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*Research Article*

# Customer Decision-Making Factors for Taxi Booking Apps: A Comparative Analysis of Uber, Careem, and Bolt in Qassim City, Saudi Arabia

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**Abstract**

This study aims to identify the factors influencing consumers' choice of three taxi booking mobile applications in Qassim: Uber, Careem, and Bolt. The suggested independent factors are marketing mix, mobile applications, and customer behavior. Moreover, the research is based on the survey methodology to study the relationship between these variables and customer choice of applications. An online questionnaire is used to collect the data. The sample study consisted of 419 users of three taxi applications (Uber, Careem, and Bolt). Additionally, frequency was used to describe the study samples and apply the appropriate statistical tests to the research hypotheses. The results of the study show that there is a statistically significant relationship between offered service, cash payment methods, car cleanliness, car model, customer service presence, customer income level, and influential social networks and customer choice for one of the available applications for booking a taxi. As well, it indicates a high rate of Bolt application users, which is considered a local application compared to its competitors in the market (Uber and Careem). Accordingly, the recommendations were written about the importance of focusing on the factors related to consumers' choice of applications.

**Keywords**: Marketing mix, Taxi Booking Applications, SPSS statistical Analysis Program

## INTRODUCTION

The taxi service industry has undergone several stages of development in the Kingdom, with regulations and legislation specifically tailored to this sector being issued. With the increasing demand over the years, significant changes have been made to the regulations to improve the quality of services provided and to allow establishments room for expansion and investment. It is worth noting the "diversity of operation methods for these services in past decades, ranging from roaming city taxis to airport services and others via telephone. With the rapid technological advancement and the transformation of many traditional businesses into tech-savvy ones that keep pace with the characteristics of the

current era in terms of ease and speed, the process of passenger transportation and the use of public taxis have evolved into a more flexible, faster, and easier process. Beneficiaries can now request a taxi with just a few taps on their smartphones through applications that have become available and accessible in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabiaof Saudi Arabia, such as Uber, Careem, and Easy Taxi, which compete to attract customers.

The transportation and transit sector is of no less importance than other economic sectors in the Kingdom, as the government has shown clear interest in the services of this sector in general and in vehicle routing applications in particular. Companies providing supportive services for transportation and transit compete to provide and market their services. It is noteworthy that the industry's innovations and achievements will increase market demand and growth opportunities, estimated to be worth billions of dollars by 2025 [1].

This study aims to identify the characteristics that influence consumers' choices among three taxi-booking mobile applications in Qassim: Uber, Careem, and Bolt. The marketing mix, mobile applications, and customer behavior are the proposed independent factors. Furthermore, the study uses a survey-based approach to evaluate the relationship between these characteristics and client application preferences.

Studying the factors influencing the choice between these three applications contributes to improving the quality of these services in the future. It also helps marketing executives gain a clear understanding of consumer behavior regarding electronic services for booking taxis.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of the Sakunlertvattana study [2] was to identify the factors influencing consumers' decisions in choosing among the three most popular ride-hailing applications in Bangkok: Uber, Grab Taxi, and Easy Taxi. The study examined the relationship between the marketing mix, mobile applications, consumer behavior, brand, and demographic characteristics influencing consumers' decisions. The study highlighted the factors that made users prefer Uber over Easy Taxi and Grab Taxi, and vice versa.

Another study [3] intended to understand the success and growth factors of Uber in the United States compared to its direct competitor Lyft. The study sought to understand the reasons behind Uber's exponential growth compared to Lyft. As shown in Fig. 1, Uber has tremendous consumer awareness, as evidenced by its global expansion and significant investment from investors, having invested around $15 billion in 2016. As for pricing and availability, both applications offer roughly the same level of service during booking, making brand perception a key factor in influencing consumer choices.

