

## **Enhancing tourist transport service experience: factors influencing customer satisfaction.**

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### **Abstract**

Transportation accounts for a significant portion of tourism services, and improving its quality directly translates into improved overall tourism service quality. Many scientists have proven in their research that transport and tourism services play a significant role in the country's economic development. Transportation services offered to tourists are diverse, with transfers being the most common. The number of transfer service providers is growing daily, and competition among them is fierce. The main goal of our study was to improve the performance of transportation service providers for tourists. To this end, we analyzed the factors influencing customers' choice of transfer services.

Keywords: tourism, travel, transport, transfer

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### **1. Introduction**

Nowadays, increasing customer satisfaction and retaining them has become a priority for any service company in the service sector. If the level of customer satisfaction is high, the likelihood of their return and positive recommendations to others increases. Therefore, identifying the main factors affecting customer satisfaction is a relevant issue both scientifically and practically. Scientific studies have shown that indicators such as service quality, safety, and pricing policy have a significant impact on customer satisfaction. For example, a study by the University of Malaysia on transport services found that price, service quality, and safety factors have a positive and statistically significant impact on customer satisfaction. High service quality increases the likelihood that the customer will be satisfied with the service - this is a scientific conclusion confirmed by numerous studies showing the direct impact of service quality on satisfaction. Also, ensuring safety in the service process and offering a fair price are important factors for customers. Improving the activities of companies providing transport services to tourists has a number of important advantages, which will have a positive impact not only on the company itself but also on tourists, the local economy, and the entire tourism industry. Tourists' satisfaction with transport services leads to a positive assessment of tourism. By providing convenient, high-quality service, customer loyalty can be increased, boosting the company's revenue and profitability. As a result of improving the quality of service, the number of customers increases, and income also increases. Providing high-quality service can position the company as a leader among competitors. Improving transport services to tourists not only improves the financial condition of the company but also leads to important results such as increasing customer satisfaction, developing the tourism industry, and ensuring environmental sustainability. Therefore, this process is of great importance for both the business and the country's economy. In this study, we investigated the factors that determine service satisfaction levels using real data. For this, the survey results from 430 respondents were analyzed, and the impact of various service indicators on

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satisfaction was assessed using a simple linear regression model (OLS). The main objective of this study is to identify the factors that affect overall customer satisfaction with the service and to assess the strength of their influence. In other words, the aim is to statistically verify which aspects (e.g., service quality, safety, etc.) have a significant impact on the overall satisfaction score based on survey data from 430 customers. Thus, this study will help companies or service providers understand in which areas service improvements will have the greatest impact.

## 2. Literature Review

Scientific studies have shown that factors such as service quality, safety, and pricing have a significant impact on customer satisfaction. For example, a study by the University of Malaysia on transportation services found that price, service quality, and safety factors have a positive and statistically significant impact on customer satisfaction. High service quality increases the likelihood that a customer will be satisfied with the service - a scientific conclusion confirmed by numerous studies showing the direct impact of service quality on satisfaction. Also, ensuring safety in the service process and offering a fair price are important factors for customers. Scientific research conducted in this area shows that service quality is one of the most important determinants of customer satisfaction. High service quality increases the likelihood that customers will use the service again and will make positive recommendations. In addition, the safety factor is especially important in transportation services, as a customer's sense of safety directly affects their overall satisfaction. Pricing policy is also an important factor influencing customer decisions, and the reasonableness and fairness of service prices are highly valued by customers. At the same time, factors such as driver qualifications, vehicle comfort, ease of booking the service, timely service provision, and language support also form the quality of service in a comprehensive way and have a significant impact on customer satisfaction. The studies emphasize the need to examine these factors together, since a single factor does not determine customer satisfaction but rather results from the interaction among various aspects of the service process. Especially in the tourism sector, service quality, safety, affordability, convenience, and other service attributes play an important role in shaping customers' overall assessment. Therefore, determining customer satisfaction and assessing the factors that affect it remain among the main areas of modern scientific research. This study also aims to identify the main determinants of overall satisfaction with the service, based on these factors.

