

# Customer Satisfaction toward Ride-Hailing Services in Kuantan, Pahang

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## Abstract

Ride-hailing services are on-demand vehicle acquisition services that rely on network connectivity and a specialized digital application via the Internet. Ride-hailing, often known as e-hailing, is an act in which a customer orders a customized ride online, typically through a smartphone application. As a part of Malaysia's transportation sector, it will continue to be competitive in contributing to the economy. It is, however, more challenging to keep current consumers happy than to attract new ones. There is no way for service providers to guarantee that their customers will continue to use their apps because of the ongoing threat of competition from comparable apps. This study examines factors associated with customer satisfaction toward ride-hailing services among Kuantan residents. Five independent factors associated with ride-hailing customer satisfaction are examined; tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. In this cross-sectional study, 160 Kuantan residents were surveyed. The study's findings found that customer satisfaction is strongly linked to all study's independent variables. This study will assist ride-hailing service providers in bettering their services while also spurring the economy. This study will also enrich the knowledge of ride-hailing services in Kuantan, Pahang. The findings of this study will help policymakers formulate sound public policies and programs to encourage citizens, particularly youth, to choose ride-hailing as their primary medium of transportation.

**Keywords:** Ride-Hailing, E-Hailing, Customer Satisfaction, Service Quality, Transportation Network Companies (TNCs)

## Introduction

The Internet and its supporting technologies have changed the way people communicate, interact, and transact in the digital age. Technology has improved people's quality of life since people can readily access information and conduct numerous daily tasks with smartphones. Most businesses have enhanced their communication with customers to increase sales and profits. Businesses must constantly keep up with technological trends and embrace creative business models to meet current demands. According to Almunawar et al (2020), one of the novel business ideas is mobile-based ride-hailing. Unlike traditional taxi businesses, a company that manages a ride-hailing platform does not own vehicles and does not need to hire drivers to run the service. It works by enticing car owners/drivers to register and agree

to the terms and conditions supplied and then collaborate to locate customers using the app available on their smartphones.

The most well-known transportation network firm that has challenged the traditional taxi industry is Uber (Cramer & Krueger, 2016). Besides that, many Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) provide ride-hailing services, such as Lyft, Grab (Malaysia), DiDi (China), and GO-JEK (Indonesia). They use sophisticated internet-based mobile applications on smartphones (Almunawar et al., 2020). According to Jang et al (2020), various fast-growing ride-hailing apps, including Uber, Didi, Lyft, Grab, Ola, and BlaBlaCar, have disrupted the pricey taxi business globally.

According to Woskow (2014), ride-hailing services are a subset of the sharing economy business model, which has continued to increase in acquiring transportation services. Jiang et al. (2020) contend that ride-hailing services have aided the country's economy by creating job opportunities. The ride-hailing app includes an integrated rating system that allows users to review their drivers. This condition encourages drivers to maintain their vehicles clean and deliver superior customer service, distinguishing these innovative ride-hailing services from traditional taxi services (Kavadias et al., 2016). Clewlow & Mishra (2017) discovered that the two primary reasons customers in metropolitan areas use ride-hailing services over driving their cars are to avoid parking challenges and prevent driving while intoxicated, which could result in an accident. Waiting periods for ride-hailing services are shorter and more dependable than those for taxis, making them more convenient to use. Hence, ride-hailing services' ease and benefits would entice more people to utilize them (Rayle et al., 2016).

Attracting new customers may be a challenge for ride-hailing service companies. However, maintaining existing customers is more complex than recruiting new potential customers (Kotler et al., 2017). The alternative appeal is the primary factor influencing users' ride-hailing service switching behaviour (Cheng et al., 2017). In this regard, none of the service providers can easily ensure consumers' continued usage of their apps, as the potential of alternate attraction from other similar apps is constantly present. They can download other service apps to their cellphones and any location without additional charges.