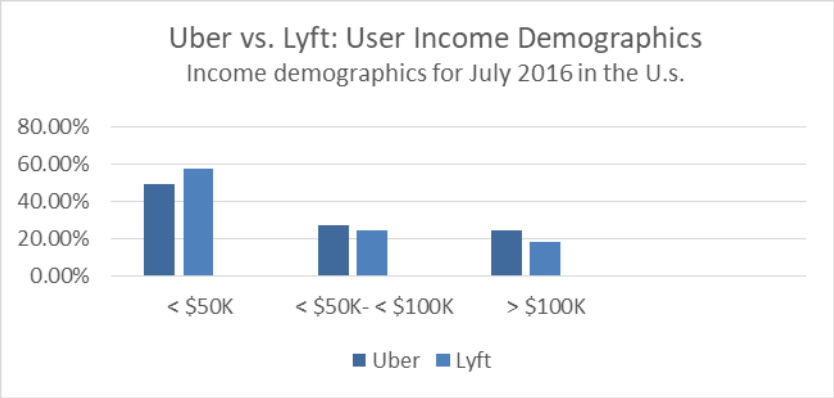


**Figure 1.** Uber vs. Lyft: User income demographics [3]

As well as It was also found that Uber users have higher incomes compared to Lyft users. As seen in Fig. 2, Uber has a higher percentage of users in the income brackets of $50,000 to $100,000 annually and over $100,000 annually, while Lyft users have a higher percentage in the income bracket below $50,000 annually.

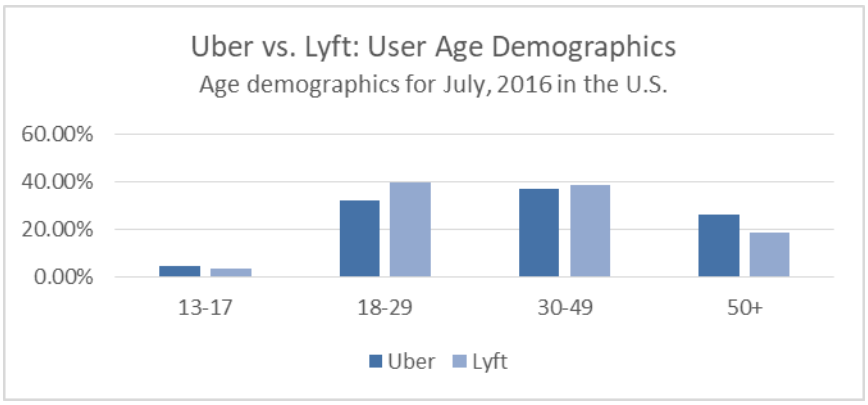


**Figure 2.** Uber vs. Lyft: User age demographics [3]

Skok, W. et al. [4] conducted a study to obtain opinions and suggestions from potential consumers of ride-hailing applications and understand their demands for this service. The study focused on Uber and Hailo, the most popular and successful applications in both the American and European markets, respectively. It was found that both companies adopted costly strategies to attract new users, such as offering free rides to newly registered users, a method commonly used among global competitors.

Bassey et al. [5] shed light on the changing dynamics of Calabar's transportation industry, highlighting the growing importance of factors such as convenience, cleanliness, ride comfort, safety, and cost-related incentives in shaping customer preferences between e-cab services and traditional taxis. The findings highlight the need for e-cab drivers to focus on

service quality, operational efficiency, and competitive pricing strategies to meet consumer expectations and maintain a strong market presence.

Another study [6] used a modified RECSA model to analyze how service quality affects customer satisfaction with Uber rides in Ernakulam. Research indicates that perceived reliability significantly impacts consumer satisfaction. Customers believe Uber cabs are reliable and timely. Customers pick Uber for its seamless ride experience. The study found that customer satisfaction is influenced by service quality elements such as perceived reliability, comfort, driver behavior, safety, availability, price, discounts, and promotional activities. According to the regression results, perceived reliability has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. Passengers' happiness depends on elements such as availability, prompt arrival, smooth ride, safety, driver behavior, route knowledge, and affordability.

