The relationship between service quality and customer's intention to use ride-hailing service: Case study from Vietnam for Grab mobile application

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between service quality factors and customers' Intention to Use the Grab ride-hailing service among residents and workers in Hanoi, aiming to provide actionable recommendations for service improvement The research employed a quantitative methodology, collecting 173 valid responses using a Likert scale questionnaire, with data analyzed through Cronbach's Alpha, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and Multiple Regression Analysis. The research model included three independent variables based on established service quality theories: Technical Quality (TQ), Functional Quality (FQ), and Sensory Quality (SQ), predicting the dependent variable, Intention to Use (ITU). The regression results demonstrated that the model is statistically significant, explaining 72% of the variation in usage intention. Crucially, the analysis confirmed that Technical Quality and Sensory Quality positively and significantly impact customers' Intention to Use the service, leading to the acceptance of hypotheses H1 and H3. Conversely, Functional Quality was found to be statistically non-significant, resulting in the rejection of hypothesis H2. The findings highlight that customers place a higher value on the Sensory Quality—the tangible aspects of the experience—and the core Technical Quality (reliability and performance) when deciding on future service use

Keywords: Service quality; customer's intention to use; ride-hailing; Functional quality; Sensory quality; Technical quality

1. Introduction

The 4.0 Industrial Revolution, with its strong technological development, has significantly changed consumer behavior. In the modern context, consumers are becoming increasingly sophisticated, demanding more in terms of service quality, and have notably changed their service consumption habits (Indah and Suryadinatha, 2019). Intra-city passenger transport services, typically represented by ride-hailing applications, are a prime example illustrating this shift in customer service usage behavior. Traditional methods of hailing a vehicle (via phone calls or drivers waiting for passengers on the street, etc.) have been replaced by connections made through smartphones. In major cities, customers and ride-hailing drivers can communicate through the technology application on their smartphones, and transactions are subsequently executed (Huynh et al., 2020). Besides convenience, the use of technology makes customer journeys for transport safer, more transparent, and faster. Since the 2012–2015 period, intra-city transport applications have rapidly transformed customer mobility in major Vietnamese hubs like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, establishing a powerful technology-based transport market. Grab in Vietnam is a widely used and highly popular super app that offers a variety of services, making it an essential part of daily life for many Vietnamese people and a convenient tool for tourists (Nguyen et al., 2022). The ride-hailing service has seen intense competition from various players: initial international entrants like Uber have since exited or been absorbed (with Grab acquiring Uber's Southeast Asian operations), leaving dominant regional platforms like Grab to compete fiercely with strong local applications such as Be, the environmentally focused Xanh SM, and others like GoViet (now integrated into Gojek). This dynamic technological transport ecosystem continues to exhibit significant growth potential; for instance, the Vietnamese ride-hailing market was valued at an estimated $0.93 billion in 2024 and is projected to exceed $1.5 billion by 2029 with the majority of market share belonged to Grab (according to recent market analysis from Mordor Intelligence), highlighting the sustained importance of this service type in the urban economy.

The competition arising from globalization and the continuously increasing demands of customers also provide them with more choices and make them more rigorous when using this type of service. Therefore, service quality has become the top priority for technology-based transport companies in the current market, requiring them to constantly innovate, be creative, and bring more value to customers. Service quality is considered a crucial management approach in business to ensure customer satisfaction, while also increasing the competitiveness and effectiveness of the industry (Darzi et al., 2023; Sahin et al., 2024). Consequently, the competition among brands operating this service is becoming fiercer and more rapidly innovative. In the scope of Vietnam market, Grab is highly regarded for its diverse ecosystem, flexible application features, broad coverage, and large number of driver partners (Nguyen and Ha, 2022). However, despite being a familiar and popular brand, Grab also faces many debates surrounding its service quality, such as waiting time for vehicles, driver attitudes, and fluctuating prices during peak hours. On social media platforms, users express mixed opinions about their Grab service experience (Tran and Pham, 2021). Nevertheless, there are not many in-depth studies assessing the relationship between service quality and customer usage intention in Vietnam. Thus, the author chose the topic "***The relationship between service quality and customer intention to use ride-hailing service: Case study from Vietnam for Grab mobile application***" with the goal of proposing a research model, assessing the degree of influence of quality factors on the decision to use Grab services, and subsequently offering solutions and recommendations to improve service quality from the consumer's perspective.