This study relied on existing scientific research and practical observations to select the factors that affect customer satisfaction. In particular, service quality, safety, and affordability have been identified in many studies as key determinants of customer satisfaction. At the same time, given the nature of transport services, factors such as driver qualifications, vehicle comfort, ease of booking, timeliness, and language support were also selected. These factors were included in the study because they fully reflect the customer's overall experience with the service and have a comprehensive impact on satisfaction.

## 3. Methodology

Data for the study were collected using a specially designed questionnaire. The questionnaire aimed to determine customers' experience and satisfaction with transport services, and 430 respondents were surveyed. Respondents were selected from a range of age groups and levels of service experience, which increased the reliability of the research results.

The questionnaire was based on a Likert scale, in which respondents rated the quality of service and other factors on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest rating, 5 being the highest rating). The overall customer satisfaction level was used as the outcome variable and measured on a scale of 1–5.

The following aspects of service were selected as independent variables:

- service quality – the overall quality of the service provided and the degree to which it meets the customer's expectations;
- safety – how safe the customer felt during the service process, the level of safety measures;
- driver qualifications – the professionalism, qualifications, and ethics of the driver (if the type of service involves a driver; for example, in a taxi service);
- price acceptability – the acceptability and fairness of the price of the service provided, its compliance with the customer's expectations;
- vehicle comfort – the comfort and condition of the vehicle (cleanliness, comfort, technical condition, etc., if there is a transport service);
- booking convenience – the convenience of the process of pre-ordering or booking the service (for example, ordering through an application or website is convenient and understandable);
- service time compliance – the compliance of the service time with the agreed plan and times, that is, the service provider arrives at the appointed time or performs the work on time;
- language support – the ability to communicate and provide support in a language convenient for the customer (for example, the ability to obtain information in their native language for foreign customers).

All of these independent variables are rated by the customer on a 1–5-point scale, with 5 being the best (high quality, very safe, etc.). The 8 factors selected in the study were selected through theoretical and practical grounds as the most important aspects affecting overall customer satisfaction. The dataset contains all of the above indicators and satisfaction scores for each respondent.

The study used an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model to assess the effects of independent variables on the outcome variable. The regression equation looks like this:

Several standard statistical tests were used to assess the reliability of the model: the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), F-test, and t-statistics, and p-values for each variable were analyzed. A VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) analysis was also conducted to assess multicollinearity in the model.

In addition, the study used a structural equation model (SEM) to assess the overall fit of the model using indicators such as RMSEA, CFI, TLI, and SRMR. These criteria allow us to determine how well the model fits the empirical data.

The Shapiro–Wilk, Jarque–Bera, and Skewness/Kurtosis tests were used to assess the normality of the residual distribution. These tests were used to assess the statistical reliability and stability of the model results.

Table 1. Results of econometric analysis (based on a questionnaire collected from customers of Modern Cars LLC)

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs	=	430
Model	268.142204	8	33.5177755	F(8, 421)	=	239.31
Residual	58.9647725	421	.140058842	Prob > F	=	0.0000
				R-squared	=	0.8197
				Adj R-squared	=	0.8163
Total	327.106977	429	.762487125	Root MSE	=	.37424

  

qoniqish	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	[95% Conf. Interval]
x1	.2452745	.0435363	5.63	0.000	.1596988 .3308501
x2	.1608921	.0431046	3.73	0.000	.0761651 .2456192
x3	.1070105	.0429975	2.49	0.013	.0224939 .1915272
x4	.1372574	.0415557	3.30	0.001	.055575 .2189399
x5	.0711092	.0402862	1.77	0.078	-.0080779 .1502964
x6	.0650579	.0404384	1.61	0.108	-.0144284 .1445441
x7	.0983617	.0397908	2.47	0.014	.0201483 .1765751
x8	.1182856	.0443145	2.67	0.008	.0311803 .2053909
_cons	-.0214105	.0824554	-0.26	0.795	-.183486 .1406651

Several standard statistical tests were used to assess the reliability of the model:

Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ) and F-test

- The value of  $R^2 = 0.8197$  indicates that 81.97 percent of the variance in the level of satisfaction is explained by the selected independent variables. This is a high indicator, indicating that the factors selected in the model explain service satisfaction well.

