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Effect of Ride-Hailing Service Factors on Generation Z's Satisfaction in Kathmandu Valley

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Abstract

This study analyzed the factors that affect Gen Z's satisfaction level with ride-hailing services in Kathmandu Valley. It used a cross-sectional research design, where data was collected using a structured questionnaire from 188 respondents residing in Kathmandu Valley during the study period. The samples were selected using the convenience sampling technique. The descriptive statistics Pearson's correlation and hierarchical regression were adopted for data analysis. The results show that all the variables, driver's attitude, service reliability, and price, were positively correlated with Gen Z's satisfaction. Among these variables, the driver's attitude stood out as the most influencing factor, followed by price and service reliability for inducing satisfaction among Gen Z. The study can be useful in comprehending the major factors for Gen Z's satisfaction in terms of ride-hailing services, which can be used in their strategic decision-making. Future researchers can utilize the findings and broaden the scope in terms of variables, methods, and population for further knowledge elaboration.

***Keywords*:** Price, Service reliability, Driver's intention, Gen Z's satisfaction

Introduction

Ride-hailing platforms surfaced in the early 21st century as transformative advancements in the transport industry, fundamentally altering the manner in which individuals commute by leveraging digital technology to promptly connect drivers and passengers (Cohen & Kietzmann, 2014). Service users can opt to utilize a mobile app or a web interface to provide their location and request a driver, allowing them to view theestimated time of arrival and driver availability prior to the assignment of a vehicle. Payments can be processed either within the app or through external means, with both the user and driver receiving their respective compensations (Mitropoulos et al., 2021).

The rapid growth of ride-hailing solutions has attracted significant attention from academics and policymakers, particularly in terms of their implications for urban transport, traffic congestion, and environmental consequences (Henao & Marshall, 2019). Moreover, the sharing economy, encompassing ride-hailing platforms, has disrupted traditional business approaches by emphasizing accessibility over ownership, thereby shifting consumer behaviors and expectations (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). For example, ride-hailing service platforms like Uber, Lyft, Grab, Didi Chuxing, Pathao, Ola cabs, inDrive, Tootle, etc., have relatively changed the perspective ofthe public riding in different parts of the world (see Hamal, 2019; Rayle et al., 2016).

Generation Z (Gen Z), who is also called i-Gen, is the first internet generation population. This generation is flexible and willing to accept every tech-based solution for quick results. However, they also have prompt switching behavior when they once felt an unpleasant experience (Parbohastuti, 2023). Apart from that, as opined by Roberta Katz, this generation is more collaborative and pragmatic (Katz, 2022) and relies on referrals and reviews of their own cohorts on online sources when it comes to accepting the value offered by businesses (Hieu & Loan, 2022). Therefore, it is always a challenge to retain such customers when it comes to commute business.

In Nepal, especially in Kathmandu Valley, ride-hailing services like Pathao, Tootle, and inDrive are increasingly popular choices for daily commuters due to more efficient and cost-effective alternatives to the often-unreliable existing public transit options (Hamal, 2019). However, despite

their growing popularity, these platforms also face persistent challenges regarding their service offerings, which can be attributed to several factors such as difficulties in locating and booking rides, extended waiting times, surge pricing, safety concerns, unprofessional driver conduct, regulatory hurdles, and inconsistent service quality (Ghimire, 2023; Hamal & Huijsmans, 2021; Prasain, 2024; Singh & Sah, 2022). Such issues have widened the gap between the current state of ride-hailing services and the ideal scenario—where high travel demand is met with an efficient, dependable public transit alternative (Hensher, 2008). Addressing this gap is crucial for better customer satisfaction and the long-term success of ride-hailing companies.

Besides, Gen Z, who has the highest demographic distribution in Kathmandu Valley (National Statistics Office, 2021) and the significant customers of ride-hailing services (Singh & Sah, 2022), should be made happy for the long-term sustainability of such companies. Therefore, it is imperative to determine the factors that likely affect the level of satisfaction among Gen Z cohorts. A plethora of researchers have claimed numerous determining factors for ride-hailing service satisfaction. For example, Kumar et al. (2022) identified five factors, i.e., comfort, reliability, security of booking App., and responsiveness, where reliability was found to be the most promising factor for ride-hailing. Likewise, Ali et al. (2022) found comfort, convenience, privacy, security, fare system, social system, and safety as the major factors. Similarly, Shaikh et al. (2019) also found convenience, real-time location, ride-sharing mobile app., high perceived value, and quality of information available as the vital components. In addition, Aisyah et al. (2024) found ride-hailing drivers' activities to be the only prominent factor in passengers' satisfaction. In addition, Assegaff (2020) found price as the dominant factor for customer satisfaction, among other factors like service quality, service benefit, price, corporate image, and system quality. These studies highlighted that the presence of both the intrinsic and extrinsic components is vital for satisfaction. However, Santos (2002) claimed that customers highly value the effectiveness of the tangible actions of service companies while delivering services. In addition, Gen Z is highly pragmatic (Katz, 2022), i.e., relatively value extrinsic

