Hayatul Safrah Salleh[1*], Yusnita Yusof[2], Wan Norhayati Mohamed[3], Nik Hazimah Nik Mat[4], Nur Khairunnisa Ahnual[5], Muhammad Hafizuddin Ali[6]

Grabcar Service Quality: What Matters Most?

Hayatul Safrah Salleh[1*], Yusnita Yusof[2], Wan Norhayati Mohamed[3], Nik Hazimah Nik Mat[4], Nur Khairunnisa Ahnual[5], Muhammad Hafizuddin Ali[6]

[1,2,3,4,5]Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Development, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
[6]Coway (M) Sdn.Bhd., Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu

hayatul@umt.edu.my, yusnitayusof@umt.edu.my, wannor@umt.edu.my, nikhazimah@umt.edu.my, annisa.ann95@gmail.com, mhafizuddin.afp@gmail.com

*Corresponding author: hayatul@umt.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Customer satisfaction is the primary aim of the services industry as satisfied customers will stay loyal and the number of complaints is minimized. The purpose of this study is to examine the level of customer satisfaction and the influencing factors affecting customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service. The data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire through an online survey from 211 respondents who have experience of using the GrabCar service. The results revealed that the level of customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service is encouraging. The results also showed that price, cleanliness, accessibility, and safety significantly influence customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service. This study assisted marketers and the transportation company better to understand the key drivers of the GrabCar service to generate and uphold customer satisfaction and loyalty as well as fidelity in an incredibly intricate market.

Keywords: Customer Satisfaction; Service Quality; GrabCar; Influencing Factors.

INTRODUCTION

Every day, millions of people in urban cities all over the world, including Malaysia, commute around the city using taxis and public transportation. However, getting a cap that is safe and reliable can be a significant challenge for consumers. Malaysian taxi services are well known for their poor service with long-standing complaints from customers for being overcharged, refused to use meters, and rudeness. Media release by the Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) of Malaysia reported that the biggest grievances on cabs services are declining to utilize the meter (SPAD, 2015a). It was supported by Farah (2015), who added that consumers are not happy with the taxi services in the Klang Valley due to the expensive fares, old and dirty taxi, and refuse to use the meter. At the same time, taxi drivers also feel distressed and have raised their voices, especially about the higher initial costs of car rental fees and the increases in fuel prices that affect their profits and the quality of their services (BERNAMA, 2015). These days, customers require better, more reliable, and more expert

providers in transportation services that offer high service quality to satisfy and fulfill their needs (Chi et al., 2016).

Due to the problems faced by the consumers and taxi drivers, the technological innovation of ride-sharing applications used by organizations such as GrabCar and Uber services have considered these and developed opportunities as alternative transport services in Malaysia. GrabCar is an online transportation system and innovative organization that offers a wide variety of ride-sharing and coordination benefits through its mobile phone application, and their operations are to match customers asking for rides with drivers that will take them (Rahel, 2016). GrabCar operates well especially during rush hours as a substitute for the shortage of public transport. Russell (2016) mentioned that almost 350 thousand of car owners registered as GrabCar service in 2016, and above nineteen million portable phones across Southeast Asia have the GrabCar application. It shows that consumers have accepted the GrabCar service as another type of public transportation. A study by SPAD in 2015, reported that the majority of the consumers chose GrabCar service compared to a regular taxi (SPAD, 2015b). It is because consumers are looking for other transportation services that can make them more safe, comfortable, and satisfied. Accordingly, consumers have turned to the GrabCar service as an alternative.

Most studies on transportation users' emphasis on finding the sources of consumer satisfaction and that insufficient study on this issue is possible because the correlation between loyalty, satisfaction, and service quality, can be complicated (Merkert & Pearson, 2015). Thus, understanding what affects transportation customers' happiness is essential to explain consumers' intention to use a service, willingness to spend more, or to tell others about the service (Dixon, Freeman & Toman, 2010).

This study examines the level of satisfaction with the GrabCar service among Malaysian consumers, and to identify the factors that influence customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service. Based on previous literature, many factors influence customer satisfaction; however, only four factors are examined in this study: price, cleanliness, accessibility, and safety. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the influence of price, cleanliness, accessibility, and safety on customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction determines individual happiness towards the company's products or services, including psychological response to the differences between their expectation and what they attain, concerning the fulfilment of particular necessities, objectives, or wishes (Hansemark & Albinsson, 2004). Satisfaction among consumers occurs when the response of products or services meets the expectations of the consumers, and the consumers will be more contented if the fulfilment of the products or service is above their expectations (Cristo, Saerang & Worang, 2017). Mouwen (2015) found that the general satisfaction with open city transport among consumers in the Netherlands is affected most by service quality, for example, on-time execution, travel speed, and administration recurrence followed by driver conduct and vehicle cleanliness. Therefore, to increase satisfaction among customers, the company should pay the highest consideration on the quality and perceived value of the service (Lai & Chen, 2011).