Ramasamy et al. [7] searched for the elements that influence taxi passengers' happiness when choosing a cab service in Bhubaneswar. Statistical software such as IBM SPSS Statistics was utilized to evaluate the data collected throughout the investigation. Taxi passengers were selected at random and given questionnaires to complete for additional analysis using analysis and logistic regression. According to the analysis, the aforementioned criteria accounted for 54.8% of consumer satisfaction with taxi services, with the remainder (45.2%) attributed to other factors.

Hayder, N. B. [8] identified three independent variables that positively impact customer satisfaction: quality, pricing, and reliability. Most customers were aware of the costs they paid for services. Females were the majority of users, with few males. Coefficient analysis was used to determine the link between independent and dependent variables affecting customer satisfaction. The variables were analyzed using both linear regression and correlation. Price has a high positive correlation with consumer satisfaction when selecting a taxi. Customers in Dhaka prefer price strategy among four variables.

According to Hanif et al. [9], the Uber Cabs Call-a-Cab service was in high demand. Cab services offer GPS tracking and female drivers to ensure the safety of female passengers, particularly at night.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of the research can be divided into:

- ***Academic Importance of the Research:***

According to the studies and research that have discussed the research topic with varying cognitive dimensions and geographical differences, the importance of this research scientifically lies in elucidating some of the new phenomena in society related to the fields of management and business. This is crucial to keep pace with the rapid developments in the world of technology and to provide marketing specialists with the latest updates.

- ***Practical Importance of the Research:***

The research topic constitutes one of the modern topics in the realm of services and technology. The existence of such applications has contributed to providing transportation services more conveniently. Hence, it was important to monitor and study the events occurring in this sector and make decisions accordingly. Thus, this study provides valuable insights in the fields of business, marketing, and customer-oriented services.

Moreover, some studies highlighted the available means of transportation for working women in the Kingdom, where taxis ranked second as the most frequently used means. Therefore, the importance of this sector, especially for women in Saudi Arabia, lies in being the most reliant consumer group on these services.

Additionally, the Saudi government has shown great interest in such services and has invested in them. The Saudi Sovereign Wealth Fund invested $3.5 billion in Uber, while the Saudi Telecommunications Company announced the purchase of 10% of Careem for $100 million [10]

Studying the factors influencing the choice between these three applications contributes to improving the quality of these services in the future. It also helps marketing executives gain a clear understanding of consumer behavior regarding electronic services for booking taxis.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent years, ride-hailing applications have effortlessly integrated into daily life, transforming transportation by providing speedy and technologically advanced options. These apps have become indispensable, altering traditional transportation methods, improving service quality, and saving time. In Saudi Arabia, various enterprises have emerged to address specific societal concerns, such as women's safety and accessibility. As a result, there is an urgent need to investigate the factors influencing customer decisions in this dynamic context, fueled by a scarcity of thorough studies. This study project intends to shed light on the societal impact of ride-hailing apps in Saudi Arabia, which are becoming increasingly important and influential.

### *Research Questions*

The research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What is the effect of the service quality factor on the customer's choice of one of the three ride-hailing applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt)?
2. What is the effect of the price factor on the customer's choice of one of the three ride-hailing applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt)?
3. What is the effect of the availability factor on the customer's choice of one of the three ride-hailing applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt)?
4. What is the effect of the promotions factor on the customer's choice of one of the three ride-hailing applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt)?

5. What is the effect of the vehicle factor on the customer's choice of one of the three ride-hailing applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt)?
6. What is the effect of the booking process factor on the customer's choice of one of the three ride-hailing applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt)?
7. What is the effect of the driver's skill on the customer's choice of one of the three ride-hailing applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt)?
8. What is the level of user satisfaction with the ride-hailing applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt)?
9. Does consumer behavior have an impact on their choice of one of the three ride-hailing applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt)?