actions and are result-oriented. In a similar vein, we also believe that extrinsic actions have a likely direct effect on the ride-hailing service takers. Further, the resources related to specific tangible factors are scant when it comes to addressing the Gen Z cohort in a Nepalese context. Therefore, this study tries to analyze the directly observable major factors like overall service reliability (which incorporates visible actions performed for maintaining all-time services., timely action execution, driver's rating visibility, and ride timing), the riders' or drivers' observable attitude (especially the behavior they show in the whole period of pick up to drop, i.e., courteousness, price bargaining, and empathy behavior) and price (i.e., price-offering consistency, relative price in terms of distance).

In this backdrop, we raised a significant research question to address the knowledge gap in the Nepalese context, specifically Kathmandu Valley: What is the degree of effect of service reliability, driver's attitude, and price on Gen Z's satisfaction in ride-hailing services in Kathmandu Valley? Besides, the following specific objectives were set to ascertain the answer:

- To identify the level of satisfaction with ride-hailing services among Gen Z.
- To examine the associations between service reliability, driver's attitude, and price on Gen Z's satisfaction.
- Finally, we will analyze the degree of effect of service reliability, driver attitude, and price on Gen Z's satisfaction.

Literature Review

Customer satisfaction is a critical post-sale evaluation in which a customer's perception of a product or service meets or exceeds their expectations, leading to satisfaction or falls short, resulting in dissatisfaction (Blackwell, 1995; Kotler & Keller, 2006). Expectations are what customers anticipate receiving, while perceived performance is their experience with the product. This comparison, as Oliver (2010) noted, is central to understanding customer satisfaction, involving both pre-purchase expectations and post-purchase perceptions.

Customer satisfaction with ridesharing services is essential for ridesharing platforms as it

impacts customer retention, loyalty, and word-of-mouth referrals (Gerpott et al., 2001). Understanding satisfaction with ridesharing services is vital due to customers' unique characteristics. Lai and Chen (2011) assert that ride-sharing service satisfaction is achieved when customer expectations are met. Morfoulaki et al. (2010) defined passenger satisfaction as how the service experience compares to predefined expectations. Identifying customer satisfaction factors is crucial as it aligns with customer needs, enhances market share, and justifies the services provided (Zulkiffli et al., 2019). In addition, retaining satisfied customers also reduces marketing costs associated with acquiring new ones (Datta et al., 2017). Şener (2018) found that satisfied customers are more inclined to recommend ridesharing services, further expanding the user base. Therefore, it is vital to comprehend the components of satisfaction that improve customers' loyalty, increase profitability, and improve the overall platform's sustainability (Hawlitschek et al., 2016).

Price is a significant factor in customer satisfaction, particularly ride-hailing/sharing services (Assegaff, 2020). It refers to the monetary amount charged for a service (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012). Button and Hensher (2001) argued that price is a crucial determinant of service affordability and value. Anderson et al. (1994) highlight that a reasonable price relative to service quality influences customer choices. Yan et al. (2019) found that while dynamic pricing during peak hours might cause dissatisfaction, it generally improves customer satisfaction by effectively balancing supply and demand. In this backdrop, it is hypothesized that;

H_1: Price has a significant positive influence on Gen Z's satisfaction.

Likewise, service reliability is a major dimension that determines customer satisfaction (Kumar et al., 2022). It is regarding the punctuality of service, time taken during the journey, and consistency in the provision of services (McKnight et al., 1986). According to Horsu and Yeboah (2015), on-time services and accurate arrivals are reliability attributes that significantly impact customer satisfaction. In addition, reliability has been emphasized as a crucial factor for ride-hailing services (see Jusoh and Ridzuan, 2022; Man et al., 2019). In this regard, it is posited that,

H_2: Service Reliability has a significant positive influence on Gen Z's satisfaction.

