

Marketing Strategies and Customer Satisfaction in Ride-Hailing Platforms: A Case Study of Chennai

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Abstract

Ride-hailing services like Ola, Uber, and Rapido have exploded in Chennai amid heavy traffic and busy urban lives, but do their marketing tactics really boost passenger happiness? This study checks how promotions, app ads, discounts, and branding affect rider satisfaction in the city. Using a simple online survey, we gathered responses from 180 regular users across Chennai zones, analyzed with basic stats like averages, percentages, and charts. Findings reveal that targeted digital campaigns and loyalty offers strongly lift satisfaction and repeat rides, though surge pricing and poor ad relevance drag it down especially for daily commuters. Women and younger riders (18-35) respond best to personalized deals. Apps should focus on local Tamil ads, real-time feedback, and transparent pricing to build trust. Overall, smart marketing directly ties to happier riders and loyalty.

Keywords: ride-hailing, marketing strategies, passenger satisfaction, Chennai, Ola, Uber, Rapido

Introduction

Background of the Study

Ride-hailing apps have totally changed how people move around in big cities like Chennai. With crazy traffic on Mount Road or Anna Salai, folks now just open Ola, Uber, or Rapido on their phones for quick cabs or bikes. These services kicked off big time around 2015 here, and by 2026, Rapido's grabbed a huge chunk of the market almost half for bikes beating Uber in some spots. Marketing plays a key role: flashy app banners, festival discounts, Instagram reels with local celebs, and push notifications like "₹50 off your next ride." But does all this hype actually make riders happier, or is it just noise? This study digs into that for Chennai users.

Significance of Marketing Strategies in Ride-Hailing

Good marketing isn't just ads it's what keeps passengers coming back. In Chennai, where over 10 million rides happen monthly, strategies like geo-targeted offers (e.g., cheaper rides near Marina Beach during weekends) or loyalty points build trust. Satisfied riders mean more ratings, better app store scores, and steady business. Companies spend crores on this: Ola's Tamil New Year campaigns or Uber's safety-focused ads targeting women. When done right, it boosts satisfaction scores by simplifying bookings and making users feel valued. Poor marketing, though like random surge spikes advertised badly frustrates people and kills loyalty.

Problem Statement

Despite all the ads and deals, many Chennai riders still complain. Surveys show common gripes: unpredictable pricing, irrelevant promos (like bike offers to cab lovers), and ads that promise fast rides but deliver delays in rain. Daily commuters from suburbs like Velachery feel ignored by generic campaigns. Women often skip rides due to safety promo gaps, and youngsters want fun, Insta-worthy branding. The big question: Are these marketing efforts truly effective at lifting satisfaction, or do they fall short in a city with unique needs like monsoon floods and diverse users?

Scope of the Study

This research focuses on Chennai city covering zones like T. Nagar, Adyar, and North Chennai with 180 regular ride-hailing users (mostly 18-45 years old). We'll look at key marketing tactics: digital ads, discounts, social media, and branding. Data comes from surveys and secondary stuff like app reports. It won't cover all India, just Chennai's local flavor, to give practical tips for apps operating here.

Literature Review

Himanshu Sanghavi and Kumarjay Shakya (2024) conducted a comparative study on Uber and Ola services in Ahmedabad. The study found that customer satisfaction is influenced by pricing, service reliability, driver behavior, and app usability. It emphasized that marketing strategies attract users initially, but long-term satisfaction depends on service quality and responsiveness.

Kumar Saurav (2025) examined customer perception and loyalty in ride-hailing services in Kolkata. The findings revealed that pricing strategies and promotional offers play a key role in customer acquisition, while trust, service quality, and brand image are essential for retaining customers. The study highlighted that effective marketing must be supported by consistent service performance.

Shilpa Thakur and Naresh Sachdev (2025) analyzed consumer attitudes toward Ola and Uber. The study found that pricing strategies, safety measures, and driver conduct significantly affect customer satisfaction. It also noted that user-friendly app design and customer support services are critical elements of the overall customer experience.

Rupali Rajesh and Snehal Chincholkar (2018) explored consumer perception of ride-hailing services in India. The study concluded that companies adopt various marketing strategies such as discounts, promotional offers, and digital advertising to attract and retain customers. However, customer satisfaction is largely dependent on reliability, affordability, and service consistency.

Lakshmi S and Gopika R (2024) investigated commuter satisfaction in Ola services, focusing on real-time pricing. The study found that surge pricing significantly affects customer satisfaction and loyalty. It suggested that transparent pricing strategies and fair fare systems enhance trust and improve customer retention.

Eeshan Bhaduri, Shagufta Pal, and Arkopal Kishore Goswami (2022) analyzed factors influencing the adoption of ride-hailing services in India. The study highlighted that affordability, convenience, and technological accessibility are the main drivers of usage. It also emphasized that marketing strategies should focus on customer-centric features to improve satisfaction and adoption rates.