### *Hypotheses Testing*

- H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between the service quality factor and the customer's choice of ride-hailing application (Uber, Careem, Bolt).
- H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between the price factor and the customer's choice of ride-hailing application (Uber, Careem, Bolt).
- H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between the availability factor and the customer's choice of ride-hailing application (Uber, Careem, Bolt).
- H4: There is a statistically significant relationship between the promotions factor and the customer's choice of ride-hailing application (Uber, Careem, Bolt).
- H5: There is a statistically significant relationship between the vehicle factor and the customer's choice of ride-hailing application (Uber, Careem, Bolt).
- H6: There is a statistically significant relationship between the booking process factor and the customer's choice of ride-hailing application (Uber, Careem, Bolt).
- H7: There is a statistically significant relationship between the driver's skill factor and the customer's choice of ride-hailing application (Uber, Careem, Bolt).
- H8: There is a statistically significant relationship between user satisfaction with the mobile application and the customer's choice of ride-hailing application (Uber, Careem, Bolt).
- H9: There is a statistically significant relationship between consumer behavior and their choice of ride-hailing application (Uber, Careem, Bolt).

## THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The factors influencing consumer choice of ride-hailing applications consist of:

The independent variables are:

- Marketing mix,
- mobile applications,
- Consumer behavior.

The dependent variable is:

- The consumer's choice of one of the ride-hailing applications (Uber, Careem & Bolt).

The conceptual framework for the research study is as shown in Fig. 3

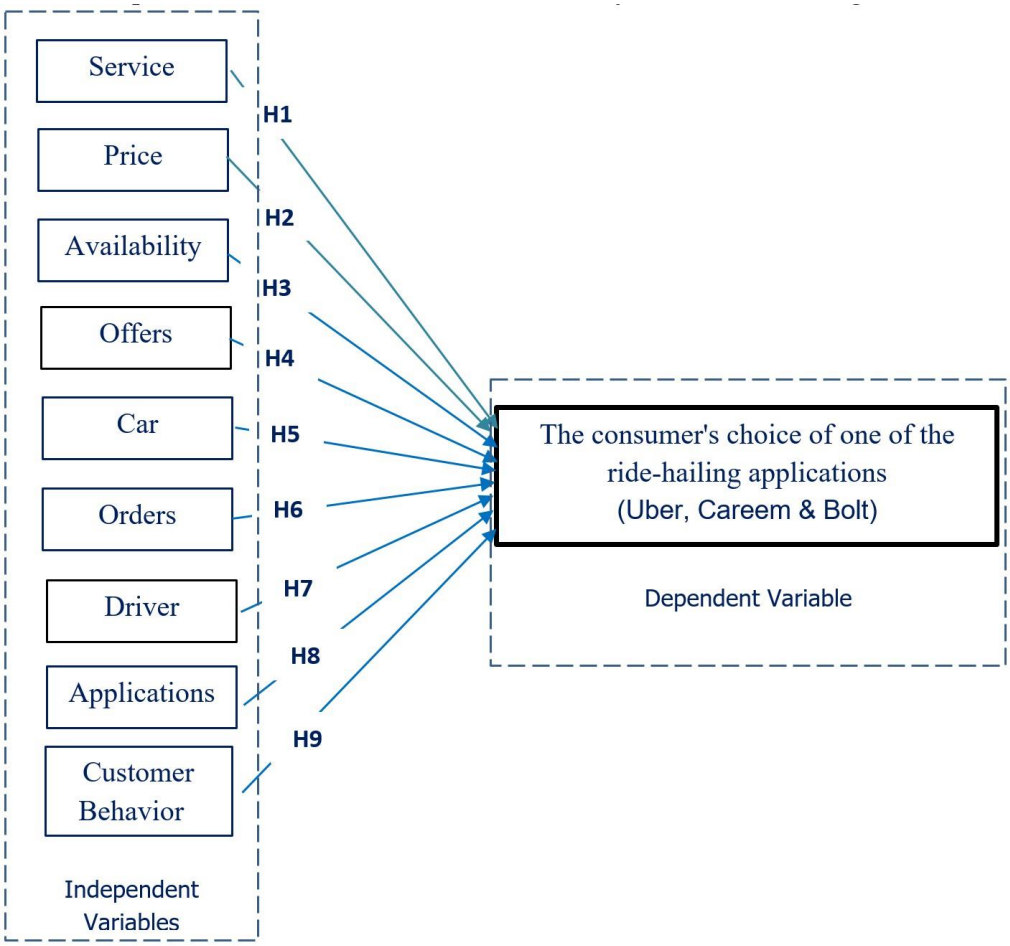


**Figure 3.** The proposed framework of the study

## *Marketing Mix*

The Marketing Mix comprises seven elements, as shown in Fig. 4:

- Service Provided: Measures the customer's satisfaction with the service provided by the applications they have used.
- Price: Measures the customer's satisfaction with the pricing and its impact on their choice of ride-hailing application.
- Availability: Measures the impact of car availability when requested via ride-hailing applications on the customer's choice.
- Promotions: Measures the influence of discounts and monthly subscriptions on the customer's choice of application.
- Vehicle: Measures the influence of factors like car type and cleanliness on the customer's choice of application.

- Booking Process: Measures the influence of factors like waiting time and customer service availability on the customer's choice.
- Driver: Measures the influence of driver skill on the customer's choice of ride-hailing application.


**Figure 4.** Marketing mix

### *Mobile Applications*

This element measures the customer's satisfaction with the application they use and thus determines its impact on their choice of one of the applications through several factors, which are:

- Simplicity of the application, presenting content in a simple manner and understandable language.
- Clarity and ease of navigation, making the application more flexible for the customer to use.
- Download speed, measuring the speed and quality of the connection each time the customer requests a ride.

- Professional design of the application, including overall design aesthetics, logo usage, and suitable colors.
- User-friendliness, allowing the customer to register and request a service without any complications or difficulties.

### *Consumer Behavior*

This element measures several factors to understand their impact on the customer's choice of application, including:

- Economic status of the customer, describing the impact of economic status on their choice of application by determining their level of agreement with its influence.
- Frequency of the customer's app usage, indicating how often the customer uses the application by selecting the most appropriate answer.
- Monthly income level of the customer, determining its influence on their choice of application.
- Social network commonly used by the customer, selecting one of the well-known social media platforms.
- Influential social network affecting their choice of application, depending on the customer's selection of the social network in the previous paragraph to verify its influence.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is employed to meet the research objectives and aims. This study uses quantitative methodology through the questionnaire tool to apply the research design model. This aimed to identify the factors influencing the choice of ride-hailing applications (Uber, Careem, and Bolt). This was achieved by measuring the point of view of the population sample of Al Qassim City in Saudi Arabia.

### *Primary Data*

A questionnaire was designed as a data collection tool to serve the research questions and objectives.

### *Research Community*

The research community here consists of individuals who have used ride-hailing applications (Uber, Careem & Bolt) in the city of Al-Qassim, including both Saudi nationals and residents.

### *Research Sample*

Considering the nature of the study, a stratified random sample was selected to represent the research community consisting of users of the three applications (Uber, Careem & Bolt). The allowable sample size was determined to be 384 individuals based on statistical tables. However, the research sample comprised 419 individuals.

Referring to the following table, we find that each stratum of the research community exceeded thirty individuals (n>30), which is considered acceptable according to statisticians' guidelines for determining sample size. Additionally, the sample size exceeded ten times the number of research variables, which is another reason for its acceptance.

Fig. 5 depicts the distribution of users across different ride-hailing applications as follows: Bolt users constitute 57%, Careem users comprise 32%, and Uber users make up 11% of the total.

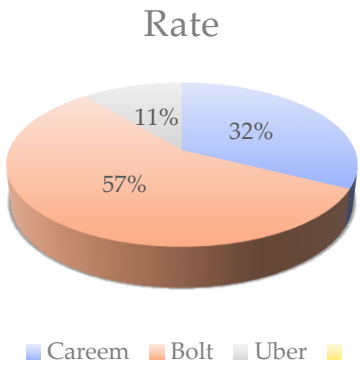


**Figure 5**. The distribution of users across (Careem, Bolt, Uber)

### *Statistical Methods Used in the Study*

Statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 20) used to analyze and test the hypotheses by using the following statistical methods:

### *Calculation of Validity and Reliability Coefficients*

Below are the methods and techniques used to calculate the validity and reliability coefficients for the research tool (questionnaire).