Much of the significant research on ride-hailing services has concentrated on the travel customer's loyalty to ride-hailing services (Lee & Wong, 2021) and the implications on ride-hailing service revenue (Caroline, 2018). However, limited studies provide a comprehensive picture of ride-hailing and consumer satisfaction, particularly in Kuantan, Pahang. This study is driven to address a research vacuum in this area by analyzing factors associated with customer satisfaction with ride-hailing services in Kuantan, Pahang. The research findings may benefit industry participants, policymakers, government agencies, and ride-hailing users by elucidating the requirements and concerns of consumers who utilize ride-hailing services.

## **Literature Review**

### **Ride-Hailing and Customer Satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction is a crucial factor in determining whether or not a client will remain a customer (Jin et al., 2012). Customer satisfaction can be defined as a customer's assessment of the extent to which their criteria have been met, referring to the gap between expectations and actual performance (Hanif et al., 2010). In terms of passenger satisfaction, satisfaction refers to the passenger experience following the receipt of service compared to their predetermined expectation (Morfoulaki et al., 2010; Li et al., 2019).

The concept of customer satisfaction has long been linked to service quality. According to Man et al (2019), to compete, ride-hailing companies must maintain high service quality

standards to assure consumer happiness. SERVQUAL, developed by Parasuraman et al (1985), has been adopted by most researchers for studying service quality across five significant dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

The explanation for these dimensions is as follows: (1) tangibility refers to an organization's physical environment, (2) reliability refers to an organization's ability to perform the service accurately, and dependable, and (3) responsiveness refers to an organization's ability to respond to customer requirements promptly and the employee's willingness to help and serve the consumers. (4) Assurance refers to employees' capacity to develop trust and instil confidence in customers based on their knowledge and competence, and (5) empathy refers to employees' ability to care and be concerned about the client (Saghier, 2015; Naik et al., 2010).

In general, tangible elements refer to the physical environment consisting of three components: design factors, social factors, and ambient factors (Moon, 2013). Khurshid et al (2012) found a positive relationship between tangibility and customer satisfaction with Pakistan's public transport services. A higher level of tangibility leads to a higher level of customer satisfaction. Khuong & Dai (2016) found that service tangibility significantly impacts customer satisfaction in local taxi companies in Vietnam.

Randhir (2018) stated that reliability promises a consistent and exact service delivery by getting it right the first time and every time. The statement guarantees the customer that service will be provided on time and accurate information will be provided without exceeding the time limit. According to Balachandran & Hamzah (2017), reliability is service steadiness, regularity, and transportation services. For example, ride-hailing drivers should arrive on time, be honest about journey length, have good communication skills, and use effective scheduled routes to establish and maintain customer loyalty. Horsu & Yeboah (2015) discovered that reliability was substantially connected with customer satisfaction in their study on minicab taxi services in Ghana. Similarly, Khuong & Dai (2016); Mudenda & Guga (2017) testified that reliability is highly related to customer satisfaction with public transportation services.

Responsiveness refers to a firm's ability to assist the customer and provide accurate time service and was found to be positively related to customer satisfaction as well (Siew et al., 2011; Saghier & Nathan, 2013; Hong & Marimuthu, 2014; Al-Azzam, 2015; Minh et al., 2015). Randhir (2018) contends that responsiveness is the willingness to deliver quick services in helping customers by fulfilling the customers' needs and expectations. The responsive drivers will keep the customers well informed of any delay or inability to deliver services. Akram et al. (2020) also discussed two crucial factors: willingness and promptness in presenting services.

Tazreen (2012) believes that those that instil confidence and trust in their clients will achieve a high level of certainty. In his previous study, Randhir (2018) defined assurance as personnel knowledge and civility in behaviour. Service providers can create trust and confidence among customers to increase customer satisfaction. Assurance guarantees the delivery's integrity and usability to the recipients. Assurance refers to someone's assessment of knowledge and capacity to provide trust and confidence, which includes expertise, civility, credibility, and security. In this case, ride-hailing drivers demonstrate assurance services by being highly timely when it comes time to pick up the passengers at the requested place and ensure that they arrive on time and safely at their destination. According to Akram et al (2020), individual services are presented well if both parties, ride-hailing drivers and passengers, are good communicators, energetic, and accept both objectives, needs, and expectations.

