer Protection Statute. The model thereby moves beyond a purely legal or administrative approach, becoming an integrative framework for understanding regulatory compliance as a strategic element of automotive after-sales service management.

Ultimately, the strategic value of regulatory compliance does not lie solely in observing the law. It lies in the organization's capacity to translate those obligations into service experiences that the customer recognizes as quality—and that, through this pathway, strengthen trust and satisfaction.

3. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK: LAW 1480 OF 2011 AND AUTOMOTIVE AFTER-SALES SERVICE

3.1. Constitutional and Legal Foundations

Article 78 of the Political Constitution imposes on the State the duty to guarantee the quality of goods and services and to protect the consumer. Upon this constitutional foundation, Law 1480 of 2011 was enacted. It is not an ordinary statute: the Constitutional Court, in Judgment C-1141 of 2000, declared it a public order norm, meaning its provisions are mandatory and cannot be waived or modified to the detriment of the consumer.

For automotive after-sales service specifically, this law articulates five fundamental regulatory pillars, each with a direct correspondence in workshop operations:

Table 1. Regulatory Pillars of Law 1480/2011 Applied to Automotive After-Sales Service

Regulatory Pillar	Key Articles (Law 1480/2011)	Implication for After-Sales Service
Quality, suitability, and warranty	Arts. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	Reliable repairs, minimum warranty of 3 months or 2,000 km, use of original parts, written receipts for vehicle intake and delivery.
Information and advertising	Arts. 23, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33	Visible pricing, itemized invoices, binding advertising, truthful and timely information about the service.
Contractual protection	Arts. 37, 39, 41, 42	Clear terms, no abusive clauses, customer freedom of choice, comprehensible contracts.
Complaint management and compliance	Arts. 57, 58, 79	Response within 15 business days maximum, effective service channels, compliance with conciliation agreements.
Technical control and metrology	Arts. 68, 69, 71, 72	Calibrated diagnostic equipment, compliance with ICONTEC technical regulations, quality standard certification.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

4. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: PROPOSED INTEGRATIVE MODEL

4.1. The Proposed Model

Based on the theoretical and regulatory review, this article proposes an integrative analytical framework that relates two variables within an after-sales service value chain:

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE → DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Regulatory Compliance → Customer Satisfaction

(Adapted AutoSERVQUAL)

(3R: Repurchase, Retention, Recommendation)

Figure 1. Analytical model of research variables. Source: Prepared by the authors.

As a result of the integration among the legal framework, service quality theory, and customer satisfaction theory, the integrative conceptual model presented in Figure 2 is proposed, which synthesizes the principal conceptual contribution of this research.

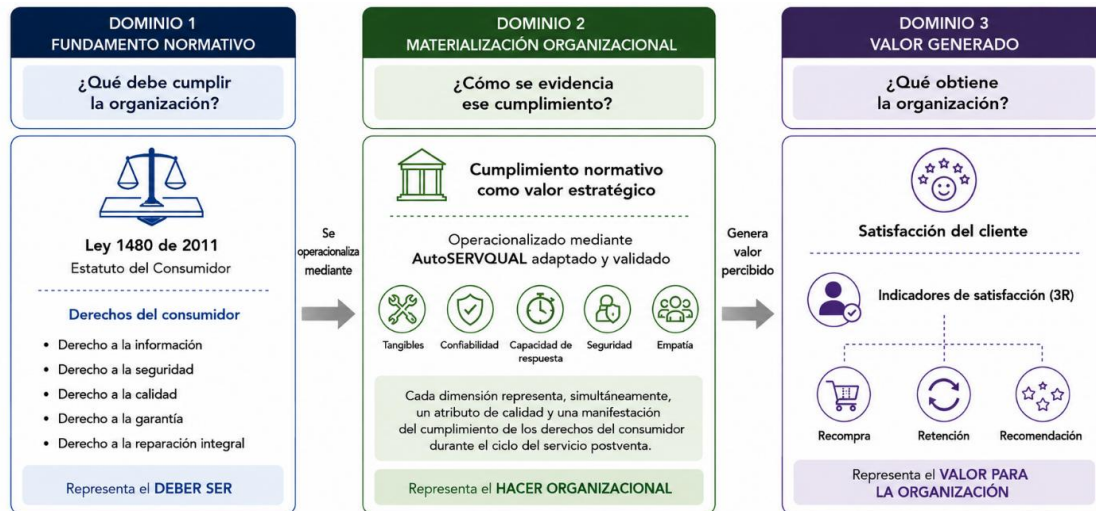


Figure 2. Conceptual framework of regulatory compliance as strategic value in automotive after-sales service. Source: Prepared by the authors based on Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), Gencer and Akkucuk (2017), Barney (1991), Kaplan and Norton (2004), Oliver (1980), Kotler and Keller (2016), and Law 1480 of 2011.