### *Internal Consistency Calculation for the Questionnaire*

The internal consistency validity of the questionnaire items was assessed by calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient for each axis item with the total of that axis. Table (2) demonstrates the internal consistency coefficients for the items of the Marketing Mix axis. Conversely, Table (3) illustrates the internal consistency values for the Mobile Application axis statements.

## RESEARCH TOOL RELIABILITY

Reliability refers to obtaining the same results if the scale is repeated and applied several times. It is measured using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which ranges between 0.7 and 1, minimum acceptable value is 0.70, and the scale's reliability increases as the coefficient approaches 1.

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESEARCH SAMPLE

The study includes an analysis of the most important demographic characteristics of the research sample, such as gender, age, occupation, education level, and nationality. Table (1) provides an analysis of these characteristics

**Table 1**: Demographic characteristics of the research sample

| Variable | Age | Rate | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Sex** | Female | 363 | 87 % |
| | Male | 56 | 13 % |
| **Age** | 20 years | 68 | 16 % |
| | 21-30 | 207 | 49 % |
| | 31-40 | 106 | 25 % |
| | 41-50 | 32 | 8 % |
| | 51-60 | 5 | 1 % |
| | 60 or more | 1 | 1 % |
| **Profession** | student | 169 | 40 % |
| | employee | 53 | 13 % |
| | private | 89 | 21 % |
| | employee | 8 | 2 % |
| | academic | 4 | 1 % |
| | retired | 85 | 20 % |
| | not working | 5 | 1 % |
| | business owner | 6 | 2 % |
| | Other | | |
| **Educational level** | High school | 99 | 24 % |
| | Bachelor | 251 | 60 % |
| | Diploma | 25 | 6 % |
| | Master | 40 | 10 % |
| | PhD | 4 | 1 % |
| **Nationality** | Saudi | 386 | 92 % |
| | Non Saudi | 33 | 8 % |

## RESEARCH TOOL RELIABILITY

Reliability refers to obtaining the same results if the scale is repeated and applied several times. It is measured using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which ranges between 0.70 and 1. A minimum acceptable value is 0.70, and the scale's reliability increases as the coefficient approaches 1.

Table (2) illustrates the reliability coefficient value for the Marketing Mix axis.

**Table 2.** The reliability coefficient value for the Marketing Mix axis

| Sr. | Issue | Statement | Correlation coefficient* | significance level |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Mobile application | Simplicity of application | .878 | 0.000 |
| 2 | | Clarity and ease of navigation | .877 | 0.000 |
| 3 | | Download speed | .866 | 0.000 |
| 4 | | Professionally designed application | .854 | 0.000 |
| 5 | | Ease of use | .896 | 0.000 |

From Table (3), it is evident that the reliability coefficient value for the Marketing Mix axis is 0.804, which is relatively high. Additionally, the reliability coefficient value for the Mobile Application axis is 0.922, indicating a very high reliability (close to 1). Based on these values, we can conclude that the questionnaire demonstrates high reliability.

**Table 3.** Reliability coefficient for the marketing mix

| Sr. | Issue | Statement | Correlation coefficient* | Significance level |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Marketing elements | The service used was provided to me as I intended | ,480 | 0.000 |
| 2 | | Price is considered a factor influencing the optional decision to apply for a taxi | ,479 | 0.000 |
| 3 | | The availability of cars on demand affects my choice of taxi application | ,567 | 0.000 |
| 4 | | The discounts offered affect my choice of taxi app | ,676 | 0.000 |
| 5 | | The availability of the monthly subscription service is important to me | ,514 | 0.000 |
| 6 | | The types of cars available affect my choice of taxi application | ,626 | 0.000 |
| 7 | | The cleanliness of the car affects my choice of taxi application | ,713 | 0.000 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | | Waiting time affects my choice of taxi app | ,704 | 0.000 |
| 9 | | The presence of customer service has an impact on my choice of taxi app | ,686 | 0.000 |
| 10 | | Driver skill affects my choice of taxi application | ,608 | 0.000 |
| Sr. | Issue | Statement | Correlation coefficient* | Significance level |
| 1 | Marketing elements | The service used was provided to me as I intended | ,480 | 0.000 |
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| 10 | | Driver skill affects my choice of taxi application | ,608 | 0.000 |

