CUSTOMER SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE QUALITY OF ELECTRIC TAXIS IN HANOI

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ABSTRACT

In Hanoi and several other provinces and cities across Vietnam, electric taxis have been in operation for just over two years but have already gained widespread acceptance among customers. Numerous other provinces, cities, and countries will be potential market areas for electric taxi companies. Enhancing the service quality of electric taxis to foster customer satisfaction represents a long-term strategic objective for sustaining and developing this market. This study extends the traditional SERVQUAL model by incorporating its five original dimensions and further examines the role of a new factor - namely, the use of the electronic hailing application. Based on a dataset comprising 396 valid responses, the study employs Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) to assess the service quality of electric taxis in Hanoi. The findings confirm the significant influence of the proposed factors on customer satisfaction, with the exception of responsiveness. In addition to the variable associated with the modern electronic hailing application, several indicators specific to the characteristics of electric vehicles are also found to be significant contributors to customer satisfaction.

Keywords: *Electric Taxi, SERVQUAL, E-hailing Application, Satisfaction.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In major cities across Vietnam, particularly in Hanoi, electric taxis utilizing the Xanh SM application have become increasingly prevalent on urban roads. Launched in April 2023, the Xanh SM electric taxi brand quickly expanded to a fleet of 17,000 vehicles, securing the fourth position in the technology-based taxi market. Within a short period, electric taxis have exhibited rapid growth. By the first quarter of 2025, Xanh SM had established a strategic alliance with over 100 transportation enterprises in Vietnam and emerged as the market leader in the taxi-hailing segment, capturing a 39.85% share according to market research data from Mordor Intelligence. Although electric vehicle operation may still pose certain challenges for service providers, the benefits experienced by consumers from using electric taxi services integrated with smart ride-hailing applications are undeniable. Compared to conventional gasoline-powered taxis, electric taxis offer customers a notably different experience, including reduced noise levels, the absence of fuel odors, and most significantly, lower greenhouse gas emissions. This reduction in environmental impact elicits positive emotional responses from customers, as it aligns with their aspiration to engage in more environmentally responsible consumption behaviors.

Existing studies on electric taxi services in Vietnam have primarily explored factors influencing the acceptance of this emerging service in the market or consumers' intention to use it. These studies, alongside real-world developments, indicate that this type of service has been well-received and accepted in recent years. However, in the long run, electric taxi service providers must pay close attention to maintaining and enhancing service quality. This is essential not only to sustain a competitive advantage over traditional fuel-powered taxis but also to prevent the emergence and expansion of new competitors, especially foreign electric vehicle entrants. To that end, understanding the key dimensions of electric taxi service quality is important. Through a review of secondary data, we observe a noticeable gap in the domestic literature - no existing research has yet examined the quality of electric taxi service and its impact on customer satisfaction, despite its evident practical significance. This paper aims to address this research gap and contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding customer satisfaction with the services of electric taxis.

In the context of technological advancement, electric taxi services integrated with electronic hailing applications have become an inevitable trend. This study refers to this combined service model as smart electric taxis. Accordingly, the research does not solely examine traditional aspects of taxi service quality but also incorporates factors reflecting the adoption of new technologies in the booking process. In the field of service quality research, the SERVQUAL model serves as a fundamental, widely accepted, and versatile framework applicable to various service sectors such as tourism [26], service of accommodation sharing [13], education and training [25], and public transportation [6] including taxi services [1],…. This study builds upon the SERVQUAL model, adapting and extending its dimensions and indicators to align with the context of technology-enabled services. Subsequently, primary data will be collected in the first half of 2025 from a demographically diverse sample of customers in Hanoi who have experienced electric taxi services, ensuring the representativeness of the sample. The analyses, results, and evaluations derived from the study are expected to provide a clear understanding of the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the context of electric taxis. From a practical standpoint, the discussion and recommendations offered by this study aim to provide electric taxi service managers with valuable insights for strategic planning and policy formulation. These insights are intended to improve customer engagement, enhance service quality, better satisfy customer needs, and ultimately strengthen the competitive advantage of electric taxi services.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Literature review