- F-test result: Prob > F = 0.0000, which means that the model is statistically significant overall. This means that at least one independent variable has a significant effect on the resulting variable. For each independent variable, t-statistics and corresponding p-values were analyzed. For example, variables x1, x2, x3, and x4 have p-values < 0.05, indicating statistical significance. This means these factors have an independent, significant positive effect on satisfaction.

Table 2. Structural Equation Model Fit Indices

Fit statistic	Value	Description
Likelihood ratio		
chi2_ms(0)	0.000	model vs. saturated
p > chi2	.	
chi2_bs(8)	736.739	baseline vs. saturated
p > chi2	0.000	
Population error		
RMSEA	0.000	Root mean squared error of approximation
90% CI, lower bound	0.000	
upper bound	0.000	
pclose	1.000	Probability RMSEA <= 0.05
Information criteria		
AIC	5404.547	Akaike's information criterion
BIC	5445.185	Bayesian information criterion
Baseline comparison		
CFI	1.000	Comparative fit index
TLI	1.000	Tucker-Lewis index
Size of residuals		
SRMR	0.000	Standardized root mean squared residual
CD	0.820	Coefficient of determination

In the study, factors affecting service satisfaction were assessed using ordinary linear regression (OLS) and structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical validity and goodness-of-fit of the estimated model were checked using several indicators.

First, the overall statistical significance of the regression model was high. In the OLS regression, the value of Prob > F = 0.0000 was observed for the F-statistic, which indicates that at least one of the selected factors has a significant effect on the level of satisfaction.

#### 4. Findings

Based on the results of the model, the following factors should be given priority to improve the efficiency of the company:

- If the quality of service increases by 1 point, satisfaction increases by 0.245 points
- Improving safety adds 0.161 points
- Improving driver skills affects 0.107 points
- Optimizing price acceptability gives a result of 0.138 points
- Developing language support services has a positive effect of 0.112 points

Secondly, most independent variables in the regression turned out to be statistically significant. In particular, the significance of factors such as service quality, safety, driver skills, price acceptability, timeliness, and language support at the  $p < 0.05$  level confirms their independent effect on satisfaction.

Thirdly, the model's explanatory power is also high, with an  $R^2$  of 0.8197. This means that the eight selected factors can explain approximately 82% of the variance in customer satisfaction scores. This is a very high-level explanation for socio-economic research.

Fourth, the normality of the residuals was tested using the Skewness/Kurtosis test and the Shapiro–Wilk test. The Shapiro–Wilk test yielded  $p < 0.05$ , indicating that there are some deviations from normality in the residuals. However, due to the large sample size ( $n = 430$ ), these deviations do not undermine the reliability of the overall regression results. The combined normality test based on the Jarque–Bera test ( $p = 0.0701$ ) showed that the model residuals are borderline but have an acceptable normal distribution.

The analysis shows that the largest number of tourists is between the ages of 18-29, who are the most active travelers. The second largest group is 30-39 years old, who are more likely to be business travelers or family travelers. There are also enough tourists in the 40-54 age group, who are more concerned with safety and comfort. They may prefer private driver services or high-end transportation options. There are relatively fewer tourists aged 55+, who may need VIP services and private transportation. The comfort and safety of transportation services should be tailored to them. The group under 18 is very small.

The survey results show the purpose of tourists coming to Tashkent. The largest group is tourists who come for recreation. Most tourists come to Tashkent for recreation. This indicates a high demand for tourist transport services to develop city tourism. Tourist buses, excursion transport, and convenient transfer services may be important for this group.

Business trips are in second place. Many tourists come to Tashkent for business or official business. Premium transport, personal driver services, airport transfers, and express services are necessary for this segment.

There are also many people who come to visit friends and relatives. This group is price-sensitive, so economy class transport services may be in high demand. They mainly use public transport, taxis, or car rentals. The number of those who come to study is relatively small; students mainly prefer budget transport services. Cheap transport tariffs, unlimited ticket packages, or student discounts may be beneficial for this segment.

