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ABSTRACT

Background: The rapid expansion of app-based ride-hailing has transformed the transport service encounter from a predominantly physical and interpersonal interaction into a digitally mediated process that combines platform technologies with physical mobility. This transformation challenges conventional service-quality frameworks, particularly SERVQUAL, which was developed for face-to-face service encounters. Despite the rapidly expanding ride-hailing literature, there remains limited conceptual integration of the digital and physical components of service quality. **Objective:** This scoping review maps how service quality in app-based ride-hailing has been conceptualised, operationalised and measured, identifies its principal dimensions and determinants, examines the theoretical and methodological approaches used, and identifies important geographic, conceptual and methodological gaps.

Methods: The review follows the methodological principles of the Joanna Briggs Institute and the PRISMA extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR). Searches were conducted in Scopus and IEEE Xplore. The search yielded 2,774 records, of which 59 duplicates were removed. The remaining 2,715 records underwent title and abstract screening using ASReview LAB, an active-learning screening platform. Thirty-eight reports were sought for full-text retrieval; 33 were assessed for eligibility and 33 empirical studies were included in the final synthesis.

Results: The evidence indicates a transition from predominantly SERVQUAL-based conceptualisations toward a multidimensional, platform-mediated understanding of service quality. Four interrelated domains emerged: digital quality, transaction quality, physical ride quality, and relational quality. Quantitative cross-sectional surveys dominate the evidence base (76%), while structural equation modelling is the principal analytical approach. The literature is geographically concentrated in low- and middle-income country (LMIC) settings (73%). Safety, information accuracy, reliability and platform functionality emerge as recurrent determinants of perceived quality.

Conclusions: Service quality in app-based ride-hailing has evolved beyond the traditional SERVQUAL paradigm. It is better understood as an integrated digital–physical construct in which platform performance and physical service execution jointly shape consumer experience. Future research should move beyond cross-sectional perceptual measures toward mixed-method designs that integrate perceived quality with objective operational indicators and explicitly examine equity and contextual differences.

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1. Introduction

App-based ride-hailing has altered the organisation and experience of urban transport. The transition from conventional street-hail and dispatch-based taxi services to technology-mediated platforms has introduced real-time matching, GPS-based navigation, digital payments, dynamic pricing and continuous information exchange between passengers, drivers and platforms. These capabilities have addressed some longstanding problems of conventional taxi systems, including uncertainty surrounding vehicle availability and passenger waiting times, while simultaneously creating new dimensions of service performance associated with digital interfaces and algorithmic coordination (Yang et al., 2024; Sanin-Villa et al., 2025).

This transformation presents a conceptual challenge for service-quality research. Traditional service-quality models were developed largely around direct interactions between customers and service employees. SERVQUAL, for example, conceptualises service quality through tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Kaulu et al., 2025). SERVQUAL remains useful for capturing interpersonal and physical

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service attributes, but does not by itself capture the full digital, algorithmic and platform-mediated service encounter. The contemporary ride-hailing encounter begins before the passenger enters the vehicle. It starts with the application. It includes the accuracy of the displayed information, the ease of booking, the estimated arrival time, the location of the vehicle, the quoted price and the security of the transaction (Nabarian et al., 2019; Yusra et al., 2026).

The service encounter therefore has at least two interconnected components. The first is digital and platform-mediated, involving the application, algorithms, information systems and transaction interface (Shiau et al., 2021). The second is physical and interpersonal and involves the driver, vehicle, journey and physical safety of the passenger. Evidence from the reviewed literature increasingly reflects this distinction, with studies differentiating booking-app quality from post-booking service quality (Nguyen-Phuoc et al., 2021).

This distinction is theoretically important. A technically sophisticated application cannot compensate indefinitely for unreliable physical service, while a courteous driver cannot fully compensate for inaccurate digital information, unexplained charges or an unreliable platform. Service quality therefore increasingly reflects the consistency between digital promise, physical execution and consumer outcome (Li et al., 2025; Amat-Lefort et al., 2023).