Service quality plays a crucial role in the success of any business [27]. It is commonly understood as the outcome of comparing customers' expectations with the actual performance of the service [21]. The definition suggests that service quality is ultimately evaluated from the customer's perspective rather than the service provider's. Nowadays, advancements in technology have expanded the concept of service quality in technology-based environments to include system quality and information quality, in addition to the traditional dimensions of service quality [4]. Service quality refers to the customer's evaluation of the overall excellence of the service, considering both digital and human interactions in a multi-channel environment. Enhancing quality serves as a strategic approach in business, increasing the value of a service while distinguishing it from rival offerings [21].

Research on the use of electric taxi services has become a topic of more interest recently. The adoption of electric vehicles as substitutes for gasoline-powered cars aligns with global trends toward the environment by reducing CO_2 emissions. In Vietnam, electric autos also benefit from favorable government policies, including tax reductions and some types of fees or restrictions on the use of gasoline/diesel vehicles in some areas. These advantages and opportunities indicate that electric taxi services represent a strategic and promising business direction. Several studies in Vietnam have addressed electric taxi services; however, most of the research objectives primarily focus on the "intention" variables, corresponding to the pre-purchase stage of consumer behavior. Some other studies focus on the intention to purchase electric cars rather than the use of electric taxi services. Different from those goals, this study focuses on the during- and post-purchase stages, which are closely linked to customers' actual experiences with electric taxi services. Several studies have shared a common interest in service quality but while our study specifically targets electric taxis, Duy Phuong and Dai Trang [7] examines ride-hailing services in general, and the study of Tuan Van Truong [27] focuses on the service quality of public transport riders. International research also demonstrates considerable diversity in both context and research objectives. Some studies evaluate public transportation services such as subways [2], buses [23], tricycles [15], or provide comprehensive assessments of public transport services overall [6, 16]. Other studies investigate taxi services but from alternative perspectives, such as cost optimization [14] or fare calculation methods [10], rather than focusing on service quality or customer satisfaction. Some research also explores taxi service quality but concentrates on different service types, such as minicab taxi [9] or electronic hailing services without distinguishing vehicle type [26]. In contrast, Yang, Wong [29] centers on the acceptance of premium electric taxis by taxi owners and drivers, without addressing customer perceptions or evaluations of the service. Hence, the existing body of literature has largely overlooked customer satisfaction with electric taxi service quality. This study seeks to address that gap, aiming to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding - both theoretical and practical - of service quality and customer satisfaction in the context of electric taxis.

2.2. Background

Numerous studies have employed various methods to quantify or measure service quality. In transport, two most well-known service quality analysis and policy prioritization techniques are the IPA (importance-performance analysis) and the three-factor theory [27]. In addition, SERVQUAL, a model proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml [21] has become an effective analytical tool for assessing service quality in numerous studies on service-oriented businesses, including public transportation and taxi services [1, 11]. SERVQUAL has facilitated the measurement of fundamental dimensions and the quantification of intangible aspects of services, enabling customers, researchers, and managers to effectively evaluate and analyze service quality. This study also adopts SERVQUAL as the foundation for developing its research model. The SERVQUAL scales are categorized into the following five core dimensions: tangibility; reliability; responsiveness; assurance; empathy.

Besides, Carrillat, Jaramillo [3] recommend that the SERVQUAL model's predictive accuracy improved when its items were tailored to the specific context of the study. This study is situated within the context of electric taxi services that utilize smart ride-hailing applications; therefore, information technology factors must be incorporated into the research model. This implies that, in addition to the five traditional SERVQUAL dimensions, the study must develop and integrate additional variables or indicators related to e-hailing applications.

