

Ride booking trends on can aggregators (Uber/Ola)

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Abstract - One of the major factors in the Indian urban transportation digital transformation is the spread of the ride-hailing services. This study examines the key elements that define consumer preferences and booking behaviours on two most popular applications, Uber and Ola. Beyond the straightforward price comparison, the research uses the multi-dimensional methodology to assess the effects of algorithmic pricing models, digital interface design, perceived safety, service reliability, and engagement strategies. The study applies a mixed method; the combination of quantitative survey results related to urban commuters and qualitative findings based on interviews with users. The results will be used to develop an elaborate behavioural model that will categorise the users into decision-driving segments. The model is designed to offer actionable intelligence to platform operators to improve service delivery, better customer retention and negotiating the competitive nature of the dynamic mobility industry in India. The strategic recommendations are also given at the end of the paper in relation to the consumer segments identified.

Keywords: Digital Mobility, Platform Economy, Consumer Behaviour, Service Quality, Pricing Strategy, Urban Transportation, India

I. INTRODUCTION

The metropolitan landscapes in India have experienced a paradigm shift in the personal mobility in the past ten years. The development of the app-based ride-hailing systems has reorganized the transportation system in cities, providing a strong alternative to classical taxi services and the use of personal vehicles. The services offered by platforms like Uber and Ola have not simply presented a new service to the world; they have created a platform in which convenience, technology and on-demand access come together. This shift has resulted in the very competitive market where the loyalty of the customer is flexible and depends on a multifaceted set of both tangible and perceptual forces.

At first, the introduction was driven by the new, and

aggressive pricing, but the modern market requires a more advanced knowledge of the psychology of users. The booking trends have ceased being linear; they are influenced by the real-time variables such as dynamic fares, real-time service availability, and well-instilled perceptions of security and trust. To platform operators, understanding such subtle behavioural trends is the key to success. The key to success lies in being able to predict user needs, customize the experiences, and create the value proposition which goes beyond the transactional functionality.

This paper will attempt to dean switch the complex nexus of influences that informs the decision to use and further use of significant ride-hailing applications by a user. It assumes that the process of decision-making is holistic and that the interaction of the economical, technological, as well as psychosocial factors, takes place. The main contribution of the study is that it is integrated in the ways it attempts to go beyond the observation of user behaviour to the explanation of why they behave in a certain way. Through this, the study has offered a basis to come up with better resilient and customer-oriented business models in the high-speed digital mobility environment.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The system of app-based ride-hailing is located at the crossroads of some known theoretical fields. As far as service marketing is concerned, the platforms reflect the dimensions of the SERVQUAL model, including tangibility (the app and the vehicle), reliability (corrected ETAs), responsiveness (customer help), assurance (safety features), and empathy (personalized offers). But this mediation of services (through digital means) introduces the levels of complexity in terms of technology acceptance.

It is also most applicable to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in which perceived usefulness (saving time, reducing hassle) and perceived ease of use (app intuitiveness) are the key factors regarding adoption. Building on this, behavioural economics theories are useful in explaining behaviour to dynamic pricing. It is essential, such notions as the perception of fairness and aversion to losses, a user can accept a higher fare in rain when the reason is well-expressed (surge caused by high demand) but feel that the same fare is not fair when the reason is arbitrary. Moreover, with a two-sided market, the experience of the user is partially defined by how the platform handles the driver- partner side that influences the consistency of the services. The views are synthesized, a conceptual framework of this study. It makes the Platform Selection Intent the focal outcome variable, which is directly affected by five major antecedent constructs:

- 1) Economic Value (pricing and promotions)
- 2) Service Assurance (reliability and safety)
- 3) Digital Experience (functionality and design of the app)
- 4) Habitual Engagement (loyalty programs and routine use)
- 5) Contextual Moderators (purpose of trip, time, urban level).

This model will inform the research process of the interaction of these constructs that contribute to the observed booking patterns.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was the best fit to describe the complexity of the research problem. This design is started by the general quantitative (collected data) survey to determine the overall patterns and relationships and then a qualitative phase is undertaken to investigate the chosen results on a more detailed basis and clarify how the statistics come about.

Population and Sampling: The target population in this study will be the adults living in Indian cities and have used either Uber or Ola at least once in the last six months. The stratified random sampling method was utilized so that both the major demographics (age 18- 25, 26-40, 41+, gender, city classification Tier-1 vs. Tier-2) would be represented. The quantitative phase was aimed at targeting a sample of 180 respondents.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures:

1. **Quantitative Phase:** The questionnaire was designed to be a structured online questionnaire and was distributed. The instrument used Likert scales with 5 points to gauge the attitudes toward the constructs of the conceptual framework (e.g., I find the fare breakdown on the app to be clear and transparent). It also gathered behavioural information regarding the frequency of bookings, switching applications and the favourable services (Go, Prime, Auto, etc.)