Previous studies reported that customer satisfaction leads to brand loyalty, repeat purchase, customer retention, price insensitivity, and positive word of mouth (Angelova & Zekiri, 2011; Castaneda, 2011; Sweis et al., 2013, Sabir et al., 2014). Organizations make every effort to meet customers' demands to ensure their satisfaction. Thus, providing superior service, such as reasonable

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price, uphold safety, excellent cleanliness, and accessibility should be considered as essential strategies by the public transportation industry to satisfy their customers. Many factors influence customer satisfaction, such as; friendliness, knowledgeable, courteous and helpful employees, accuracy and timeliness of billing, competitive pricing, good value, quick service, and service quality. The service quality influences customer satisfaction, particularly in terms of the service offering, and, hence, is critical and deserves attention from service providers.

Service quality is a comparison between customer expectation and perception of service. It consists of five dimensions known as, tangibles (physical facilities), reliability (ability to perform the promised functions accurately), responsiveness (provide prompt service to the customer when needed), assurance (ability to inspire trust and confidence), and empathy (provide caring and individualized attention to customers) (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1988). Based on these dimensions, factors, such as price, cleanliness, accessibility, and safety, was considered as the independent variables, and customer satisfaction as the dependent variable in this study.

Price

Due to globalization and competition among businesses, the market has become more competitive, which may create difficulties in that businesses may cut their price to draw customers to choose their services over their competitors. This situation gives an advantage to consumers since they may have more options in terms of the price selection of goods and services based on their preferences (Cristo, Saerang & Worang, 2017). According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018), price is the value that the customer gives up to receive a benefit of the product or service. Bhattacharya and Friedman (2001) suggested that price could be used as a resource to strengthen customer satisfaction and organizational income. It is supported by Zahra (2014), who added that the price and quality of a product or service influence customer happiness and loyalty.

Price is one of the essential components to the consumers before purchasing a product or service, and, if the price set does not match the market, many organizations will face hardship in maintaining their customers and business (Cristo et al., 2017). However, loyal customers are less likely to switch to other services because of the price compared to non-loyal customers (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). Customers tend to compare the price of products or services in the same category and evaluate the fairness of the amount by making comparisons with other sources (Beldona & Namasivayam, 2006). Satisfaction will transpire when customers believe that the price is reasonable and the purchase behaviour tends to be repeated (Huber, Herrmann & Wricke, 2001). The perceived reasonableness of the price and quality has a positive relationship with customer retention and affects consumer satisfaction (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2017; Ranaweera & Neely, 2003).

In Malaysia, SPAD reported that generally, consumers are not satisfied with the service quality offered by public transport, and almost 40% of the overall grievances is due to declining of utilizing meter among taxi drivers. The report also showed that consumers are not happy with the price and that they are also very concerned about the current price increase for taxis, trains, and buses (SPAD, 2015). It indicated that price is one of the main concerns for customer satisfaction in the transportation industry. Ackaradejruangsri (2015) mentioned that in terms of price comparison, consumers prefer the GrabCar services because the customer knew the estimation fare price before getting the ride service, and it can be paid by cash or credit card. Furthermore, customers can use promo codes to discount the fare. Therefore, this study hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 1: Price positively influences customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service.

Cleanliness

In the services industry, the physical environment has a considerable impact on customer satisfaction; thus, service providers should weight these factors more seriously. One of the attributes of the physical environment is cleanliness, which is the state of keeping the environment clean, tidy, and free from dirt. Organizations that take care of the quality of the services environment will be more likely to influence customer satisfaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Sweis et al., 2013; Sabir et al., 2014). The physical environment of the services, such as music, setting arrangement, decoration, and cleanliness, will create a positive image of the services and influence customer satisfaction, because, nowadays, customers not only want to use the facilities but also want to enjoy the atmosphere of the service (Cristo et al., 2017).

Tyrinopoulos and Antoniou (2008) reported that the most critical aspects of service quality to improve customer satisfaction across transportation operators are service frequency, vehicle cleanliness, waiting conditions, transfer distance, and network coverage. Besides, a study on public city transport services found that service quality attributes, such as vehicle cleanliness, on-time performance, travel speed, service frequency, and driver behaviour influence the overall satisfaction (Mounica, 2014; Mouwen, 2015). Sitting comfort, reasonable entertainment, adequate air circulation, a vehicle in good condition, and cleanliness are part of the independent variable described as service quality that positively and significantly influences customer satisfaction (Khuong & Dai, 2016; Solomon, 2015; Rabiul et al., 2014). Therefore, the hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 2: Cleanliness positively influences customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service.