Despite the rapid expansion of ride-hailing research, the literature on ride hailing service quality remains fragmented. Some studies adapt SERVQUAL directly to ride-hailing (Murad et al., 2019; Wireko-Gyebi et al., 2024), while others incorporate technology-acceptance constructs, electronic service-quality dimensions, transport-specific operational measures or platform-specific variables (Lim et al., 2021; Ahmed et al., 2020). The result is a growing collection of dimensions without a widely accepted integrated framework. This fragmentation is particularly important in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), where ride-hailing platforms frequently coexist with informal and semi-formal transport systems (Pandit and Sharma, 2022; Shah and Kubota, 2022). In these settings, digital platforms may improve accessibility, traceability and safety for some users while simultaneously creating barriers for individuals with limited digital literacy, restricted access to digital payment systems, or lack of reliable connectivity.

Accordingly, this scoping review addresses four questions:

1. How has service quality in app-based ride-hailing been conceptualised and operationalised?
2. What dimensions and attributes constitute ride-hailing service quality?
3. Which theoretical and methodological approaches dominate the literature?
4. What geographic, conceptual and methodological gaps remain?

The review contributes to the literature by synthesising evidence across the traditional service-quality, technology-adoption and transport-operations perspectives, ultimately developing an integrated conceptualisation of platform-mediated ride-hailing service quality.

2. Methods

2.1. Review design

This study employed a scoping-review design because the objective was to map a heterogeneous body of literature concerning the conceptualisation, measurement and determinants of ride-hailing service quality rather than estimate a pooled intervention effect or a single statistical relationship. The review was conducted in accordance with the methodological guidance of the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) for scoping reviews and reported using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR).

2.2. Search strategy

A Boolean search strategy was implemented in Scopus and IEEE Xplore to identify empirical research addressing service quality and consumer experience in app-based ride-hailing. The search strategy combined terms relating to ride-hailing, app-based transport, transportation network companies, service quality, customer experience, satisfaction, and digital platforms. An example of the search code used in Scopus is shown in Table 1.

2.3. Study selection

The search identified 2,774 records. Following the removal of 59 duplicates, 2,715 unique records remained for screening. Titles and abstracts were screened using ASReview LAB, an active-learning machine-learning platform (utilising a TF-IDF feature extractor and Naive Bayes classifier). A predefined stopping rule was applied, halting manual screening after 50 consecutive irrelevant records were identified. This protocol prioritises highly relevant

Table 1
Search terms used in Scopus

Search Query
TITLE-ABS-KEY (("ride-hailing" OR "ride hailing" OR "ride-sharing" OR "ride sharing" OR "e-hailing" OR "e-hail*" OR "app-based transport*" OR "app-based taxi*" OR "mobile taxi*" OR "online taxi*" OR "on-demand mobility" OR "on-demand transport*" OR "platform-based mobility" OR "transportation network compan*" OR "Uber" OR "Yango" OR "Bolt" OR "Lyft" OR "DiDi" OR "Grab" OR "Careem" OR "inDrive") AND (consumer* OR customer* OR passenger* OR rider* OR user* OR traveler* OR traveller* OR "service user*") AND (experience* OR satisf* OR dissatisf* OR "service quality" OR "perceived value" OR trust OR safety OR convenience OR reliability OR usability OR accessibility OR loyalty OR "customer perception*" OR "consumer perception*" OR "user perception*" OR "customer attitude*" OR "consumer attitude*" OR "user attitude*")) AND PUBYEAR > 2009 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "cp") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "re") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ch"))

literature and is a methodologically established approach for reducing the screening burden in large scoping reviews without compromising scope.

The screening process excluded 2,677 records. Thirty-eight reports were subsequently sought for full-text retrieval. Five could not be retrieved due to access limitations, leaving 33 reports for full-text eligibility assessment. All 33 assessed reports satisfied the inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis. The PRISMA flow diagram in Figure 1 illustrates the overall process.