This proposal transcends an instrumental adaptation by conceptually reinterpreting the AutoSERVQUAL dimensions as observable expressions of regulatory compliance during the after-sales service cycle.

The developed concepts allow us to understand that service quality constitutes the mechanism through which regulatory compliance becomes perceptible to the consumer. On this basis, the following section presents the regulatory framework that provides the legal foundation for this proposal.

4.2. AutoSERVQUAL–Regulatory Correspondence

The central methodological result of this study is a matrix that connects the provisions of Law 1480 of 2011 with the dimensions of the AutoSERVQUAL model. This matrix enables the operationalization of regulatory compliance by converting it into observable indicators of service quality.

Table 2. Correspondence Between AutoSERVQUAL Dimensions and Law 1480/2011

AutoSERVQUAL Dimension	Related Articles (Law 1480/2011)	Observable Manifestation of Compliance
Tangibles	Arts. 7, 18, 68, 69, 71, 72	Equipment certification, reception infrastructure, adequate delivery area, visible quality standards.
Reliability	Arts. 6, 10, 12, 15, 23, 24, 27, 29	Technically reliable repairs, original parts, accurate records, delivery within promised deadlines.
Responsiveness	Arts. 11, 30, 42, 57, 58, 79	Equitable treatment, complaints resolved within ≤15 days, committed and available staff, conciliation compliance.
Assurance	Arts. 1, 8, 23, 26, 33	Transparent warranty information, reasonable and visible pricing, clear

		technical explanations to the customer.
Empathy	Arts. 13, 37, 41	Personalized attention, understanding of customer needs, flexibility in contractual conditions.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

5. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

5.1. Methodological Approach

This article follows a qualitative approach, descriptive-reflective in scope, and is developed through documentary review and normative analysis. Its purpose is not to measure or experiment, but to construct: a conceptual model that integrates service quality theory, consumer rights, and customer satisfaction, so that regulatory compliance may be reinterpreted as a strategic value in automotive after-sales service.

5.2. Research Design

The conceptual model was constructed in three complementary phases:

Table 3. Research Design Phases

Phase	Description	Result	Product
Documentary review	Analysis of scientific literature	Conceptual framework	Theoretical constructs
Normative analysis	Review of Law 1480, SIC, jurisprudence	Legal matrix	Normative correspondence
Conceptual integration	AutoSERVQUAL–Law 1480 correspondence	Integrative conceptual model	Proposed framework

Source: Prepared by the authors.

5.2.1. Documentary Selection Criteria

The documentary review combined two types of sources, each with specific search and selection criteria.

For scientific literature, priority was given to articles published in indexed journals (Scopus, Web of Science) across four thematic axes: service quality and its adaptation to the automotive sector (SERVQUAL, AutoSERVQUAL), customer satisfaction and repurchase behavior, and regulatory compliance as a source of strategic value. Both the seminal works that underpin each construct (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Oliver, 1980; Barney, 1991) and recent studies—published predominantly between 2019 and 2023—that demonstrate the current relevance and application of these frameworks in the automotive sector were included. Studies focused on sectors with no direct conceptual relationship to after-sales service (e.g., service quality in healthcare or education) were excluded, unless they contributed a cross-cutting theoretical development applicable to the model.

For normative and jurisprudential sources, the search focused on the current text of Law 1480 of 2011, its regulatory decrees, the Unified Circular of the Superintendence of Industry and Commerce (SIC) and its amendments, and jurisprudence from the Constitutional Court and the Civil Cassation Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice related to warranties, defective products, and consumer protection. The inclusion criterion was direct relevance to one of the five regulatory pillars identified in Section 3.1 (quality and suitability, information and advertising, contractual

protection, complaint management, and technical control and metrology); judicial pronouncements on consumer protection in contexts unrelated to tangible goods or technical services (e.g., financial services) were excluded as not directly applicable to automotive after-sales service.