Accessibility

Accessibility in this study means that the service offered is convenient for the customers to reach or easy to obtain or easy to use. A convenient service location implies that customers can easily access the business to receive the products or services regularly; thus, accessibility is a related factor, which enables customers to acquire the services more efficiently. Levesque and McDougall (1996) reported that service accessibility and attractiveness are two essential elements to affect the total happiness level of an individual towards the service offered by the service providers. Previous studies have applied five dimensions of service accessibility (post-benefit convenience, transaction convenience, decision convenience, accessibility convenience, and benefit convenience) using the SERCVON scale for the Canadian cellular and Internet services (Berry, Seiders & Grewal, 2002), food and grocery retail context (Aagja, Mammen & Saraswat, 2011), and in the banking sector (Kaura, 2013).

A study in Thailand on the influencing factors to ride a GrabTaxi in Thailand demonstrated that 75% of the respondents who experienced a ride with GrabTaxi stated accessibility as being the most important factor, followed by short waiting time, reliability, and safety (Ackaradejruangsri, 2015). Public transportation accessibility stands out amongst the essential indicator factors that show the level of execution of the framework travel plan, particularly for day-to-day customers without a private vehicle and for those with restricted transportation accessibility (Woldeamanuel & Cyganski, 2011). The nature of availability has huge immediate and vital effects for traffic in evaluating the viability of a framework travel plan and the combination of transportation with land utilization (Litman, 2020). Woldeamanuel and Cyganski (2011) stated that the level of accessibility could be a deciding variable for consumers' judgment and satisfaction with general travel planning. Thus, the hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 3: Accessibility positively influences customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service.

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Safety

GrabCar is improving its safety and transportation convenience by ensuring that the lives of its passengers and drivers are safe while travelling at an affordable cost (Lin & Dula, 2016). Felleson and Friman (2008) undertook a yearly transnational public transport consumer loyalty study in eight European urban areas, and four consumer satisfaction measurements were considered necessary; these were a specific framework, solace/comfort, staff, and safety. Ackaradejruangsri (2015) also mentioned that security is one of the crucial factors that influence consumer satisfaction with the use of the GrabCar service along with accessibility, short waiting time, and service reliability. It is supported by Farah (2015), who reported that consumers are not satisfied with the taxi services in the Klang Valley due to the lack of basic safety.

Solomon (2015) carried out a study to investigate six antecedents factors that may influence customer satisfaction with minicab taxi services in Ghana. The results indicated that comfort, continuous service, reliability, driving behaviour, and affordability, had an important effect on the satisfaction of the customer, except for safety. Khuong and Dai (2016), and MMResearch (2008) reported that personal safety and driver behaviour were the most important factors influencing customer satisfaction with the local taxi companies among consumers in Vietnam and New Zealand, respectively. Consumers generally confident and felt secured using the GrabCar service since it equipped with a safety belt, drivers were careful and polite and provided good communication. Therefore, this study hypothesized the following:

Hypothesis 4: Safety positively influences customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service.

METHODOLOGY

The respondents in this study are consumers in the Klang Valley who have experience using the GrabCar service more than two times in the past six months. GrabCar services are often available in major cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Penang, and Putrajaya (Russell, 2016). Therefore, Klang Valley was selected as the location of this study. Klang Valley Region is comprised of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, and all the districts in Selangor except for Kuala Langat, Kuala Selangor, Sabak Bernam, and Ulu Selangor (Pemandu, 2010). This study uses the quantitative data collection method to precisely measure the research data to accept or reject the research hypotheses. This study applied an online survey with general GrabCar passengers to gather the data. The data were collected using an online survey technique because of its ability to collect data from the GrabCar users around the Klang Valley and because they are also using the online GrabCar mobile application.