2. Literature review

2.1. Ride-hailing service

The ride-hailing service has brought about a revolution in the field of urban transport, removing many barriers inherent in traditional methods (Shaheen and Cohen, 2019). With just a few taps on a smartphone, users can easily connect with a wide network of drivers, actively choose the vehicle type, know the cost in advance, and transparently track their journey. The convenience, speed, and easy accessibility have made this service an indispensable part of modern life, meeting diverse travel needs, from commuting and leisure to urgent business trips, while also creating flexible employment opportunities for a segment of the population (Feng et al., 2021). This transport method continues to expand and is particularly evident in developing countries (Agarwal et al., 2023). With the explosion of technology, ride-hailing services have been "upgraded" to be more convenient and have become very efficient, especially in Southeast Asian countries (Huynh et al., 2020).

2.2. Service quality

Zeithaml and Bitner (2010) argue that, "Service quality and customer satisfaction are two distinct concepts; while service quality focuses specifically on the components of the service, customer satisfaction is a comprehensive concept." Furthermore, Zeglat et al. (2009) assert that, "Service quality is the cause, and satisfaction is the result." The relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction is a positive one; service quality has a positive influence on the customer's perception.

According to ISO 8402 as provided in Lushi et al. (2016), service quality is defined as, "The totality of characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated and implied needs." Alternatively, service quality is customer satisfaction measured by the difference between expected quality and perceived quality (or achieved quality). If the expected quality is lower than the achieved quality, the service quality is excellent; if the expected quality is greater than the achieved quality, the service quality is inadequate; and if the expected quality equals the achieved quality, the service quality is acceptable (Biscaia et al., 2023).

In summary, based on the above concepts, service quality can be deduced to be the customer's perceived quality. It stems from comparing the customer's expectations *prior* to using the service with what the customer *perceives* after using the service. When the customer's perception of quality meets their prior expectations, the service provider is deemed to have delivered perfect quality. Assessing and measuring service quality is inherently difficult, and service quality is influenced by the customer's perception of the service and is closely related to customer satisfaction.

2.3. Customer's intention to use

Intention is a factor used to evaluate future behavior; it is a motivational element that drives an individual's readiness to perform a behavior and is directly influenced by attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991).

Behavioral intention is hypothesized to be an intermediate precursor to actual behavior, and thus, research on usage intention provides a good prediction of actual usage behavior. Jamil et al. (2022) argue that intention is a mental state, often possessing causal power. A person's determination, or their worry and eagerness, acts as the driving force behind us. Since mental states operate under causal relationships, a person cannot commit to carrying out a course of action in the way we typically do when making a promise or signing an agreement or contract (Alalwan et al., 2016).

Thus, attitude, perceived behavioral control, overall image, and past behavior significantly influence behavioral intention regarding the use of ride-hailing services. Specifically, service quality is considered a crucial factor that generates customers' intention to use a product or service.

2.4. Research model

Kang and James (2004) proposed a service quality model based on the assumption that service quality encompasses three aspects: technical quality, functional quality, and corporate image. This model is a combination and adaptation of predecessor models, specifically the service quality models by Grönroos (1988). Functional Quality (Functinonal Quality) comprises the methods by which a company delivers the service to the consumer, including five main dimensions: Reliability, Assurance, Tangibles, Empathy, and Responsiveness. Technical Quality (Technical Quality) encompasses the actual value that customers receive from the service provided by the company. The Corporate Image factor acts as a "filter" in the process of perceiving service quality. Consumers may perceive the service quality offered by the company as high or low based on their recognition of the corporate image.