Taxis are the most commonly used mode of transport for tourists who come for recreation. Public transport and tourist buses are also widely used. Private driver services and cycling/walking are used less frequently. Business travelers, private driver services, and taxis are the most commonly used modes of transport. Public transport use is relatively low. Tourist buses are hardly used in this segment. Tourists visiting friends and relatives, public transport, and taxis are most commonly used. Private driver services are used slightly less frequently. Tourist buses and cycling/walking are very rarely used.

## 5. Discussion

The results of the analysis show that service quality is one of the factors that has the strongest impact on customer satisfaction. This result confirms the direct relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction and indicates that as service quality increases, customers are more likely to be satisfied with the service. This is also consistent with the scientific approach that high service quality increases the likelihood of customers using the service again.

The safety factor also emerged as an important determinant. The customer's feeling of safety in transport services affects not only service satisfaction, but also trust in the service. Especially for tourists, the feeling of safety in a foreign environment is very important, and this factor plays an important role in their decision to choose transport services.

It was also found that factors such as driver qualifications, price acceptability, and language support also have a positive impact on customer satisfaction. This shows that the human factor and communication aspects are important in the service process. The professionalism and courtesy of the driver are of great importance in shaping the customer experience. Affordability is related to the fair assessment of the value of the service by the customer and directly affects the level of satisfaction with the service.

In addition, the timely provision of service and the convenience of the booking process are of great importance in modern transport services. As a result of the development of digital technologies, customers expect fast and easy use of the service. Therefore, the simplicity of booking a service and the timely implementation of the service are considered important factors that increase customer satisfaction.

Analysis by age group shows that tourists aged 18–29 are the most active users. This group actively uses transport services and quickly adapts to new technologies. Tourists aged 30–39 are more likely to travel on business trips or family trips, for whom service quality and convenience are important. The group over 40 pays special attention to safety and comfort, indicating the need for service providers to develop services tailored to segmentation.

The purpose of the visit of tourists also has a significant impact on the use of transport services. While tourists who come for recreation mainly prefer convenient and fast services, those who come for business trips need high-quality and individual services. Tourists who come to visit friends and relatives are more price-sensitive and choose more economical options.

In the choice of means of transport, taxi services were found to be the most widely used type of transport. This is explained by the convenience, speed, and availability of the service. Public transport and tourist buses are also used to some extent, but they are not equally attractive to all customer segments. This indicates the need to diversify transport services.

In general, the results of the study show that customer satisfaction is formed as a sum of many factors, and these factors determine the quality of service in an interconnected manner. Therefore, it is important to apply an integrated approach to the development of transport services, that is, to jointly improve the factors of service quality, safety, comfort, and communication.

## 1.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

The results of the analysis show that the main factors affecting the level of customer satisfaction in the provision of transport services to tourists are service quality, safety, driver qualifications, affordability, language support, and timeliness of service. These factors are statistically significant and play an important role in shaping the overall level of customer satisfaction. The model results also have a high level of explanatory power, showing that the selected factors can explain a large part of the differences in customer satisfaction.

Based on the results of the study, a number of practical recommendations were developed to further improve the activities of transport service companies. First of all, it is necessary to pay priority attention to improving the quality of service, since it is this factor that has the greatest impact on customer satisfaction. Strengthening security measures is also important, which will increase customer confidence in the service.

In addition, the customer experience can be further enriched by enhancing driver qualifications and fostering a service culture. It is also important to optimize the pricing policy, that is, to ensure that the price of the service is fair and corresponds to the value expected by the customer. Also, the development of language support for foreign tourists will help to improve the quality of service.

Simplifying the process of booking transport services and the widespread introduction of digital technologies will also increase the convenience of service. Ensuring the timely provision of service will strengthen customer trust and increase the likelihood of re-use of the service.

In general, by strengthening the quality of service, safety, convenience, and customer-oriented approach, transport service companies can increase their competitiveness, strengthen customer loyalty, and contribute to the sustainable development of the tourism industry.

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