2.4. Eligibility criteria

Studies were eligible when they examined app-based or digitally mediated ride-hailing services, addressed service quality, customer satisfaction or closely related service-performance constructs, reported empirical evidence or empirical modelling, and were published as peer-reviewed research articles in English. Studies focused exclusively on conventional taxi services without a digital component, or studies examining technology adoption without evaluating service quality, were excluded.

2.5. Data charting

Data were extracted using a structured charting matrix containing author and publication year, platform, geographic context, methodology, sample size, theoretical framework, service-quality dimensions, service failures, and consumer outcomes. Extracted attributes were subsequently grouped thematically to identify recurring conceptual domains across studies using different terminology.

3. Results

3.1. Characteristics of the evidence base

The final evidence base comprised 33 empirical studies (Table 2). The literature is geographically diverse but heavily concentrated in LMIC settings. Twenty-four of the 33 studies (73%) examined ride-hailing in LMIC contexts, including India, Indonesia, Vietnam and Ghana (Kumar et al., 2022; Addo et al., 2025; Wireko-Gyebi et al., 2024). Only seven studies focused on high-income country (HIC) settings, including the United States and Spain (Beirigo et al., 2022; Amat-Lefort et al., 2023; Boar et al., 2023).

The methodological profile is considerably less diverse. Twenty-five of the 33 studies (76%) employed quantitative cross-sectional surveys, indicating a strong reliance on self-reported perceptions of service quality. Several studies used structural equation modelling (SEM) to examine relationships between service-quality perceptions and outcomes such as satisfaction or continued-use intention (Shah and Kubota, 2022; Nguyen-Phuoc et al., 2021). In contrast, five studies employed mathematical or operational models, including the Dial-a-Ride Problem with Service Quality Contracts (DARP-SQC), to examine issues such as fleet allocation and waiting-time performance (Beirigo et al., 2022; He et al., 2024).