## RESULTS

1. The statistical results indicate the significance of the service factor on the choice of customers using ride-hailing applications, particularly among users of Bolt and Careem. However, this effect was not observed among users choosing between Uber and Careem or Careem and Bolt. This aligns with [11], confirming the service factor's impact on customer choice. Thus, the first objective of the study, identifying the service factor as influencing consumer decision-making regarding available applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt), was achieved.
2. The statistical results indicate the insignificance of the price factor on the choice of customers using ride-hailing applications. This contrasts with previous studies by [12,13] which highlighted the price factor's influence on customer choice. Therefore, the second objective of the study, identifying the price factor as influencing consumer decision-making regarding available applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt), was achieved.
3. The statistical results indicate the insignificance of the availability factor on the choice of customers using ride-hailing applications. This aligns with [2]. Hence, the third objective of the study, identifying the availability factor as influencing consumer decision-making regarding available applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt), was achieved.
4. The statistical results indicate the insignificance of the offers factor on customers' choice of ride-hailing applications, including discounts and monthly subscriptions. This aligns with the findings of [2] and contradicts the findings of [14] and [15] which emphasized the significant impact of offers on customer choice. Therefore, the fourth objective of the study, identifying the offers factor as influencing consumer decision-making regarding available applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt), was achieved.
5. The statistical results indicate the significance of the car factor, whether in terms of type or cleanliness, on customers' choice of ride-hailing applications, particularly among users of Uber and Bolt and users of Careem and Bolt.
6. The statistical results indicate the significance of the demand process factor on customer choice concerning the presence of customer service. It is noteworthy that its impact was observed among Uber and Easy Taxi users and Careem and Bolt users. However, statistical tests did not confirm its effect on Uber and Careem users.
7. The statistical results indicate the insignificance of user satisfaction with the application and its choice for ride-hailing applications, despite including five dimensions: simplicity of the application, clarity and ease of navigation, speed of loading, professional design, and ease of use. Therefore, the eighth objective of the study, identifying user satisfaction with available ride-hailing applications (Uber, Careem, Bolt), was achieved.

8. The statistical results indicate the significance of consumer behavior on their choice of ride-hailing applications through two factors: income level and influential social network. However, the other factors related to consumer behavior, such as the economic status of the consumer, the frequency of application usage, and the social network used, were not confirmed. Thus, the ninth objective of the study was achieved, which is to identify consumer behavior that affects his decision to choose one of the applications available for booking a taxi (Uber, Careem, Bolt).

## CONCLUSION

According to the study's analysis and interpretation of its results, the study found the following conclusions:

1. Users of local applications represent the majority of users of ride-hailing applications. Therefore, developing and improving the services of these applications contributes to their support and expansion abroad.
2. Emphasis should be placed on customer service, given its impact on consumer choice, and facilitating communication with customers through unified numbers and rapid correspondence.
3. The importance of the car factor and its direct impact on customer choice, whether in terms of vehicle cleanliness or type, should be acknowledged.
4. There is a need to focus on attracting customers with limited income as regular customers, as they constitute the largest segment of users. This may be due to the high number of individuals aged up to 30 and the student category among the research sample.

   There is still a need for further study and investigation into the aspects and topics related to ride-hailing applications.

## RECOMMENDATION

The study recommends several aspects that could be included in future studies and research proposals, summarized as follows:

1. Studying ride-hailing applications and the influencing factors from the perspective of drivers as customers of these applications.
2. Studying the differences between local and global ride-hailing applications.
3. Investigating the impact of ride-hailing applications on providing additional income for students and employees.
4. Examining the effect of the driver's gender on customer choice of ride-hailing applications.
5. Measuring customer loyalty to ride-hailing applications.

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