2.3. Research Model

Service quality and customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction (CS) is an overall customer attitude towards a service provider, or an emotional reaction to the difference between what customers anticipate and what they receive, regarding the fulfillment of some needs, goals, or desires [9]. According to the definition of Radojević and Stanisic [22], customer satisfaction is a customer's subjective reported evaluation of the extent to which goods or services purchased help them satisfy their needs, together with their assessment of whether the time and the money spent on purchase and consumption could have been better used. According to a simple view [18], customer satisfaction is a customer's evaluation of their purchase and consumption experience with a product, service, brand, or company. The definitions all see that the core of customer satisfaction is the good evaluation of the seller's goods/services. Customer satisfaction is recognized to be an essential factor that affects long-term relationships between firms and consumers [17], and CS affects customers' repeat purchase decisions and subsequent company profits [18]. The service quality influence on customer satisfaction, particularly on a service offering, such as transport service, is very important and deserves attention from providers [9]. Several studies have employed the SERVQUAL model to demonstrate the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in the context of passenger transportation services or related service industries [1, 11]. SERQUAL includes 5 basic dimensions (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy), each dimension is a set of different attributes. Most authors who study service quality support the existence of different categories of attributes that have a greater or lesser impact on satisfaction [6]. Therefore, the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction can essentially be interpreted through five specific relationships.

Tangible factors: The appearance of the physical installations, vehicles, staff, and communication equipment. For example: the driver's appearance, the car's interior, and the onboard equipment. The first proposed hypothesis is:

H1: Customer perceptions of service tangibility are positively related to their satisfaction

Reliability: The capability to deliver the service carefully and reliably, such as on time. The second proposed hypothesis is:

H2: Customer perceptions of service reliability are positively related to their satisfaction

The ability to respond: Willingness to help users and provide a rapid service. For example, responding to customer complaints. The related proposed hypothesis is:

H3: Customer perceptions of service responsiveness are positively related to their satisfaction

Assurance: Knowledge and attention shown by the staff and their ability to generate credibility and trust. For instance, the driver's knowledge of local streets. The next hypothesis is:

H4: Customer perceptions of service assurance are positively related to their satisfaction

Empathy: Personalized attention given by the organization to its customers, such as the driver's friendliness. Related to this, the hypothesis is:

H5: Customer perceptions of service empathy are positively related to their satisfaction.

Electronic hailing (e-hailing) application

Nowadays, with the advancement of information technology and the Internet, ride-hailing applications on smartphones have become widespread across major cities. Since its inception in Hanoi, electric taxi services have integrated these applications, thereby enhancing convenience for customers. E-hailing, which consists of the use of intelligent software, combined with Smartphone apps and GPS, thus allowing passengers to find, book, and pay for rides [24]. The current development of e-hailing software enables the addition of various features such as trip cancellation, journey tracking, and rating systems. Although e-hailing taxi applications are widely used in emerging cities, there is still a lack of understanding about which service attributes users value most and how satisfied they are with these services [1]. The study will examine the relationship between the e-hailing application and customer satisfaction, specifically assessing its degree of effectiveness in meeting customer needs. Therefore, the hypothesis proposed is:

H6: Customer perceptions of the good e-hailing application are positively related to their satisfaction

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Questionnaire

The quality of a service has a multidimensional nature, which can be measured using different techniques such as customer satisfaction surveys. This type of survey uses a series of indicators to measure user-perceived quality [6]. Based on the variables in the proposed model, this study developed an indicator system for the dimensions of electric taxi service quality, drawing upon several prior studies [1, 19]. However, many of the referenced indicators were originally constructed within the context of public transportation services or motorbike-hailing services, which differ from the context of electric taxis integrated with e-hailing applications examined in this research. Therefore, the indicator system was revised and further developed to better align with the specific context and target of the study. The number of indicators of each variable varies: tangibility includes 5 indicators, reliability includes 4 indicators, responsiveness includes 4 indicators, assurance includes 9 indicators, empathy includes 4 indicators, e-hailing application includes 6 indicators, and satisfaction consists of 5 indicators. These indicators constitute the core content of the questionnaire. Each indicator was measured using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.2. Sampling and analysis method

The survey targets individuals who have experienced electric taxi services within Hanoi. Data collection was conducted entirely through online questionnaires during the period from January to April 2025. The respondents are diverse in terms of age, occupation, and educational background, thereby ensuring the representativeness of the sample [12].