Inheriting to the research model of Kang and James (2004), the author would provide the framework with the addition of sensory quality (SQ) as follows:
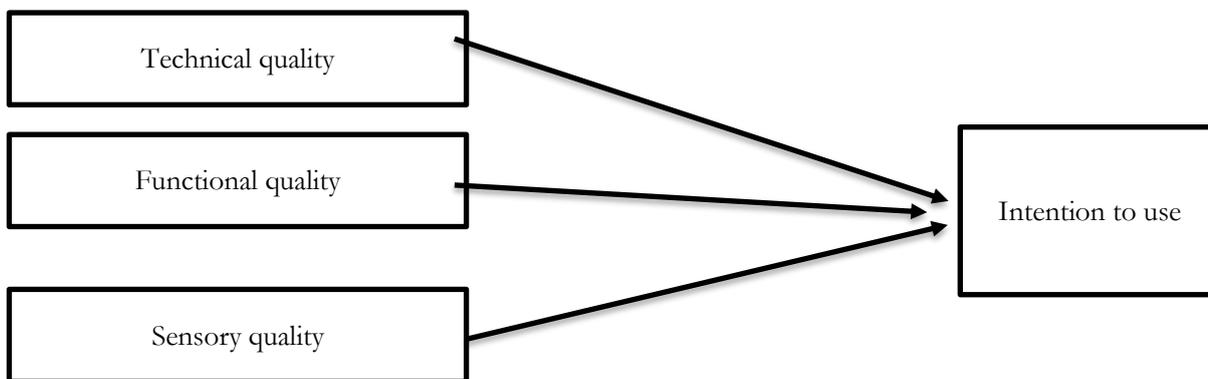

Figure 1: Proposed research model
(Source: Author's proposal)

2.5. Hypothesis development

According to Grönroos (1988), Technical Quality is what the consumer receives as a result of their interaction with a service company. Technical Quality answers the question, "What does the customer receive?" In other words, consumers will rely on their own perceptions to evaluate any given service or product. However, because the service is produced during the interaction with the consumer, this technical quality is not the total quality perceived by the consumer. Clearly, the customer will also be influenced by the functional manner in which the technical quality is delivered to them.

H1: Technical Quality positively impacts customers' intention to use the service.

Ghotbabadi et al. (2015) point out that perceived service quality has two dimensions: the Functional (or process) dimension and the Technical (or outcome) dimension. Functional Quality focuses on how the service is delivered and considers issues such as employee behavior and speed of service. Therefore, Functional Quality directly affects overall service quality. According to research by Bowen et al. (2023), functional service quality positively and significantly influences customer satisfaction. The functional factor has a strong influence on customer behavior and satisfaction and requires greater attention to enhance customer satisfaction.

H2: Functional Quality positively impacts customers' intention to use the service.

According to research by Santos et al. (2021), factors related to Sensory Quality influence overall service quality. Customers' direct perceptions via their senses, such as sight, will directly affect their evaluation of the service quality. Research by Mahanta et al. (2021) and Munoz (2002) affirm that time management, cost and payment, employee attitude and behavior, safety and security, comfort and hygiene, service availability, food, and decoration affect customer satisfaction.

H3: Sensory Quality positively impacts customers' intention to use the service

3. Research methodology

3.1. Data collection

To test the above hypotheses, a questionnaire was developed to collect information and validate the data. The study utilizes the Likert scale in the survey instrument because it is a commonly used measurement scale.

The conventional guideline for sample size dictates that the ratio of the sample size to the number of observed variables must be at least 5:1 (Bollen, 1989). Thus, for a model with 16 parameters (or observed variables) to be analyzed, the minimum sample size required is 80. To achieve this size, the author distributed the survey questionnaire.

