

# Users' Satisfaction of Pathao Ride-sharing Service in Kathmandu

Ashish Pant <sup>1</sup>, Anjay Kumar Mishra <sup>2\*</sup>, P. S. Aithal <sup>3</sup>, Bikash Shrestha <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Civil Engineer, Department of Roads, Chakupat, Lalitpur, Nepal,  
ORCID: 0000-0001-5861-9621; Email: [ashishpant@dor.gov.np](mailto:ashishpant@dor.gov.np)

<sup>2\*</sup> Dean, Madhesh University, Birgunj, Nepal,  
ORCID: 0000-0003-2803-4918; Email: [anjaymishra2000@gmail.com](mailto:anjaymishra2000@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Professor, Poornaprajna Institute of Management, Udupi, India,  
ORCID: 0000-0002-4691-8736; Email: [psaithal@gmail.com](mailto:psaithal@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> Assistant Professor, Public Youth Campus Tribhuvan University, Nepal,  
ORCID: 0000-0002-1081-461X; Email: [bikashshrestha@kcm.edu.np](mailto:bikashshrestha@kcm.edu.np)

**Area/Section:** Business Management.

**Type of Paper:** Analytical Research.

**Number of Peer Reviews:** Two.

**Type of Review:** Peer Reviewed as per [C|O|P|E|](#) guidance.

**Indexed in:** OpenAIRE.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18301180>

**Google Scholar Citation:** [PIJMESS](#)

## How to Cite this Paper:

Pant, A., Mishra, A. K., Aithal, P. S. & Shrestha, B., (2026). Users' Satisfaction of Pathao Ride-sharing Service in Kathmandu. *Poornaprajna International Journal of Management, Education & Social Science (PIJMESS)*, 3(1), 28-37. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18301180>

**Poornaprajna International Journal of Management, Education & Social Science (PIJMESS)**

A Refereed International Journal of Poornaprajna Publication, India.  
**ISSN: 3107-4626**

Crossref DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64818/PIJMESS.3107.4626.0039>

Received on: 04/12/2025

Published on: 14/01/2026

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Ashish Pant <sup>1</sup>, Anjay Kumar Mishra <sup>2\*</sup>, P. S. Aithal <sup>3</sup>, Bikash Shrestha <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Civil Engineer, Department of Roads, Chakupat, Lalitpur, Nepal,  
ORCID: 0000-0001-5861-9621; Email: [ashishpant@dor.gov.np](mailto:ashishpant@dor.gov.np)

<sup>2\*</sup> Dean, Madhesh University, Birgunj, Nepal,  
ORCID: 0000-0003-2803-4918; Email: [anjaymishra2000@gmail.com](mailto:anjaymishra2000@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Professor, Poornaprajna Institute of Management, Udupi, India,  
ORCID: 0000-0002-4691-8736; Email: [psaithal@gmail.com](mailto:psaithal@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> Assistant Professor, Public Youth Campus Tribhuvan University, Nepal,  
ORCID: 0000-0002-1081-461X; Email: [bikashshrestha@kcm.edu.np](mailto:bikashshrestha@kcm.edu.np)

### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** *The rise of the digital economy has transformed urban mobility across the world, with ride-sharing services emerging as a key innovation in sustainable transportation. In Nepal, Pathao has introduced a new mode of travel that connects riders and drivers through mobile platforms, offering affordability and convenience within Kathmandu's congested transport environment. However, users' satisfaction with such services remains underexplored, particularly in relation to price value, reliability, safety, and responsiveness. This study aims to analyze the factors influencing user satisfaction with Pathao ride-sharing services in Kathmandu, focusing on how price value, reliability, safety, and responsiveness shape overall consumer experience.*

**Methods:** *A quantitative research design was applied using a structured questionnaire distributed to Pathao users in Kathmandu Metropolitan City. Primary data from 175 valid responses were analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics, reliability tests, and multiple regression analysis to examine relationships among the variables.*

**Findings:** *Results indicate that all four variables—price value, reliability, safety, and responsiveness—significantly and positively affect user satisfaction. Among these, responsiveness and safety emerged as the most influential determinants. Users expressed high appreciation for service convenience and affordability, but also raised concerns about occasional fare inconsistencies and driver behavior. The findings validate the SERVQUAL framework's applicability in assessing ride-sharing services in developing urban contexts.*