Attitude incorporates an expression of favor or disfavor behavior by evaluation of events or entities (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). In ride-sharing/hailing services, drivers/riders are the main service executor, and their attitude matters to the customers. For instance, Aisyah et al. (2024) and Sabab et al. (2023) found that the driver's attitude significantly affects customer satisfaction. Likewise, Hossain et al. (2022) mentioned the necessity of continuing to train the drivers so that they act professionally and politely to the customer. Thus, it is claimed that,

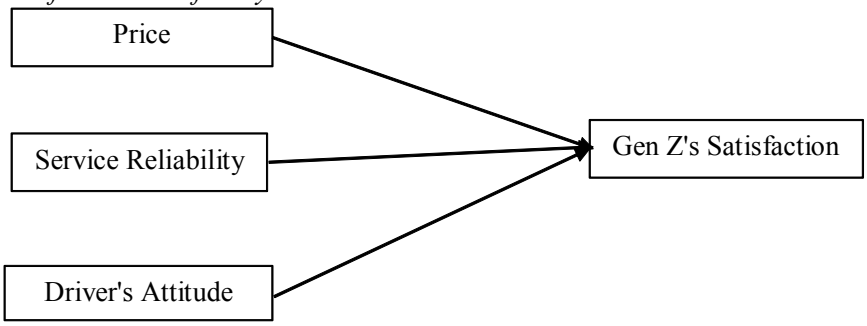
H_3: Driver's Attitude has a significant positive influence on Gen Z's satisfaction.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was drawn on the basis of a review of extant literature. It tries to show the theoretical explanation of the different ride-hailing factors that have an effect on Gen Z's satisfaction.

Figure 1

Conceptual framework of study variables



Research Methods

This study analyzed the extrinsic factors that influence Gen Z's satisfaction, so it followed the objective ontological path with the post-positivist epistemological reflection of "*tentative truth*" rather than "*absolute truth"* (Popper, 1959) and value-free axiological dimension. In this process, the study's activities were structured under a cross-sectional research design using quantitative tools. The study approached 210 Gen Z cohorts aged 16 to 27 from three different districts of Kathmandu Valley. The age group above 15 was considered independent decision-makers (Wray-Lake et al.,

2010) and took the ride-hailing services, so the age group from 16 was included in the study. During this process, respondents were given detailed instructions with full autonomy to decline at any time to control response bias as well as to maintain ethical standards. Even though convenience sampling was used, population criteria were fully adhered to while selecting samples to handle likely selection bias. Only 188 valid responses (i.e., 89.52% response rate) were finalized for data analysis.

Table 1

Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	91	48.40
	Male	97	51.60
Age	16-20	105	55.85
	21-25	83	44.15
Current Address	Bhaktapur	20	10.64
	Kathmandu	137	72.87
	Lalitpur	31	16.49
Monthly Income (Rs.)	0 - 10000	113	60.11
	10001 - 20000	31	16.49
	20001 - 30000	21	11.17
	> 30001	23	12.23
Education Level	School	2	1.06
	High School	34	18.09
	Undergraduate	131	69.68
	Graduate	21	11.17

Sources: Survey data calculation, 2024

The survey-structured questionnaire was extracted from different studies (i.e., Ahmed et al., 2021; Hou et al., 2021; Kurniawati et al., 2021; Man et al., 2019; Sikder et al., 2021) and modified some words for Nepalese respondents' comprehension. The questionnaire was divided into two

sections, where the first part includes the demographic contents with the major variables' items in the second part. For simplicity, the 5-point Likert scale was used with a scale of 1 and 5 as the extreme points, representing strongly disagree and strongly agree, respectively. Subject experts and English academics examined the questionnaire draft to ensure content validity and comprehensibility.

Once the data was received, data management procedures were conducted using standardized values, boxplots and Cook's distance less than 1 for outliers, Q-Q plots, Mahalanobis significance for normality (both univariate and multi-variables) test, and the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for multi-collinearity tests (Burns & Burns, 2008). In addition, inter-item reliability was also examined, where Cronbach Alphas (α) greater than 0.7 were achieved, ensuring the consistency of question items (see Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Results and Discussion

The descriptive and correlation analysis in Table 2 shows that the mean value of customer satisfaction is 3.660 (which is higher than the scale midpoint of 3) with negative skewness, indicating the satisfaction of Gen Z with the services offered by the ride-hailing companies in terms of price, reliability, and driver's attitude. Likewise, the correlation coefficients r of all relationships show significantly moderate linkage (i.e., $0.4 < r < 0.6$) between customer satisfaction and price, reliability, and driver's attitude (McClenaghan, 2024).