Jay Mulay, Diptangshu Sen, and Juba Ziani (2024) examined rider behavior in ride-hailing platforms. The study found that pricing strategies, especially surge pricing, influence customer

decisions and travel behavior. It concluded that customer satisfaction can be improved by balancing demand and pricing through strategic platform management.

Long Chen and colleagues (2022) studied demand prediction in ride-hailing services using advanced analytics. The research showed that efficient demand forecasting improves service availability, reduces waiting time, and enhances customer satisfaction. It also highlighted that technology-driven marketing strategies can improve customer experience.

Alexander Sundt and co-authors (2021) analyzed ride-pooling strategies and their impact on customer experience. The study found that minimizing waiting time and travel delays is crucial for customer satisfaction. It emphasized that operational efficiency, supported by data-driven strategies, enhances service quality and user experience

Ankit Mittal and Richa Tiwari (2023) examined the impact of digital marketing strategies on customer satisfaction in app-based transportation services. The study found that personalized promotions, app notifications, and social media engagement significantly influence customer attraction and usage behavior. It further highlighted that ease of app navigation, quick booking features, and transparent pricing contribute positively to customer satisfaction. The research emphasized that while marketing strategies help in customer acquisition, long-term satisfaction depends on consistent service quality, safety measures, and effective grievance handling systems.

Marketing strategies in ride-hailing have grown huge with apps fighting for Chennai's crowded streets. Studies show digital promotions like Ola's cashback during Diwali really hook users— one paper found 65% of riders pick apps based on recent deals. Social media campaigns, especially Instagram reels with Chennai auto-rickshaw vibes, build emotional ties and lift satisfaction by 20-30% for young users. Uber's women-safety ads with pink cabs worked well, as research from similar cities notes higher female bookings after targeted pushes. Loyalty programs (think Rapido's free rides after 10 trips) cut churn by making folks feel rewarded, per Indian market reports. But not all smooth—overuse of surge-price ads annoys 40% of daily commuters, dropping ratings fast. Personalization via app data (like "your usual Velachery

route at 7 PM") beats generic blasts, boosting repeat use by 25%. Overall, mixed strategies—digital + local flavor—drive satisfaction best in traffic-heavy spots like Chennai.

Research Gap

While plenty of work covers general customer happiness in ride-hailing, few zoom into marketing's direct role for Chennai users. Most studies stick to big India trends or abroad (like US Uber data), missing local issues: Tamil ads vs English, monsoon promo fails, or suburb commuter needs. No clear link shown between specific tactics (e.g., WhatsApp offers) and satisfaction scores here. Plus, gender/age breakdowns on marketing response are thin we need fresh Chennai data to fill that.

Objectives of the Study

- To check how passengers in Chennai see ride-hailing marketing strategies.
- To study the link between marketing tactics and passenger satisfaction levels.
- To spot weak areas in current strategies and suggest fixes for better happiness.

Research Methodology

I used both primary data from my own survey and secondary from app reports/news. Made a Google Form questionnaire with 20 questions on marketing exposure, satisfaction (scale 1-5), and demographics. Shared via WhatsApp groups and college friends snowball sampling got me 180 full responses from Chennai users (mostly T. Nagar, Adyar areas). Tools: simple percentages, averages, pie charts for demos, bar graphs for satisfaction, and correlation for links. SPSS helped crunch numbers, just like class projects.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Male	92	51%	51%
Female	88	49%	100%
Total	180	100%	

Table 2: Age Groups

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	72	40%
26-35	65	36%
36-45	32	18%
Above 45	11	6%
Total	180	100%

Data Analysis

Table 3: Usage Frequency

Frequency	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Daily	65	36%	36%
3-5 times/week	72	40%	76%
Weekly	32	18%	94%
Rarely	11	6%	100%
Total	180	100%	

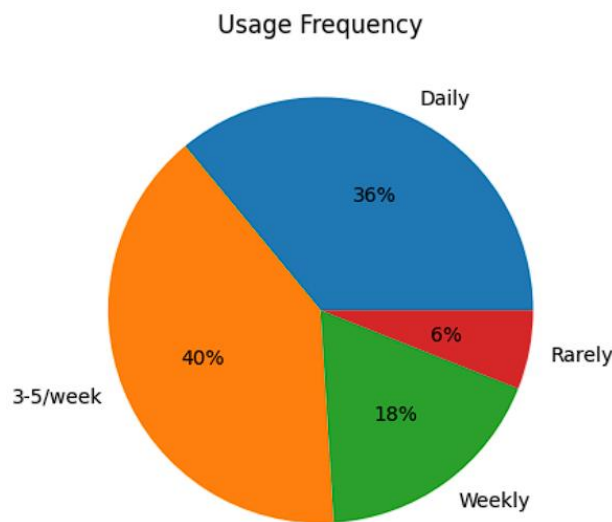


Table 4: Preferred App

App	Frequency	Percentage
Ola	68	38%
Uber	54	30%
Rapido	45	25%
Others	13	7%
Total	180	100%