Empathy refers to an employee's attitude toward a client based on an emotional experience, and it has been demonstrated to be significantly positively associated with customer satisfaction (Hassan et al., 2013; Saghier & Nathan, 2013; Al-Azzam, 2015; Bahadur et al., 2018). Empathy can also be defined as providing care and specialized attention to someone or clients, involving access, communication, and understanding. This study evaluates the empathy factor to determine the level of happiness among consumers who use ride-hailing services by understanding the customers' needs and wants and providing services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Tazreen (2012) stated that empathy is a positive behaviour in taking care of and personalizing regard for the firm through giving services to customers. Empathy is the ability to put oneself in the shoes of another human being, a learned skill or life behaviour that involves transferring and understanding feelings and emotions. Happiness, disappointment, enthusiasm, grief, discomfort, and perplexity are all ways to communicate empathy.

Based on the above discussion, the present study developed several hypotheses as follows

H<sup>1</sup>: There is a significant relationship between tangibility and customer satisfaction toward ride-hailing services.

H<sup>2</sup>: There is a significant relationship between reliability and customer satisfaction toward ride-hailing services.

H<sup>3</sup>: There is a significant relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction toward ride-hailing services.

H<sup>4</sup>: There is a significant relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction toward ride-hailing services.

H<sup>5</sup>: There is a significant relationship between empathy and customer satisfaction toward ride-hailing services.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs a cross-sectional study to examine factors associated with customer satisfaction toward ride-hailing services among Kuantan residents. The study's unit of analysis is individual residents in Kuantan who uses ride-hailing services. The sample size of the study is 160 respondents. The questionnaires were distributed to the respondents through a google form. This study employs a purposive sampling technique since only those who have experienced using ride-hailing can only respond to questionnaires. Statistical Packages for the Social Science (SPSS) version 26 was utilized to examine the correlation between service quality dimensions (i.e., tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) and customer satisfaction with ride-hailing services.

#### *Profile of Respondents*

The demographic profile of respondents is depicted in Table 1. Females make up 58.1 per cent of this study, which is slightly higher than males. The majority of respondents were between the ages of 26 and 35. The majority of respondents worked in the public and private sectors, and the majority of them lived in cities.

Table 1

#### *Profile of Respondents*

Items	N= 160	
	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	67	41.9
Female	93	58.1
<b>Age</b>		
15-25 years old	26	16.3
26-35 years old	93	58.1
36-45 years old	29	18.1
46 years old above	12	7.5
<b>Working Sector</b>		
Private Sector	60	37.5
Government Sector	63	38.8
Self-employed	13	8.1
Retired	1	0.6
Student	13	8.1
Unemployed	11	6.9
<b>Living Area</b>		
Urban	69	43.1
Semi Urban	65	40.6
Rural	26	16.3

### Results and Discussion

Table 2 depicts the relationship between the study's independent variables (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) and the dependent variable (customer satisfaction toward ride-hailing). The Pearson correlation analysis found that all the study's independent variables significantly associate customer satisfaction with ride-hailing services. The p-value is less than .005. Besides that, the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable is positive. The study's findings also found that the relationship between variables is strong as the r value for all variables is more than .800. Hence, all the alternate hypotheses of the study ( $H^1$  until  $H^5$ ) can be accepted.

Table 2  
*Correlation results*

		Customer Satisfaction
<b>Tangibility</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.860
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	160
<b>Reliability</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.865
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	160
<b>Responsiveness</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.855
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	160
<b>Assurance</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.828
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	160
<b>Empathy</b>	Pearson Correlation	0.835
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	160

The study's findings are consistent with previous research. Balachandran & Ibrahim (2017) conducted a study on ride-hailing services in Malaysia and discovered that tangibility was significantly associated with customer satisfaction. Moon (2013) proposed that expectations about physical characteristics influence views about the environment and seemingly unrelated service attributes. Because services are intangible and frequently require the client's presence during the operation, measurable or physical elements may significantly impact the quality standards of the service. The comfort and cleanliness of the seats make the customers pleasure to be in the automobile on the journey. Aside from that, a well-dressed driver might increase ride-hailing customers' satisfaction.