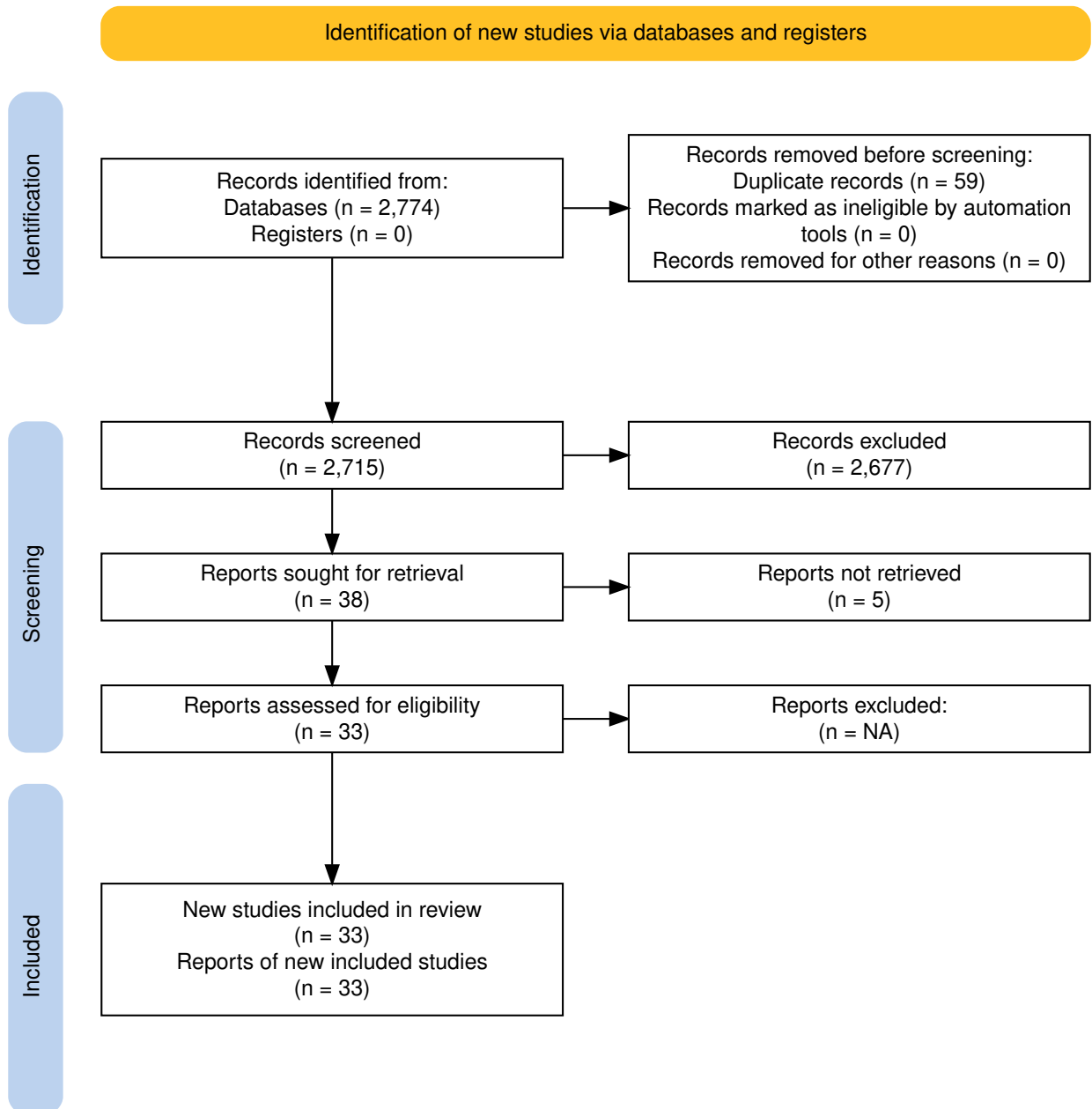


Figure 1: PRISMA-ScR flow diagram of the study identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion process

Table 2: Characteristics of included studies

Study	Platform(s)	Geographic context	Methodology	Theoretical framework	Primary outcomes
Kumar et al. (2022)	Uber, Ola, Meru	India (LMIC)	Survey (<i>N</i> = 1260)	SEM	Satisfaction
Li et al. (2025)	General ride-hailing	China (LMIC)	Mixed methods (<i>N</i> = 1496)	Grounded theory	Satisfaction
Wardhana and Pradana (2023)	GrabCar	Mixed (LMIC/HIC)	Survey (<i>N</i> = 1536)	UTAUT, TAM	Satisfaction; brand trust
Shah and Kubota (2022)	Uber, Careem	Pakistan (LMIC)	Survey (<i>N</i> = 865)	SEM	Satisfaction; continued use
Pandit and Sharma (2022)	Uber Auto, Ola Auto	India (LMIC)	Mixed methods (<i>N</i> = 710)	LOS, RIDIT	Satisfaction; mode choice
Beirigo et al. (2022)	AMoD, TNCs	USA (HIC)	Mathematical modelling	SQC	Satisfaction; service rate
Amat-Lefort et al. (2023)	Uber, Cabify, Grab	Spain, Italy, France (HIC)	Survey (<i>N</i> = 646)	SERVQUAL, E-S-Qual	Satisfaction; loyalty
van Tonder and Petzer (2020)	Uber, Lyft, Grab	South Africa (LMIC)	Survey (<i>N</i> = 610)	Defense motivation	Customer citizenship
Nguyen-Phuoc et al. (2021)	Grab, Gojek, InDriver	Vietnam (LMIC)	Survey (<i>N</i> = 536)	SEM	Word-of-mouth; perceived value
Addo et al. (2025)	Uber, Bolt, Yango	Ghana (LMIC)	Survey (<i>N</i> = 436)	Availability theory	Satisfaction; loyalty
Wireko-Gyebe et al. (2024)	Uber, Bolt, Yango	Ghana (LMIC)	Survey (<i>N</i> = 436)	SERVPERF	Satisfaction; loyalty
Boar et al. (2023)	Uber, Cabify, Grab	Spain (HIC)	Survey (<i>N</i> = 485)	RAT, SERVQUAL	Loyalty; perceived quality
Lim et al. (2021)	Ola, Grab, DiDi	India (LMIC)	Mixed methods (<i>N</i> = 241)	SERVQUAL, ECT	Satisfaction; loyalty