Table 2

Descriptive and correlation analysis

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Alpha (items)	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*
1. Price	3.333	0.815	0.839(5)	1	0.63**	0.65**	0.50**
2. Service Reliability	3.429	0.702	0.781(5)		1	0.64**	0.42**
3. Driver's attitude	3.362	0.695	0.803(5)			1	0.58**
4. Customer satisfaction	3.660	0.770	0.755(5)				1
Skewness				-0.542	-0.631	-0.734	-0.654
Kurtosis				0.137	1.186	1.607	0.773

***=0.05 level of significance*

Sources: Survey data calculation, 2024

The hierarchical regression analysis in Table 3 shows that the independent variables (i.e., price, service reliability, and driver's attitude) explain the variance in the dependent variable (Gen Z's satisfaction) by 57.4% with the significant F value [i.e., $F(3, 184) < 0.01$]. Likewise, all the independent variables significantly positively affect Gen Z's satisfaction, supporting the claims of hypotheses H1, H2, and H3. Among them, the driver's attitude stood as a relatively high affecting factor (i.e., standardized beta = 0.325), succeeded by price and service reliability, respectively.

Table 3

Hierarchical regression analysis

Model	Intercept	Price	Service Reliability	Driver's Attitude	R^2	F
1	1.82	0.552***			0.342	96.586***
		(9.828)				
		0.585				
2	0.786	0.325***	0.522***		0.511	96.600***
		(5.779)	(7.996)			
		0.344	*0.476*			
3	0.397	0.282***	0.325***	0.360***	0.574	82.552***
		(5.286)	(4.513)	(5.210)		
		0.298	*0.296*	*0.325*		

****=0.01 significance level, values in parenthesis represent t-value, and standardized beta values are in italics.*

Sources: Survey data calculation, 2024

These findings reveal that Gen Z considers price, service reliability, and the driver's attitude as significant factors in boosting satisfaction. The results also tally with prior researchers' findings. For example, as per the price, Anderson et al. (1994) found that the tradeoff between offer price and service quality determines the customer's choice. Likewise, Assegaff (2020) found a significant effect of price on satisfaction in ride-hailing services. Similarly, in the case of service reliability, this study's finding matches with Jusoh and Ridzuan (2022) and Man et al. (2019) studies, where they highlighted the need for reliable services to achieve customer satisfaction. Finally, the driver's attitude-related result also mirrors the findings of the prior ride-hailing services studies (see Aisyah

et al., 2024; Sabab et al., 2023). Therefore, it could authenticate the positive effect of price, service reliability, and the driver's attitude on Gen Z's satisfaction level.

Conclusion and Implications

Understanding customer satisfaction is pivotal to any business's sustainability. This is analogous to ride-hailing services as well. Ride-hailing services are gradually becoming popular among the younger generation in Kathmandu Valley. This service provider, e.g., inDrive, Pathao, Tootle, etc., should always know their customers' ever-changing needs to achieve long-term success. Therefore, this study analyzed the factors that have likely influenced Gen Z's satisfaction who are currently residing in Kathmandu Valley. The study collected the data using a structured questionnaire from 188 respondents and employed statistical measures like descriptive, correlation, and hierarchical regression to analyze the effect. The study identified the driver's attitude as the strongest positive influencer, followed by price and service reliability regarding Gen Z's satisfaction with ride-hailing services.

The study results can be useful for ride-hailing service providers. Based on the findings, we suggest that these companies should focus on fostering professional, ethical values among the drivers and train for effective courteousness in treating Gen Z. In addition, the price reasonability in terms of distance and regularity in services by maintaining takeoff-drop consistency would be the area for consideration.

The study limited its scope with few influencing tangible variables of customer satisfaction on ride-hailing services among Gen Z in Kathmandu Valley, which also limits the generalizability in a broader context. However, it can act as a stepping stone for further exploration. Apart from that, future researchers can increase the likely variables and use both the qualitative and quantitative methods with a broader context beyond Gen Z and Kathmandu Valley for further knowledge elaboration on ride-hailing services' customer satisfaction.

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Authors' Contribution

LS has contributed to Conception of the study, Design of the study, and final approval of the version of the manuscript. BM has contributed to Data collection, drafting, and final approval of the version of the manuscript. And NB contributed to analysis of data, interpretation of data, and final approval of the version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in authorship and publication of the research paper in this journal.

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