The conceptual integration—that is, the construction of the correspondence matrix between the AutoSERVQUAL dimensions and the articles of Law 1480 (Section 4.2)—was carried out through content analysis: each identified normative provision was classified according to the AutoSERVQUAL dimension whose conceptual definition most closely describes the obligation or right it enshrines. This classification exercise is interpretive and constitutes the principal methodological contribution of the article, not a statistical procedure or an empirical validation of the instrument.

5.3. Model Construction

The conceptual model integrates three components: service quality theory, represented by AutoSERVQUAL; the Colombian legal framework for consumer rights; and customer satisfaction theory, expressed through the 3R framework. By articulating these three elements, it became possible to reinterpret the AutoSERVQUAL dimensions as observable indicators of regulatory compliance—and from there, an analytical model emerges that explains how that compliance can become a strategic value by strengthening satisfaction.

5.4. Scientific Rigor

The methodological rigor of the model rests on three elements. First, the theoretical support of the constructs employed, which are widely validated in the scientific literature. Second, the systematic integration between the AutoSERVQUAL instrument and the Colombian regulatory framework. Third, the conceptual construction process developed during the research, aimed at preserving the theoretical coherence of the instrument's original dimensions.

6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. From Regulatory Compliance to Strategic Value

The consumer law literature has studied regulatory compliance almost exclusively from the angle of obligation: what the provider must do to avoid sanctions, how the consumer is protected against non-compliance, what mechanisms exist to enforce warranty or repair rights. This is a legitimate but partial perspective. It treats compliance as a minimum floor—a condition of legality—and not as something capable of generating value beyond avoiding legal risk.

This perspective has historical justification: the Consumer Protection Statute was born precisely to correct a power asymmetry between providers and consumers, and its initial focus was naturally protective and punitive. But that same logic has left little room for asking what happens after the norm is complied with. If a workshop complies with the law, what does it gain beyond not being sanctioned?

This article contends that the answer lies in service quality. When a legal obligation—providing clear information, ensuring suitability, addressing complaints—translates into a practice that the customer effectively perceives during their workshop experience, that obligation ceases to be merely a regulatory requirement and becomes a quality attribute. And quality attributes, unlike legal obligations, build trust and can contribute to customer retention. Therein lies the conceptual shift this study proposes: it is not about relating two theoretical frameworks for the sake of doing so, but about demonstrating that one can be read through the other.

It is worth situating this argument against the recent international literature on automotive service quality, which has continued to empirically validate the dimensions of SERVQUAL and AutoSERVQUAL across different markets—Balinado et al. (2021) in the Philippines, Izogo and Ogba (2015) in Nigeria, Zygiaris et al. (2022) in Saudi Arabia, and Yapa and Fernando (2023) in Sri Lanka. This line of research has an earlier antecedent in Bouman and Van der Wiele (1992), who had already identified that automotive service required its own instrument, distinct from the generic SERVQUAL, giving conceptual rise to what Gencer and Akkucuk (2017) would later formalize as

AutoSERVQUAL. What all these studies share, however, is a common approach: they measure whether quality dimensions predict satisfaction, treating the country's legal framework as a contextual datum—mentioned, at most, in the introduction—and not as part of the model being measured.

That is precisely the gap this proposal occupies. Rather than adding another country to the list of empirical validations of AutoSERVQUAL, it proposes that its dimensions can be read in normative terms, so that quality measurement and compliance verification cease to be separate exercises. This reading also connects with a different discussion, closer to strategic management than to service quality: the literature on regulatory compliance as a source of strategic value, and not merely risk mitigation (Porter & Kramer, 2006; Madhani, 2014). While that literature has pointed to the general possibility that compliance generates strategic value, it has rarely explained the mechanism by which this occurs. This article proposes that AutoSERVQUAL—an already validated instrument, not a new one—can function as that mechanism: the channel through which regulatory compliance becomes observable in the customer experience. In this sense, the proposal does not compete with the empirical service quality literature or with the strategic compliance management literature—it does not seek an additional statistical validation of the instrument, nor new evidence that compliance "pays off"—but rather builds a conceptual bridge between them, showing how what one measures (quality) can be read as a manifestation of what the other studies (compliance).