**Value:** *The study concludes that maintaining competitive pricing, consistent reliability, and improved safety standards are crucial for sustaining user satisfaction with Pathao services. Enhanced responsiveness through customer support and driver professionalism can further strengthen consumer trust and loyalty. The findings provide valuable insights for ride-sharing platforms and policymakers to improve digital mobility systems in Nepal. Ensuring safety, service reliability, and user-friendly platforms can foster sustained growth of the ride-sharing industry and support smart urban transport development.*

**Type of Paper:** *Analytical Research.*

**Keywords:** Ride-Sharing Services, User Satisfaction, Pathao, SERVQUAL, Digital Mobility, Kathmandu

### 1. INTRODUCTION :

In the modern era of digital innovation, technology has revolutionized the way individuals interact, communicate, and fulfill their daily needs. One of the most significant transformations has occurred in the transportation sector, where digital platforms have introduced new models of mobility through ride-sharing services (Shaheen and Cohen (2018). [1]). These platforms enable real-time connection between drivers and passengers using mobile applications, ensuring accessibility, affordability, and convenience compared to traditional transport systems (Li et al. (2021). [2]). The concept of the sharing economy,

under which ride-sharing operates, emphasizes access over ownership and has redefined urban travel patterns across the world (Pedroni (2019). [3]).

Globally, ride-sharing services such as Uber, Grab, and Lyft have transformed urban mobility by reducing dependency on private vehicles and enhancing transport efficiency (Aydin & Kalan (2020). [4]). The integration of digital technologies has not only improved time management and service reliability but also contributed to sustainable urban development through reduced traffic congestion and environmental impacts (Altshuler et al. (2019). [5]). These services are supported by the widespread use of smartphones, increased internet accessibility, and changing consumer preferences toward flexible and cost-effective transport alternatives (Hilsden et al. (2020). [6]).

In the context of Nepal, the transportation system has long been characterized by limited public transport facilities, traffic congestion, and inadequate service reliability. With rapid urbanization in Kathmandu Valley, the need for efficient and affordable mobility options has become more pressing. In response, ride-sharing platforms such as Pathao and InDrive have entered the Nepali market, introducing app-based services that connect passengers and drivers through a digital interface (Pathao (2019). [7]). Since its establishment in Kathmandu in 2018, Pathao has gained popularity among commuters due to its affordability, convenience, and time efficiency. The service has also provided income opportunities for many youths, contributing to the digital and gig economy landscape of Nepal (Giri & Kautish (2023). [8]).

Despite these benefits, user satisfaction remains a decisive factor in the continued success and sustainability of ride-sharing services (Dey (2021). [9]). Previous studies highlight that satisfaction in ride-sharing is influenced by multiple dimensions such as reliability, safety, price fairness, and responsiveness (Ziyad (2020). [10]; Elmeguid et al. (2018). [11]). These attributes form the foundation of the SERVQUAL model, which evaluates service quality across tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy (Parasuraman et al. (1988). [12]). Applying this framework, global and regional research has found that responsiveness and assurance are particularly significant in shaping user experiences in ride-sharing contexts [9] [10].

In Nepal, limited empirical research has explored the determinants of user satisfaction with ride-sharing platforms such as Pathao. While anecdotal evidence suggests that users appreciate convenience and affordability, concerns about driver behavior, safety, and technological reliability persist [13,14,15]. Understanding how these factors affect satisfaction is vital not only for improving service quality but also for ensuring long-term adoption and public trust in digital mobility services. Therefore, this study seeks to analyze user satisfaction with Pathao ride-sharing services in Kathmandu, emphasizing the roles of price value, reliability, safety, and responsiveness in shaping overall consumer experience.

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM :**

The emergence of ride-sharing platforms has significantly reshaped the global transportation landscape by offering accessible and affordable travel alternatives through digital technology. However, in developing cities such as Kathmandu, where transportation systems are often characterized by congestion, unreliable public services, and fluctuating fuel prices, the effectiveness and sustainability of such platforms remain uncertain. While the introduction of Pathao has provided a convenient mobility solution for many urban residents, varying perceptions of service quality and satisfaction among users reveal that the platform's performance has yet to reach an optimal level.