2. **Qualitative Phase:** Based on preliminary survey analysis, a purposive sample of 25 participants with diverse behaviours (e.g., loyal to one platform, frequent switchers, lapsed users) was chosen, which was to be interviewed semi-structured. Such interviews examined the stories, feelings, and details of the individual incident accounts of their quantitative ratings.

Data Analysis Plan: The statistical software (SPSS) will be used to analyse quantitative data. Among these techniques, descriptive statistics, factor analysis to substantiate constructs, multiple regression to test predictive variables and cluster analysis to segment. Thematic analysis of qualitative interview transcripts will be performed through a systematic coding process to determine common themes and new insights.

Table 1: Analytical Tests for Research Questions

Focus Area	Variables	Method
Key Choice	Price, Safety,	Multiple
Drivers	ETA, Design	Regression
User	Usage,	Cluster
Segmentation	Demographics	Analysis
Safety Impact	Gender, Safety	t-test,
	Score	Crosstab
Usability vs. Satisfaction	Ease-of-use, Satisfaction	Correlation

IV. ANTICIPATED FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Although the actual data collection will be realized in the future, the literature and conceptual framework indicate several likely findings that have high managerial consequences.

4.1 Primacy of Trust over Price: It is expected that although price competitiveness will be a very important market-entry factor, a composite element of trust will be the most important retention and platform-loyalty factor. This confidence is founded on two, namely, operational dependability (consistent on-time delivery), and ethical openness (transparent, well-grounded prices and good safety practices). One can opt to pay the lower fare once and will always go back to the platform they perceive as reliable and more secure.

4.2 The Formation of Clear User Archetypes: Cluster analysis will help see the existence of certain user groups, which are not necessarily just demographics based. For instance:

Table 2: Expected User Archetypes

Archetype	Main Drivers
Efficiency- Optimizer	Speed, ETA accuracy
Safety-Conscious User	Safety features, ratings
Value-Seeker	Price, discounts
Integrated Commuter	Multi-modal options

4.3 The Duplicity of the Digital Interface: The mobile application is not only a service conduit, but also a service. An overweight, slow, or incoherent application is a direct detrimental to the perceived quality of the whole ride experience. It is hypothesized that application performance measurements, including load time, booking steps and payment ease will have a high correlation with overall satisfaction regardless of the physical ride quality.



Fig 1: Impact of App Performance on User Satisfaction

V. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLICATIONS

Based on the expected results, several strategic directions become available to the operators of the platforms such as Uber and Ola.

1. Segment Specific Value Propositions: Platforms cannot afford to continue with mass marketing. Each of the key archetypes should be targeted and a product offering created. In the case of the Safety-Conscious segment, the proactive emphasizing of safety features at the time of booking (e.g. "This ride also includes live trip sharing with your emergency contact) is important. In the case of the Value-Seeker, flash discount notifications of the routes travelled regularly would be effective.
2. Investing in 'Trust Engineering': This will entail systemic activities of making reliability and transparency the key brand characteristics. This might involve the addition of ETAs Guarantees to select routes (minimal credit in case of failure), a more informative interface that is more informative and educational, and periodic transparency reporting on resolving safety incidents.
3. Maximizing the Funnel Beyond the Ride: Minimizing the booking and post- ride process can have a great influence on retention. One-touch rebooking of regular routes, ratings made simpler and instantaneous generation of digital receipts are minor modifications with a multiplied impact on user experience.
4. Creating Sticky Ecosystems: Multi- apping can be minimized by platforms developing integrated ecosystems, which provide more than point A-to-B transport. This might take the form of collaborations with last-mile connectivity (e.g., e- scooters), subsidies (e.g. through a program of ride credits), food delivery, and entertainment subscriptions, or loyalty credits that can be redeemed with an extensive network of partners.

VI. CONCLUSION & SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study highlights the fact that the ride- hailing industry in India is not in the growth- based, acquisitiveness phase, but rather in the sophistication-based, retention-based stage. Competition over market share will always be won less due to the fact of who offers the lowest price in any given day, but on which platform could construct and retain user confidence whilst

providing an overall better and personalized experience. Through an examination of the economic, service and digital factors in action, the current paper will serve as a template in the study of modern mobility consumer.

This work can be developed in several ways in future research. The longitudinal studies of the same users would provide insights about the changing preference at various life stages and external shocks (e.g., fuel prices). Comparison between various emerging markets (e.g., India vs. Southeast Asia) may point out cultural peculiarities in platform preferences. Lastly, the driver partner viewpoint and its congruence to the user side demand are important subjects of study that need to be made in the quest to comprehend the entire ecosystem and its sustainability in the long run.

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