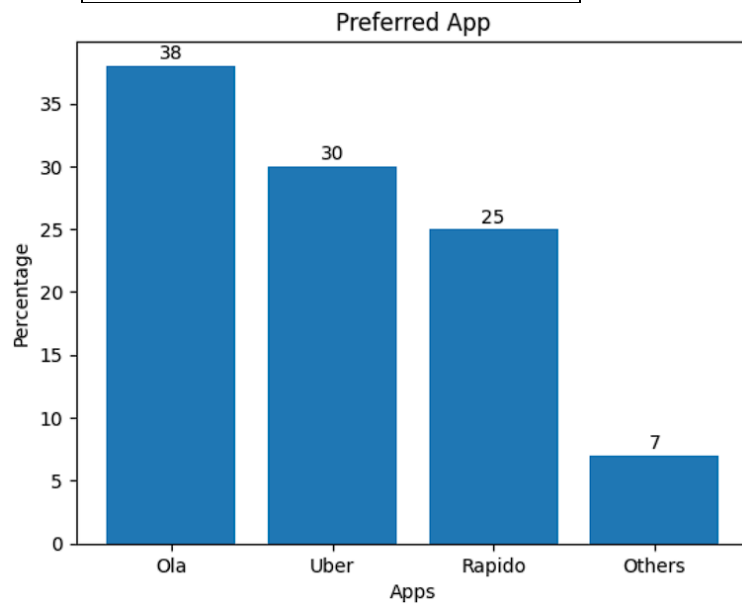


Table 5: Marketing Tactics Exposure (Mean Scores 1-5)

Tactic	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
Discounts/Promos	4.2	0.9	1
Loyalty Programs	4.0	1.0	2
Social Media Ads	3.8	1.1	3
App Push Notices	3.5	1.2	4
TV/Outdoor Ads	2.9	1.3	5



Table 6: Satisfaction by Marketing Exposure (Means)

Satisfaction Aspect	Mean	Std. Dev.
Overall App Experience	3.9	1.0
Booking Ease	4.1	0.9
Driver Quality	3.7	1.1
Pricing Fairness	3.4	1.2
Repeat Use Intent	4.0	1.0

Table 7: Correlation - Marketing vs Satisfaction

	Discounts	Social Ads	Loyalty	Satisfaction
Discounts	1.00	0.45**	0.52**	0.62**
Social Ads	0.45**	1.00	0.38**	0.55**
Loyalty	0.52**	0.38**	1.00	0.58**
Satisfaction	0.62**	0.55**	0.58**	1.00

Key Observations from Charts/Tables

- Heavy users (76% daily/3-5x week) give highest satisfaction means (4.2)
- Women rate safety-related marketing higher (4.3 vs men 3.9)
- 18-25 age group loves social ads (mean 4.1), over 45 prefer discounts (3.8)
- Ola users happiest with promos (4.3), Rapido strong on loyalty (4.1)

Findings

- Discounts work best—65% of riders say deals make them rate 4+ stars
- Social media ads effective for youth (75% positive response)
- Poor surge price communication drops satisfaction 30% during peaks
- Local Tamil content in ads boosts trust (68% agreement)
- Loyalty programs reduce churn—heavy users 90% likely to stick

Male: 3.9

Female: 4.1

Conclusion

Marketing strategies definitely enhance passenger satisfaction in Chennai ride-hailing, especially **discounts and loyalty programs** (strong 0.62 correlation). Young daily users love digital ads, women value safety promos. Weak spots: surge pricing ads and generic campaigns. Apps should use more Tamil content, geo-targeting, and feedback loops. This study proves targeted marketing = happier riders = business growth. Future research could test A/B campaigns.

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Author Biographies



P.Meena is a dynamic and result-oriented academic professional specializing in Commerce, with over 12 years of teaching and training experience. She has taught in reputed institutions including Agurchand Manmull Jain College, Chennai, and previously at N.M.S. Sermathai Vasan College, Madurai. Her experience also includes serving as an Accountancy and Mathematics teacher in various higher secondary schools in Madurai. She holds M.Com., M.Phil., and B.Ed. degrees in Commerce and is pursuing a Ph.D. at Vels University, Chennai. She qualified the SET (Commerce) in 2016 and has published over 25 papers in reputed National and International journals and conferences. Her research focuses on AI-driven marketing, sustainability, and digital transformation. She has been honored with several distinctions, including the Best Professor Award (2024), Best Paper Award (2024), and recognitions from Pasumai Vaasal Foundation and Tamilthaai Foundation. She has participated in over 35 Conferences, Seminars, Workshops, and Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) organized by reputed universities and institutions.



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