User satisfaction is a key determinant of success in service-oriented industries. In the context of ride-sharing, it reflects how well service providers meet users' expectations in terms of reliability, safety, responsiveness, and price fairness [10,16,17]. Previous studies have emphasized that high levels of satisfaction promote loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and long-term sustainability of digital transport systems [9] [11]. Yet, dissatisfaction may arise when users experience inconsistent pricing, driver misconduct, technical glitches in the app, or safety concerns—issues that have also been observed in Kathmandu's emerging ride-sharing market [13, 14,18,19].

Although Pathao has established itself as a major player in the Nepali ride-sharing industry, the extent to which users are satisfied with its overall service quality remains underexplored. Most existing research in Nepal focuses on general digital transformation or consumer behavior in e-commerce, leaving a clear research gap regarding ride-sharing satisfaction [8]. Moreover, there is limited evidence on whether perceived service quality differs across gender and demographic groups within the city.

Such insights are essential for improving user experience and designing policies that ensure equitable and reliable mobility services.

Given these issues, it becomes necessary to assess the major determinants of user satisfaction with Pathao ride-sharing services in Kathmandu. The study particularly focuses on four crucial dimensions—price value, reliability, safety, and responsiveness—which collectively shape consumer perception and influence continued usage. Understanding how these variables interact to determine satisfaction will not only help service providers enhance operational efficiency but will also contribute to the growing academic discourse on the effectiveness of digital mobility solutions in developing urban contexts.

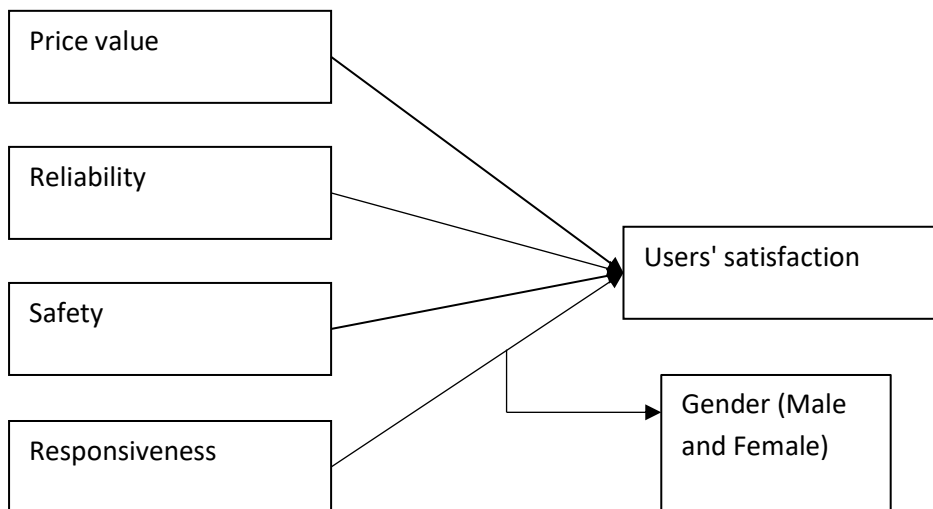
**3. OBJECTIVES :**

The main objective of this study is to examine how price value, reliability, safety, and responsiveness influence users’ satisfaction with Pathao ride-sharing services in Kathmandu.

**4. METHODOLOGY :**

This study adopts a quantitative research design aimed at analyzing the factors influencing user satisfaction with Pathao ride-sharing services in Kathmandu. The quantitative approach is appropriate as it allows for systematic measurement, statistical testing, and empirical validation of the relationships between selected variables. The study focuses on four independent variables—price value, reliability, safety, and responsiveness—and one dependent variable, user satisfaction. These variables were identified from established models of service quality and user satisfaction in the context of digital platforms [9] [10] [12].

The research design follows a descriptive and causal framework. The descriptive aspect helps to portray the characteristics of Pathao users in Kathmandu, while the causal component enables examination of how service-related factors influence satisfaction levels. The study is cross-sectional in nature, as data were collected at a single point in time from users who have utilized Pathao ride-sharing services within the city. This design provides a snapshot of user perceptions and allows for statistical inference regarding the strength and direction of relationships among variables.