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Study	Platform(s)	Geographic context	Methodology	Theoretical framework	Primary outcomes
Murad et al. (2019)	Uber, Careem	Jordan (LMIC)	Survey (<i>N</i> = 704)	SERVQUAL	Satisfaction
Shiau et al. (2021)	Uber, DiDi	China, USA (mixed)	Survey (<i>N</i> = 376)	SERVQUAL, IS Success	Satisfaction; continuance
Yusra et al. (2026)	Gojek (GoCar)	Indonesia (LMIC)	Survey (<i>N</i> = 240)	S-O-R theory	Brand love; brand loyalty
Pradhan (2019)	On-demand ride	India (LMIC)	Survey	SERVQUAL	Customer satisfaction
Pujari and Panda (2025)	Ride-hailing	India (LMIC)	Empirical survey	TQM	Service quality
Farooq et al. (2019)	Taxi apps	Malaysia (LMIC)	Survey	Marketing theory	Customer experience
Adenigbo et al. (2023)	E-hailing	South Africa (LMIC)	Survey	Transport quality	Passenger satisfaction
Thaithatkul et al. (2021)	Ride-hailing apps	Thailand (LMIC)	Survey	Path analysis	Passenger loyalty
Ahmed et al. (2020)	Ride-sharing apps	Bangladesh (LMIC)	Survey	TQM	Perceived value
Sitinjak et al. (2020)	Online taxi	Indonesia (LMIC)	Survey	Importance– Performance Analysis	Passenger satisfaction
Čabreja et al. (2024)	Cammeo, Uber	Croatia (HIC)	Comparative	Quality assessment	Service comparison
Azzahro et al. (2020)	Gojek	Indonesia (LMIC)	Survey	Partnership model	Driver loyalty
Nabarian et al. (2019)	Ride-hailing apps	Indonesia (LMIC)	Survey	E-CRM	E-service quality
Hanifah et al. (2021)	Ride-hailing	Indonesia (LMIC)	Survey	Revised IPA	Service improvement
Zhou et al. (2026)	Robo Taxi	China (LMIC)	Experimental	Kano, Kansei	Service quality
Mohamed Razi et al. (2021)	E-hailing	Malaysia (LMIC)	Survey	Service quality	Customer satisfaction

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Study	Platform(s)	Geographic context	Methodology	Theoretical framework	Primary outcomes
Nikolaidou et al. (2026)	Mobility services	Global review	Systematic review	Sentiment analysis	Public perception
He et al. (2024)	First-mile rideshare	Global	Exact algorithm	Optimization	Service preferences

4. Discussion

The review demonstrates that while conventional service-quality paradigms such as SERVQUAL provided an essential baseline for early transportation research (Pradhan, 2019; Murad et al., 2019), they are structurally inadequate to capture the dual nature of modern platform-mediated transport (Shiau et al., 2021; Yusra et al., 2026). Perceived quality in app-based ride-hailing is intrinsically dynamic, spanning pre-booking platform interactions, real-time algorithmic dispatch, transparent transaction management, and post-booking physical execution (Nguyen-Phuoc et al., 2021; Addo et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the overwhelming reliance on quantitative cross-sectional surveys in LMIC contexts highlights key gaps in the current body of knowledge. While LMIC studies rightfully emphasize safety, price transparency, and platform reliability given local infrastructural constraints (Shah and Kubota, 2022; Pandit and Sharma, 2022), there remains a distinct scarcity of longitudinal and objective behavioral studies.

5. Conclusion

Service quality in app-based ride-hailing has evolved beyond the traditional SERVQUAL paradigm. It is better understood as an integrated digital–physical construct in which platform performance and physical service execution jointly shape consumer experience. Future research should move beyond cross-sectional perceptual measures toward mixed-method designs that integrate perceived quality with objective operational indicators and explicitly examine equity and contextual differences.

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