In terms of reliability, the findings of this study are similar to (Horsu & Yeboah, 2015; Stefano et al., 2015). They also discovered a link between reliability and customer satisfaction. In this study, responsiveness and customer satisfaction were also connected. Responsiveness assesses the availability and readiness to give services as soon as possible. It measures the availability and willingness to provide the services promptly. Clients should be able to use the service quickly and easily. The clients should access the service smoothly and conveniently. Moreover, it covers the ability to effectively solve problems and handle customer complaints (Ruamchart, 2021). Ruamchart (2021) found that the highest score for both expectation and perception in the responsiveness attribute was "ride-hailing service providers delivering their service promptly".

According to the current study's findings, assurance has a significant association with customer satisfaction. It addresses the capacity to effectively manage problems and handle client complaints (Ruamchart, 2021). Ruamchart (2021) discovered that "ride-hailing service providers delivering their service promptly" received the highest expectation and perception scores in the responsiveness attribute. The findings corroborated those of (Pakurar et al.,

2019). According to Pakurar et al (2019), assurance is inextricably tied to the sense of security when conducting a banking transaction in Jordan. Customers of Jordanian banks indicated satisfaction with their interactions with the bank, showing that bank employees exhibit knowledge, civility, and the ability to inspire client confidence. In terms of empathy, a study conducted by Bahadur et al (2018) discovered that workers who exhibit empathy-like behaviour could positively impact customer satisfaction and loyalty. The warm and helpful personalities of the drivers make the passengers feel at ease and glad to use the ride-hailing services.

### **Conclusion**

The current study has identified the factors associated with customer satisfaction with ride-hailing services in Kuantan, Pahang. The factors that contribute to the achievement of customer satisfaction are tangibility, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy. The service provider can use the findings of this study to improve and boost the quality of its ride-hailing services. Service providers must deliver the highest quality services possible to entice customers to use their services. As previously stated, various transportation network firms provided transportation to locals.

Service providers can use the study findings to improve their ride-hailing services to satisfy clients. Ride-hailing companies can improve service quality in numerous ways. They must arrive on time, be honest about the length of the travel, have good communication skills, and use effective scheduled routes to build and sustain client satisfaction. Ride-hailing services are more enjoyable for passengers because of the drivers' kind and helpful personalities. Customers enjoy their journeys in the car because of the car's comfortable seats and spotless cleanliness. Aside from that, a well-dressed driver may improve the experience of clients who hail a ride-hailing vehicle. The service providers must ensure that their vehicles are always clean and that customers' wait times are less than taxis.

The introduction of ride-hailing services has provided an option for individuals who rely on public transit. It is also projected to alleviate congestion concerns in Malaysian cities. Ride-hailing services benefit and save time for both drivers and riders. Passengers can use their smartphones to book cabs, eliminating the need to wait on the side of the road or the chance of not being picked up by a driver. Simultaneously, drivers can go right to their passengers without looking for them. With the rise of the ride-hailing services business and the essential role of this service industry, there is a need to explore further the service quality aspects and customer satisfaction on ride-hailing services, particularly in the Malaysian context. It is critical to gain a deeper grasp of client perceptions and expectations in these competitive times, which influence satisfaction levels.

More studies must be conducted to improve ride-hailing services in Kuantan. On the other hand, future studies should consider the sample size of respondents and open the survey questions to a more extensive range of respondents. It will assist the researcher in gathering additional data in diverse locations and collecting the data accurately following the specified objectives. Since this study was limited to the Kuantan community only, the scope of future study could be broadened and expanded to include other districts in Pahang. It is also suggested that future researchers can use both mediating and moderating variables to understand overall customer satisfaction better. Aside from that, employing the probability sampling technique will assist future researchers in producing significant and interesting study outcomes.

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