**Fig 1:** Research framework of the study

**Table 1:** Sources of variables

Variables	Sources
Price value	Balachandran and Hamzah (2017) [20], Arteaga-Sánchez et al. (2018) [21], Elmeguid et al. (2018) [11], Jahan (2019) [22], Akbari et al. (2020) [23], Levinger et al. (2020) [24]
Reliability	Balachandran and Hamzah (2017) [20], Elmeguid et al. (2018) [11], Dey et al. (2021) [9], Ziyad et al. (2020) [10]
Safety	Dey et al. (2021) [9], Jahan (2019) [22], Levinger et al. (2020) [24], Ziyad et al. (2020) [10], Singh and Sah (2022) [25]

Responsiveness	Dey et al. (2021) [9], Jahan (2019) [22], Ziyad et al. (2020) [10]
Users' satisfaction	Balachandran and Hamzah (2017) [20], Arteaga-Sánchez et al. (2018) [21], Elmeguid et al. (2018) [11], Jahan (2019) [22], Akbari et al. (2020) [23], Levinger et al. (2020) [24], Ziyad et al. (2020) [10], Dey et al. (2021) [9]

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to Pathao users. The questionnaire comprised multiple-choice and Likert scale questions, designed to capture respondents' experiences with respect to price fairness, reliability of service, perceived safety, and responsiveness of the application and drivers. Convenience sampling was employed due to the unavailability of a complete sampling frame for all Pathao users in Kathmandu. However, efforts were made to ensure diversity in the sample by including respondents from various locations, age groups, and gender categories.

The study area was confined to Kathmandu Metropolitan City, with data collected from active commercial and institutional zones where Pathao services are widely used. These included shopping centers, business districts, and educational areas. A total of 175 valid responses were analyzed after excluding incomplete and unengaged responses. The data were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which facilitated computation of descriptive statistics, reliability tests, and regression analysis.

Reliability and internal consistency of the constructs were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, while regression analysis was employed to determine the extent to which the independent variables predict user satisfaction. The statistical findings were interpreted in light of theoretical models and empirical literature, ensuring alignment between observed data and conceptual expectations. This methodological framework ensures objectivity, replicability, and scientific rigor in addressing the research problem.

## 5. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The evolution of the sharing economy has fundamentally altered the global service landscape by emphasizing collaborative consumption and digital intermediation between users and providers [2]. Within this framework, ride-sharing services have become a central component of urban mobility, enabling passengers to connect with drivers through smartphone applications that provide real-time, cashless, and efficient transportation options [1]. Such services not only facilitate convenience and flexibility but also contribute to sustainability by reducing vehicle ownership and optimizing road usage [4].

Scholarly attention toward ride-sharing has expanded rapidly, with researchers examining user satisfaction, service quality, and behavioral intentions in various contexts. The SERVQUAL model serves as a foundational framework for evaluating service quality across five dimensions—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy [12]. This model has been widely applied to digital platforms, where service interactions are primarily mediated through technology rather than direct human engagement. SERVQUAL framework was applied to the ride-sharing industry in Pakistan and concluded that all five dimensions positively affect consumer satisfaction, particularly responsiveness and assurance [10]. Their findings highlight that user satisfaction is not only influenced by the tangible aspects of service but also by promptness, communication, and trustworthiness of drivers.

The influence of assurance and empathy was investigated on user satisfaction in the context of Bangladesh's ride-sharing market. Their regression analysis revealed that these dimensions significantly predict satisfaction, with assurance—representing users' trust and safety perception—emerging as the strongest determinant. The study's model explained 68.4 percent of the variation in user satisfaction, underscoring the importance of service reliability and interpersonal trust in technology-mediated services [9]. These findings align with the conclusions that reliability, safety, and user comfort play decisive roles in determining satisfaction levels among users of app-based transportation services [11].