The author successfully collected 184 responses from the use of Google Form in November 2025. After data processing and eliminating unqualified responses (11 samples were removed because the respondents did not provide objective assessments, as evidenced by giving the same rating to every question), 173 qualified responses remained for quantitative analysis. The study applied a stratified random sampling method combined with selection criteria including gender, age, occupation, and income to collect information from the target subjects.

3.2. Data analysis

To assess the reliability of the scale, the author used the Cronbach's Alpha test. The purpose of this assessment is to eliminate unsuitable variables (observed variables within a scale that do not correlate tightly with one another and do not collectively explain the same concept).

After assessing the reliability of the scale, the next step is to evaluate its validity using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). EFA is used to condense a set of k observed variables into a smaller set of F meaningful factors (where $F < k$).

Following the EFA, the author proceeded to conduct Multiple Regression Analysis using the Enter method at a 5% significance level to test the model and hypotheses. The regression analysis included four independent variables: Technical Quality, Functional Quality, Sensory Quality, and Outcome Quality, and one dependent variable: Intention to Use. The value used for each factor in the regression was the average value of the observed variables belonging to that factor.

3.3. Questionnaire design

The objective is to identify the factors influencing customers' intention to use the service and to assess the relationships between these factors in order to provide solutions for maintaining, improving, and developing positive attitudes and actively changing customer intention and behavior towards Grab ride-hailing services. Based on the theoretical framework and literature review (detailed in Chapter 1), the author synthesized the measurements for the research concepts as follows:

Table 1: Questionnaire design

Symbol	Observed Variable	Reference Source
TQ1	I can book a ride anytime, anywhere.	Murti et al. (2013); Ali et al. (2017); Wang et al. (2020);
TQ2	I can easily contact the driver.	
TQ3	I know clearly the distance I will travel and the amount I have to pay for that trip.	
TQ4	I can pay using various payment methods.	
FQ1	The driver picks up and drops off passengers at the correct designated locations.	Kang (2006); Ali et al. (2017)' Kasiri et al. (2017)
FQ2	The driver communicates with passengers in a friendly and polite manner.	
FQ3	The car travels the route accurately displayed on the application.	
FQ4	The driver drives carefully and safely.	
SQ1	The driver's attire is neat and clean.	Munoz (2002); Yang et al. (2021)
SQ2	The space available for passengers in the car is comfortable and spacious.	
SQ3	The space available for passengers in the car is tidied up and clean.	
SQ4	The driver proactively presents information related to the trip.	
ITU1	I intend to use the Grab ride-hailing service in the future.	Chin et al. (2018); Winasis et al. (2023)
ITU2	I plan to use the Grab ride-hailing service in the future.	
ITU3	I will use the Grab ride-hailing service more often.	
ITU4	I will recommend Grab's ride-hailing service to friends and relatives.	

(Source: Author's compilations)

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Descriptive analysis

After the data collection process, the author obtained 184 questionnaires, resulting in a 100% response rate. The number of invalid questionnaires was 11, leaving 173 valid responses. The descriptive statistics for the study sample are presented in detail in the following table:

Table 2: Descriptive analysis summary

Characteristic	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	159	49.69%
	Female	161	50.31%
Age	Under 18 years old	97	30.31%
	From 18 - 30 years old	112	35.00%
	30 years old and above	111	34.69%
Occupation	Student	121	37.81%
	Office worker	67	20.94%
	Freelancer / Self-employed	81	25.31%
	Other	51	15.94%
Income	Under 3 million VND	52	16.25%
	From 3 - 5 million VND	99	30.94%
	From 5 - 10 million VND	91	28.44%
	Above 10 million VND	78	24.38%

(Source: Author's compilations)

4.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis

The regression model is constructed through a logical sequence of steps, beginning with the clear identification of the research problem and the establishment of a theoretical model regarding the relationships between variables. This is followed by a careful process of data collection and preparation, which includes cleaning, coding, and checking the basic characteristics of the data. Once the data is ready, the appropriate regression model is selected and its coefficients are estimated. The next crucial step is model evaluation, which involves testing the statistical significance of the coefficients, the model's overall fit, and checking its underlying assumptions. Finally, the estimated results are interpreted meaningfully within the research context, compared with previous studies, and

relevant implications are drawn.