Structural equation models that represent one of the most commonly used techniques for analyzing public transport service quality [6, 27]. Given the contextual relevance, this study used the Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM) approach for data analysis, utilizing core techniques such as Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and regression analysis. EFA is a crucial technique used to eliminate weak indicators and ensure that the independent variables are robustly constructed, thereby providing a basis for subsequent regression analysis. Multiple regression analysis enables the assessment of the relative importance of independent variables and the evaluation of the strength of correlations.

Regarding sample size, due to the complexity of the proposed model and the use EFA, a minimum sample size of 200 was required [5]. The collected and valid sample for this study consisted of 396 respondents, which substantially exceeds the minimum threshold.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Characteristics of the sample

Female respondents accounted for a higher proportion of the sample (61.4%) compared to male respondents (38.6%). Most participants reported using electric taxi services primarily within urban areas (42.2%), while usage in suburban areas was lower (24.7%), and the rest (33.1%) indicated using the service for travel between both urban and suburban areas. The age group with the highest usage of electric taxis was 35 - 55 years (45.2%), followed by those aged 25 - 34 (29.8%). The remaining 25% comprised younger users under 25 and older users above 55 years of age. In terms of occupation, office employees constituted the largest user group (47%), followed by managers (15%), freelance workers (12.4%), retirees (9.3%), and the remaining percentage of students.

4.2. Analyzing the model by EFA

The results of the condition testing and EFA implementation are shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1 shows KMO = 0.961 > 0.50, which satisfies the requirements to perform EFA. Scale reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a threshold of greater than 0.7 [8]. The results summarized in Table 2 indicate that the measurement scales met the reliability standard.

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.961
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4874.5
	df	406
	Sig.	0.000

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha
TA	0.829
RE	0.725
RS	0.801
AS	0.868
EM	0.705
AP	0.829

According to Hair, Black [8], Factor loading serves as a criterion to ensure the practical significance of EFA; specifically, a factor loading of ≥ 0.5 is considered to indicate practical significance. Applying this principle, the EFA was conducted using Promax rotation with Kaiser Normalization, and the results show that several indicators have factor loadings below 0.5; therefore, their values are not displayed, and these indicators will be excluded from the model. The remaining indicators are not mixed, ensuring that the set of indicators by factor remains the same as the original (Table 3).

Table 3. The factors along with their retained indicators

Orders	Factors	Indicators
1	Assurance	AS1, AS2, AS5, AS6, AS8, AS9
2	E-hailing application	AP1, AP2, AP3, AP5, AP6,
3	Reliability	RE1, RE2, RE3, RE4
4	Tangibility	TA1, TA2, TA3, TA4, TA5
5	Empathy	EM1, EM3, EM4

4.3. Regression estimates

Regression coefficients of variables affecting customer satisfaction are shown in Table 4.

In Table 4, all P-values (Sig) of the 5 independent variables are smaller than 0.05, so the estimated coefficients are all statistically significant. Therefore, the regression equation with unstandardized coefficients is:

$$CS = -0.665 + 0.284*AP + 0.211*RE + 0.295*AS + 0.105*EM + 0.263*TA$$

Table 4. Results of regression on SPSS

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	-0.665	0.143		0.000
	AP	0.284	0.039	0.256	0.000
	RE	0.211	0.037	0.189	0.000
	AS	0.295	0.043	0.264	0.000
	EM	0.105	0.034	0.104	0.002
	TA	0.263	0.038	0.253	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: CS					

The regression coefficients (B or Beta) show that assurance in service contributes the most to customer satisfaction, followed by e-hailing application, tangibility, reliability, and finally empathy. The coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.73$ indicates that 73% of the change in satisfaction is due to the change in the 5 factors mentioned above.