In addition to these service-related factors, researchers have examined the role of price fairness and value perception. Perceived price value—the extent to which users believe they receive benefits relative to cost—strongly affects satisfaction and continued usage intentions [14]. Users tend to remain loyal when pricing structures are transparent and reasonable, especially in markets where traditional transport

alternatives are unreliable or expensive. It was further noted that in competitive urban settings, dynamic pricing models must balance affordability with profitability to maintain consumer trust [4].

In the South Asian context, studies have begun to explore ride-sharing from a socio-cultural perspective. It was identified that in Nepal, satisfaction with ride-sharing is influenced not only by functional attributes such as safety and reliability but also by social perceptions, including users' comfort with digital payments and driver behavior [13]. The responsiveness and safety are particularly critical in the Nepali setting, as they directly influence repeat usage and user recommendations. However, despite these contributions, empirical literature in Nepal remains limited, with most studies focusing on general digital service adoption rather than detailed analysis of ride-sharing satisfaction [8].

Overall, the literature demonstrates a consistent link between service quality and user satisfaction, validating the relevance of the SERVQUAL framework in digital mobility research. However, contextual variations—such as infrastructure limitations, socio-economic factors, and technological readiness—necessitate localized investigations. Thus, this study extends previous research by analyzing how four key determinants—price value, reliability, safety, and responsiveness—affect user satisfaction with Pathao ride-sharing services in Kathmandu. By situating the analysis within the Nepali urban environment, the study seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of consumer satisfaction dynamics in emerging digital transportation markets. This concept could be merged with blockchain, water supply, AI, Bridge so on [26-29].

**6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :**

The analysis in this study focuses on examining the factors influencing users' satisfaction with Pathao ride-sharing services in Kathmandu. Data collected from 175 respondents were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to evaluate the relationships between the independent variables—price value, reliability, safety, and responsiveness—and the dependent variable, user satisfaction. Both descriptive and inferential analyses were carried out to interpret the findings in line with the study objectives.

The demographic profile of respondents revealed that the majority were young adults aged between 20 and 35 years, reflecting the high level of digital engagement among this age group. A balanced representation of male and female users was included, ensuring gender-based perspectives in the findings. Most respondents reported using Pathao services for daily commuting and short-distance travel within Kathmandu, indicating the platform's integration into urban mobility patterns.

**Table 2: Relationship between variables for all samples**

Variables	Price Value	Reliability	Safety	Responsiveness	Users' Satisfaction
Price Value	1				
Reliability	0.550** (0.001)	1			
Safety	0.573** (0.001)	0.681** (0.001)	1		
Responsiveness	0.600** (0.001)	0.732** (0.001)	0.721** (0.001)	1	
Users' Satisfaction	0.539** (0.001)	0.651** (0.001)	0.591** (0.001)	0.638** (0.001)	1
Hypotheses result	Rejected H <sub>0</sub> at 0.01 level	Rejected H <sub>0</sub> at 0.01 level	Rejected H <sub>0</sub> at 0.01 level	Rejected H <sub>0</sub> at 0.01 level	

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Descriptive statistics demonstrated that respondents generally held favorable perceptions of Pathao services. A large proportion agreed that the pricing system was reasonable compared to traditional taxis, suggesting that affordability remains a key attraction for users. However, some respondents expressed

concerns regarding fluctuating fare rates during peak hours. The results align with the findings that transparent pricing enhances trust and user retention in digital transportation platforms [14]. Regarding reliability, users indicated satisfaction with the platform’s punctuality, trip completion rate, and app functionality. Respondents appreciated the availability of drivers and ease of booking but noted occasional cancellations or delays during heavy traffic hours. These observations correspond with the studies who reported that reliability plays a crucial role in shaping perceived service quality and satisfaction in ride-sharing systems [9] [10]. Safety emerged as another critical determinant of satisfaction. Most users stated that they felt secure during rides due to identifiable driver profiles, GPS tracking, and in-app emergency options. Nevertheless, a small portion of respondents, particularly female users, reported discomfort during night rides, indicating the need for stronger safety assurance measures. This finding supports the findings who emphasized the importance of perceived safety in sustaining user confidence in Nepal’s digital transport market [13].