The online survey channel of Survey Monkey was used to distribute the questionnaires. The poll had a screening question to make sure that only the GrabCar users that used the service in the Klang Valley participated in this survey. Out of 351 responses, 336 said that they had heard and had experienced the GrabCar service. However, only 211 responses were usable for subsequent analysis based on users in the Klang Valley. The self-administered questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale with a scale 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree was distributed to the respondents. The data analyses method used for this study were descriptive, reliability, and multiple regression analyses. The descriptive analysis of demographic information captured in this study comprised of gender, age, race, marital status, employment status, and monthly income. The study used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 23) to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. From the analysis undertaken, 54% of the respondents were males, and 46% were females. The majority of the respondents (79%) were between 18 and 35 years old, 18% were 36-45, and only 3.0% of respondents were above 45 years old. In terms of race, the majority were Malay (72.5%), 18.5% Chinese, 4.7% Indian, and 4.3% were from other race groups. More than half of the respondents were single (56.9%), and 43.1% were married. In this study, 38.7% of respondents were working in the private sector, followed by 20.4% self-employed, students were 20.4%, the government sector constitutes 15.6%, and unemployed 4.7%. The majority (83.9%) of the respondents have a monthly income between RM1000 to RM5000. Among the 211 respondents, 54.5% had used the GrabCar services at least 1-3 times a month. Overall, the results demonstrated that the GrabCar service was familiar among Malaysians, in that 95.7% (336 responses) had heard about it and had experienced riding it at least once. Whereas only 4.3% (15 replies) had never heard about GrabCar. The majority of the GrabCar users were students from higher education institutions and people who needed a ride regularly to go to their university, workplace, or for shopping.

TABLE 1. Background of the Respondents (N=211)

Variable	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	114	54.0
	Female	97	46.0
Age	18-25	78	37.0
	26-35	89	42.0
	36-45	38	18.0
	46 and above	6	3.0
Race	Malay	153	72.5
	Chinese	39	18.5
	Indian	10	4.7
	Others	9	4.3
Marital Status	Single	120	56.9
	Married	91	43.1
Employment Status	Private sector	82	38.9
	Government	33	15.6
	Self-employed	43	20.4
	Student	43	20.4
	Unemployed	10	4.7
Monthly income	< RM1000	51	24.2
	RM1001-RM3000	78	37.0
	RM3001-RM5000	48	22.7
	RM5001-RM7000	23	10.9
	RM7001 and above	11	5.2

The Level of Customer Satisfaction

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service. For the easiness of explanation, the Likert-scale at 5 points utilized in this study were considered to be as low for the values less than 2.33, the value of 2.33 - 3.66 as moderate, and above than 3.66 until 5.00 were

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considered to be as high (Nor Azila *et al.*, 2012). The mean value for customer satisfaction was 4.06, which indicated that the respondents showed high satisfaction with the GrabCar service. This study demonstrated that the level of customer satisfaction among GrabCar users was high and encouraging. This result is similar to Solomon (2015) and Ackaradejruangsri (2015). One plausible reason to explain this finding is maybe due to the excellent services the customers have received from the GrabCar service compared to the taxi service in the Klang Valley area. In which, consumers have faced the poor services from taxi providers, such as being overcharged, refused to use meters, refused to take passengers for a short distance, reckless driving, and rudeness.

TABLE 2. Level of Customer Satisfaction

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customer Satisfaction	4.06	.793

Reliability Test

Table 3 presents the reliability test for all the variables in this study. The Cronbach's Alpha values were all higher than the lower limit of acceptability ($\alpha > .60$), as recommended by Sekaran and Bougie (2016). Thus, showing a highly reliable measurement for the variables.

TABLE 3. Reliability Coefficient

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Customer Satisfaction	.94	11
Price	.90	7
Cleanliness	.93	7
Accessibility	.92	7
Safety	.91	8

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was used to analyze the influencing variables (i.e., price, cleanliness, accessibility, and safety) of customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service. Table 4 shows that the relationship between the dependent variables (consumer satisfaction) and independent variable (price, cleanliness, accessibility, and safety) was positively significant (F= 408.968; p< .05). The results indicated that price, cleanliness, accessibility, and safety positively influenced customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service. The model showed a higher relationship with the influencing variables explaining 80% of the variation in customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service. Therefore, hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 were accepted. The results also explained that price (ß= .36, *p< 0.05) was the strongest predictor of the customer satisfaction, followed by cleanliness (ß= .24, *p< 0.05), accessibility (ß= .23, *p< 0.05), and safety (ß= .17, *p< 0.05).

Price had the strongest positive influence and was the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service. One plausible reason is that, in the service industry, setting the price for services is one of the most challenging strategies due to the intangible attribute of the service. Generally, customers perceive that the cost of service reflects the perception of the quality of the service and trust, and the GrabCar service offers a fixed and transparent cost before the passenger boards the GrabCar, regardless of the traffic condition after accepting the service via the GrabCar app.