The author employed the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to assess the reliability of the measurement scale before performing EFA.

If the Item-Total Correlation coefficient is greater than 0.3 and the Cronbach's Alpha value falls within the range of 0.7 to 0.95, it indicates that the current questionnaire items meet the requirements for reliability (Hair et al., 2016). Variable deletion will occur if a variable has an Item-Total Correlation coefficient lower than 0.3, or if the researcher considers its removal to increase the scale's reliability, provided that the Alpha if Item Deleted value is greater than the overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The Item-Total Correlation coefficients for the observed variables range from 0.733 to 0.845, all of which are greater than the required threshold of 0.3. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values all fall within the range of 0.5 to 0.9. Therefore, the reliability requirement for the independent and dependent variables is ensured.

Table 2: Rotated Factor Matrix

Observed Variable	Factor Loading				
	1	2	3	4	5
TQ1	0.881				
TQ2	0.822				
TQ3	0.661				
TQ4	0.752				
TQ5		0.626			
FQ1		0.683			
FQ2		0.769			
FQ3		0.621			
FQ4			0.798		
FQ5			0.668		
SQ1			0.656		
SQ2			0.673		
SQ3				0.883	
SQ4				0.865	
SQ5				0.812	
SQ6				0.811	
ITU1					0.882
ITU2					0.823
ITU3					0.888
ITU4					0.885

Characteristic	Description	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy		**0.802**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1238.07
	df	105
	Sig.	<.001
Extracted Variance (Total Variance Explained)		**69.84%**

(Source: Author's compilations)

EFA performed on both the independent and dependent variables yielded satisfactory results, confirming that the data meets the necessary requirements to proceed with the subsequent analytical steps of the study.

4.3. Regression analysis

To comprehensively test the research hypotheses regarding the role and degree of influence of the constituent factors of service quality on customers' Intention to Use Grab ride-hailing services among residents and workers in Hanoi city, the author constructed and analyzed a multiple regression model. This model included all three identified independent variables: Technical Quality (representing the efficiency and reliability aspects of the core service), Functional Quality (reflecting the manner in which the service is delivered and customer interaction), and Sensory Quality (related to the tangible factors and the service experience environment). These independent variables were simultaneously entered into the linear regression model to assess their separate and combined impacts on the dependent variable, Intention to Use (which expresses the likelihood and desire for customers to continue or start using Grab ride-hailing services in the future). The use of the multiple regression model allows for a deeper analysis of the relationship between service quality factors and usage intention, while also controlling for the mutual influence among the independent variables.

The results of the linear regression analysis show that the Adjusted R-squared coefficient is 72%, indicating that the research model is statistically significant. The independent variables present in the model can explain 72% of the variation in the dependent variable, "Intention to Use" the ride-hailing service. Furthermore, the results also indicate that the variables TQ (Technical Quality) and SQ (Sensory quality) are statistically significant, having an impact on the customer's variable ITU (Intention to Use). The variable FQ (Functional Quality) is not statistically significant, with a Sig. value greater than 0.05. Thus, hypotheses H1 and H3 are accepted; hypothesis H2 is rejected.

Table 3: Regression analysis

Variable	Full Model	
	Std.	Sig.
TQ (Technical Quality)	0.021	0.367
SQ (Sensory Quality)	0.042	0.002**
FQ (Functional Quality)	0.226	0.02*
Adjusted R-squared	0.78	
R-squared Change	0.72	
F-statistic	121.771	
Dependent Variable: ITU (Intention to Use)		
Notes: Standardized coefficients achieved at significance levels: $*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001$		

(Source: Author's compilations)

4.4. Results discussions

Technical Quality and Sensory Quality are proven to be two factors influencing customers' Intention to Use ride-hailing services. Notably, the impact level of Sensory Quality is higher, indicating that customers using ride-hailing services pay significant attention to the sensory experience of the service.