6.2. AutoSERVQUAL as an Operationalization Mechanism

AutoSERVQUAL was designed to measure service quality in the automotive sector, and in this regard it has proven to be a robust instrument in prior literature. But its five dimensions—Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy—have a particularity that the original literature did not explore: each of them can also be read as a manifestation of consumer rights compliance.

Reliability, for example, is not merely a quality perception; it is, fundamentally, the reflection that the workshop honored the warranty as the law requires. Responsiveness is not solely an indicator of agile service; it also reveals whether the workshop addressed a petition, complaint, or claim within the legally mandated timeframe. Viewed in this light, AutoSERVQUAL ceases to be just a quality measurement instrument and becomes a mechanism that makes regulatory compliance observable—something that, until now, was verified exclusively through legal or administrative channels, and that this model allows to be also verified through the customer experience.

This does not mean the instrument changes its nature. It continues to measure quality. What changes is the interpretation of what that measurement reveals.

6.3. Implications of the Model

This model has implications at three distinct levels: theoretical, managerial, and practical. Distinguishing them prevents diluting the article's contribution in generalities and allows for precision about what changes, and for whom, at each level.

At the theoretical level, the principal contribution is conceptual rather than empirical: demonstrating that two bodies of literature that have developed independently—service quality measurement and consumer law—can be read as manifestations of the same phenomenon when they share the same unit of analysis, which in this case is the customer experience during the service cycle. This opens a scarcely explored avenue in the management literature: treating regulatory compliance not as an external constraint on service quality, but as part of its content.

At the managerial level, for an authorized workshop, this model has a direct implication: managing regulatory compliance no longer requires a logic separate from quality management. They are, in fact, the same management viewed from two angles. A workshop that measures its AutoSERVQUAL indicators and works to improve them is simultaneously strengthening its compliance with Law 1480, without needing a parallel system of legal control. This carries an additional effect in markets where authorized and unauthorized workshops coexist: regulatory compliance becomes a differentiating argument before the customer, not just before the regulator. A workshop can demonstrate

its compliance not as an abstract legal certificate, but as a tangible service experience—transparent treatment, honored warranties, timely responses. And that experience is precisely what drives repurchase, retention, and recommendation.

At the practical level, the most concrete implication concerns the design of service protocols. If each AutoSERVQUAL dimension corresponds to specific articles of Law 1480, a workshop could build its customer service checklists directly from that correspondence—for example, incorporating into the vehicle reception protocol the information elements required by Article 23, or into the delivery protocol the warranty periods established by Article 7. This translates a conceptual framework into a concrete operational tool, although its detailed design exceeds the scope of this article and remains an applied line for future work.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This article proposed a conceptual framework that reinterprets regulatory compliance in automotive after-sales service, understanding it not as mere adherence to Law 1480 of 2011, but as a strategic value that materializes through service quality. As stated from the introduction, the contribution does not consist of generating new data about the sector or empirically validating AutoSERVQUAL, but rather of demonstrating that this instrument, already validated in the literature, can be read in normative terms: its five dimensions do not only measure quality—they also make observable the compliance with consumer rights during the service cycle. Therein lies the central contribution: two frameworks that had developed separately—quality evaluation through AutoSERVQUAL and consumer rights protection—describe, in reality, deeply connected phenomena in the actual customer experience within a workshop.

The contribution of this study lies in building that bridge. By reinterpreting the AutoSERVQUAL dimensions as observable manifestations of regulatory compliance, the model offers a pathway for organizations to stop treating the law and quality as separate management concerns. Both converge in the same service experience, and that convergence is what strengthens customer trust and satisfaction, differentiating authorized from unauthorized workshops.

There remains, however, a clear limitation: this is a conceptual model built upon documentary review and normative analysis, not upon empirical field data. Therein lies the most evident line for future research—validating this model through studies that measure, in actual workshops, whether perceived regulatory compliance effectively translates into repurchase, retention, and recommendation behaviors. The question also remains open whether this same reinterpretation logic could be extended to other sectors where the relationship between regulation and service quality is equally close.

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