5. DISCUSSION

Improving service quality has always been a key concern and a long-term strategic objective for service-oriented enterprises in general, and electric taxi operators in particular. This study highlights the significant influence of various factors and indicators associated with electric taxi services on customer perceptions. Although previous literature of Tran, Nguyen [26] has suggested a relationship between customer satisfaction affects service quality, this study provides evidence supporting the opposite direction. Our findings affirm that service quality has a direct impact on customer satisfaction, consistent with many earlier studies conducted in similar contexts [1, 11, 17].

Unlike conventional SERVQUAL-based models that rely solely on five traditional dimensions, this study introduces a new factor - e-hailing application - to reflect the growing role of technological development and digital platforms in service industries. The results demonstrate that this additional factor is accepted. Therefore, electric taxi operators should prioritize enhancing the usability and user-friendliness of their e-hailing applications, ensuring they function smoothly, without technical errors or service interruptions.

Among the indicators developed in this study, several were tailored specifically to the characteristics of electric

taxi services and were empirically validated. For example, reliability is represented by the indicator "no battery depletion during the trip," while tangibility includes indicators such as "cars operate quietly and are environmentally friendly" and "technologies and equipment are modern". These validated indicators contribute to customer satisfaction and suggest that the development of electric taxis aligns well with current market needs.

Although the proposed model originally included six factors, empirical analysis retained five: assurance, e-hailing application, tangibility, reliability, and empathy. Among them, assurance and e-hailing application showed similarly high correlation coefficients, surpassing those of the remaining factors, highlighting their particularly important roles, consistent with the findings of Kester S. Ong, German [11], but differing from studies like studies [1, 19], where tangibility was found to be the most influential factor. Furthermore, while some earlier studies have supported the inclusion of responsiveness [23, 28], or even merged empathy and responsiveness into a single construct [19], this study excludes responsiveness altogether. This obtained result is consistent with findings from Kester S. Ong, German [11] and Ong [20] and partially aligns with Adenigbo, Mageto [1], which did not emphasize or include responsiveness in their models. Kester S. Ong, German [11] points out two reasons why responsiveness is rated as low in significance. The first reason is due to the limited number of vehicles. The second reason is that responsiveness in terms of ease of booking a vehicle is a challenge during rush hour, which is similar to the context in our study, where Hanoi is a city with very high traffic density, difficult to travel, and even traffic jams become familiar every day. Other reasons have not been clearly answered in the literature. Are activities related to customer support - such as addressing requests and complaints - truly less important in the context of electric taxi services? Are customer requests and inquiries handled quickly? What channels are there for customers to connect? These issues need to be investigated clearly in continued studies.

The expansion of electric taxi services, together with the adoption of e-hailing technologies, not only aligns with contemporary consumer demand but also contributes to fulfilling commitments to reducing air emissions. Therefore, policymakers should introduce additional mechanisms and incentives to further promote the development of this business model.

Overall, this study has successfully developed a model for assessing the service quality of electric taxis, helping to address the research gap identified in the literature review. Nonetheless, certain limitations must be acknowledged. While electric taxis offer notable environmental and operational advantages, the study focused primarily on customer satisfaction. It remains unclear whether the eco-friendly nature of electric taxis influences other customer perceptions, such as awareness, attitudes, emotions, or pro-environmental behaviors. Future research should explore these potential associations and assess the extent of their impact.

6. CONCLUSION

The study employs an extended SERVQUAL model, incorporating the five traditional dimensions along with an additional factor-e-hailing application - to evaluate the impact of electric taxi service quality on customer satisfaction. Through the application of EFA, and regression analysis, the study confirms the statistically significant influence of all factors except responsiveness. The research findings contribute to the theoretical literature by addressing existing gaps and offering new insights. Moreover, the results serve as a practical reference for business managers in the electric taxi industry, supporting strategic planning and operational efforts aimed at improving service quality and better meeting customer needs.

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