It is evident that Sensory Quality plays a vital role in shaping the customer's experience and their decision to choose a ride-hailing service. Tangible elements such as the vehicle's condition (cleanliness, modernity), the driver's demeanor and attire (neat, courteous), the application interface (user-friendly, intuitive), and even minor details like the car's interior fragrance all affect the customer's initial perception and emotion. A positive sensory experience creates a good impression, fosters feelings of comfort, safety, and trust in the service, thereby driving the intention to use and customer loyalty (Hoang et al., 2021). Conversely, negative sensory elements can cause discomfort, raise doubts about the overall service quality, and easily prompt customers to switch to competitors (Ali et al., 2017). Specifically, tangible aspects like the vehicle's newness and cleanliness, the driver's polite manner and neat uniform, a friendly and easy-to-operate application interface, along with small details such as a

comfortable and pleasant interior space, all contribute to a strong initial impression for customers. A positive sensory experience evokes good emotions, bringing trust and a sense of security throughout the journey (Nguyen and Hoang, 2022). This not only enhances immediate satisfaction but also reinforces the intent to continue using the service in the future.

Alongside this, Technical Quality is an indispensable factor in evaluating service quality that leads to customer usage intention. This aspect includes the stability, reliability, and performance of the core service. For ride-hailing services, technical quality is demonstrated through the ability to book a ride quickly and accurately, a smooth and stable application operation, a reliable GPS navigation system, and transparent trip and pricing information (Kang and James, 2004). When these factors are guaranteed, customers feel secure and confident in the service, leading to the formation of an intention for frequent and long-term use. Any technical issue, no matter how small, can lead to a negative experience, reducing satisfaction and causing customers to consider switching to more reliable alternatives. Therefore, maintaining and enhancing technical quality is a key factor in attracting and retaining customers in the competitive ride-hailing market. Technical Quality is what consumers receive from their interaction with a product or service; it answers the question of what the customer receives. Although previous research by Kasiri et al. (2017) indicated that the observed variable "accessibility" has a positive influence on customer satisfaction, this current study's finding is different. We need to look at the research context and subject to explain this divergence.

Finally, Functional Quality showed no impact in the research model. Functional Quality factors, which emphasize the *manner* in which the product or service reaches the customer (e.g., the driver's attitude towards the customer or whether the driver picks up and drops off at the correct locations), were expected to have a significant effect on usage intention. This result is an interesting finding as it suggests that the Grab application has performed well in establishing pickup and drop-off points, making customers feel secure, and thus defaulting to a perceived reliability in the application and this quality dimension.

5. Conclusion

This study successfully analyzed the impact of service quality dimensions on customers' intention to use Grab ride-hailing services in Hanoi, utilizing a robust multiple regression model. The primary finding confirms that both Technical Quality (TQ) and Sensory Quality (SQ) are critical drivers of customers' Intention to Use (ITU). The significant role of Technical Quality is demonstrated by the necessity of providing reliable, efficient, and transparent service, such as quick and accurate booking, stable app operation, and clear pricing.

More notably, the high impact of Sensory Quality suggests that customers are highly sensitive to the tangible and environmental aspects of the ride-hailing experience. Factors like the cleanliness and condition of the vehicle, the driver's neat appearance, and a comfortable cabin space create positive initial impressions, fostering trust and security that drive long-term usage intention.

In contrast, Functional Quality (which includes driver attitude and adherence to pick-up points) was found to be statistically insignificant in this model. This unexpected finding suggests that Grab's foundational technological systems, such as accurate location setting and routing, have effectively standardized this aspect to a point where it is now a baseline expectation rather than a competitive differentiator that significantly *drives* usage intention.

For Grab, the key implication is the need for continuous investment in maintaining seamless Technical Quality and prioritizing the often-overlooked Sensory Quality to enhance the entire customer experience and solidify their position in the highly competitive Vietnamese ride-hailing market.

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