**Table 3: Impact of variables for all samples**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig.	F	Sig.	Model result	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Hypotheses result
	B	Std. Error							
(Constant)	0.932	0.151	6.179	0.001	98.312	0.001	Model is fit	0.502	Null hypothesis rejected at 0.01
Price Value	0.119	0.034	3.447	0.001					
Reliability	0.310	0.055	5.647	0.001					
Safety	0.125	0.056	2.214	0.027					
Responsiveness	0.231	0.064	3.625	0.001					
a Dependent Variable: Users' Satisfaction									

Responsiveness, encompassing drivers’ communication behavior and the platform’s support system, also significantly influenced satisfaction. Respondents highlighted that quick driver response and the app’s customer support feature contributed positively to their overall experience. However, delays in issue resolution and occasional unprofessional behavior by drivers were cited as sources of dissatisfaction. These observations are consistent with the conclusions that found responsiveness to be among the strongest predictors of satisfaction in ride-sharing contexts [10].

Inferential analysis through regression confirmed that all four independent variables—price value, reliability, safety, and responsiveness—had a statistically significant and positive relationship with user satisfaction. Among them, responsiveness and safety were identified as the most influential predictors. The model’s coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) indicated that a substantial proportion of the variation in user satisfaction could be explained by these variables, suggesting a strong explanatory power of the model.

Overall, the findings highlight that while *Pathao* has achieved considerable user acceptance in Kathmandu, continuous improvement in pricing transparency, driver conduct, and safety assurance is essential to maintaining long-term satisfaction. The results reinforce the applicability of the SERVQUAL framework in evaluating digital mobility services and provide valuable insights into user expectations within the context of Nepal’s evolving ride-sharing industry.

**7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The study analyzed the major factors influencing users’ satisfaction with Pathao ride-sharing services in Kathmandu. Drawing upon the SERVQUAL framework, it focused on four key dimensions—price value, reliability, safety, and responsiveness—and examined their collective impact on consumer satisfaction. The analysis revealed that all four dimensions significantly contribute to shaping users’ overall experiences with the service. Among these, responsiveness and safety emerged as the most

influential determinants, indicating that users value timely service, clear communication, and a secure travel environment above all else.

The findings affirm that Pathao has been successful in addressing urban mobility needs by offering an accessible and cost-effective transportation alternative. However, challenges remain in maintaining consistent service quality, addressing concerns related to driver behavior, and ensuring the safety and comfort of all users, particularly women. The study also reinforces that user satisfaction in ride-sharing services is multidimensional, encompassing not only technical and operational aspects but also emotional and psychological factors that influence trust and loyalty. By identifying these critical determinants, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital transportation platforms can sustain growth in developing urban contexts like Kathmandu.

The results of this research carry both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study validates the relevance of the SERVQUAL framework in assessing user satisfaction within technology-driven transport services. It expands the literature on digital mobility by contextualizing global service quality dimensions in a developing economy setting. Practically, the findings offer valuable insights for ride-sharing service providers, policymakers, and urban planners. For service providers such as Pathao, the study underscores the need to strengthen reliability, enhance communication channels, and prioritize safety mechanisms to ensure sustained user confidence. Policymakers can use these insights to formulate regulatory frameworks that encourage fair competition, promote passenger safety, and foster the integration of ride-sharing platforms into Nepal's broader urban transport system.

#### **Recommendations:**

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed to enhance user satisfaction with Pathao ride-sharing services in Kathmandu. First, Pathao should adopt a transparent and consistent pricing policy to reduce user concerns about fare fluctuations, especially during peak hours. Second, efforts should be made to improve reliability by introducing a driver performance monitoring system and by optimizing route allocation through advanced algorithms. Third, user safety must be prioritized by implementing strict driver verification, gender-sensitive safety protocols, and real-time tracking alerts to boost passenger confidence. Fourth, responsiveness can be improved through faster customer service responses and driver training programs focused on communication etiquette and professionalism.

In addition, collaboration with municipal authorities to improve road infrastructure and traffic management could indirectly enhance service reliability and efficiency. Future research should consider expanding the study area beyond Kathmandu to include other major cities and comparing user satisfaction across different ride-sharing platforms. Such comparative analysis would provide a broader perspective on digital mobility trends in Nepal and contribute to the continuous improvement of user-centered transportation services.

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