It prevents customers from being overcharged. Also, cleanliness was the second highest factor that influenced customer satisfaction. Usually, customers look for comfort whenever they use public transport, including GrabCar. They will obtain satisfaction when the GrabCar service provides an excellent servicescape, such as a clean vehicle, comfortable seats, and the car is in good condition. This result is congruent with Khuong and Dai (2016), Solomon (2015), and Rabiul *et al.* (2014), who identified cleanliness as part of the independent variable that positively and significantly influenced customer satisfaction. Due to the importance of having a comfortable ride, GrabCar uses feedback for the customers to rate their happiness, and the GrabCar drivers will face a penalty or suspension if they receive negative complaints from the customers.

This study revealed that accessibility is the third factor that influences customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service. The reason for this is because GrabCar can be accessed anywhere, anytime, and mostly provides a 24/7 service; hence, consumers only need a CrabCar app using a mobile phone to request the service. It is in line with Woldeamanuel and Cyganski (2011), and Ackaradejruangsri (2015), who noted that accessibility to acquire the GrabCar services faster and easier is amongst the vital indicator factors that influence the level of customer satisfaction with public transportation. The least influencing factor in customer satisfaction in this study is safety. The reason for this is because, by using the GrabCar app, the customer will receive detailed information of the driver and the car, sharing the ride location, and the GrabCar must be less than five years old. Thus, to a certain extent, the customers feel less worried and more secure when riding with GrabCar. Another possible reason is that consumers believe that most of the GrabCar vehicles offer comfort and are fitted and functional and safe seat belts and that the drivers drive cautiously (Khuong & Dai; 2016; Lin & Dula, 2016; Ackaradejruangsri, 2015).

TABLE 4. Factors Influencing Customer Satisfaction

Independent Variables	B	SE B	ß
Price	.38	.05	.36*
Cleanliness	.26	.06	.24*
Accessibility	.23	.05	.23*
Safety	.18	.07	.17*

Note: Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction; R^2= .80; F=408.968

Managerial Implication

The understanding of variables that affect consumers' levels of satisfaction is essential because it will determine a consumers' intention to continue or to stop using a service, to promote the service through word of mouth, or to be loyal to the service. This study assisted marketers of the E-hailing industry to understand the key drivers of the GrabCar service to generate and uphold customer satisfaction and loyalty as well as fidelity in an incredibly intricate market. Price has been the most influential factors on customer's satisfaction; thus, Grab services should improve their sales promotion and pricing strategy by giving more rewards, discount, points, and a variety of offers that can be used for other purposes such as to buy groceries using the Grab points. Other than that, GrabCar services also can add more values to the quality of Grab services such as providing a comfortable drive with cleanliness, fresh, and germs free vehicle. In addition, GrabCar services can upgrade the Grab application for easy access and includes a panic button as a new security feature for the safety of the passengers.

CONCLUSION

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The tremendous changes have happened in public transport, especially in Malaysia. The emergence of mobile phone transportation application-based has increased the demand for GrabCar service, which increases the competition among the local taxi industry and other kinds of public transportation. Due to that, customer satisfaction is an essential issue in the success and sustainability of any business framework offering the services, because satisfied customers lead to loyalty. Organizations must know how to satisfy their customers better than their competitors since consumer loyalty has an essential impact on the ability to build long haul associations with the customers. The more satisfied the customers are, the more benefit the organization can acquire.

The result from the regression equation for the four factors - price, cleanliness, accessibility, and safety - that may influence customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service among Malaysian consumers, showed that all of the factors are significant predictors of customer satisfaction with the GrabCar service. The results also show that price was the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction, followed by the cleanliness of the vehicle, accessibility to obtain the service, and, lastly, safety in riding the GrabCar. The results of this study provide several insights into the GrabCar service from the market demand and supply perspectives. The results indicate that there is a high potential demand for the GrabCar service in Malaysia, especially in urban and metropolitan areas. The increasing demands for GrabCar will both benefit the customers and drivers. For the drivers, it can help them to increase their wellbeing. The findings also shed further light on the knowledge concerning the area of public transportation. Thus, marketers and the government of Malaysia can use this information to enhance the strategies for providing excellent public transport services. Due to the tremendous development in technology and the increasing number of people using smartphones, this study suggests that other types of public transportation to use the smartphones technology to minimize the cost of empty vehicles as well as to increase customer satisfaction.

There are some limitations to this study. Since the study employed the quantitative research approach by using an online survey, future research can be expanded into qualitative research that might provide in-depth information on various factors that may contribute towards consumers' satisfaction of GrabCar services. Furthermore, since the study is limited to only the Klang Valley areas, the findings may not represent the whole population of Malaysia. Thus, future research should focus on other states in Malaysia.

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