

# AMB 340 Service Audit



U B E R

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## **1.0 Introduction**

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The report aims to analyse and evaluate the effectiveness of the service marketing mix of Uber Australia, identifying strategic opportunities in improving Uber's services and providing three recommendations in which the organisation should implement to ensure efficiency for their service. According to Lovelock's services classification, Uber is classified as a people-processing service since customer's presence is required in order for the service to be delivered. As such, Uber's service act involves tangible action (passenger transportation) which requires customer to be physically present throughout the service delivery (Kapoor et al., 2011; Lovelock, 1986).

## **2.0 Service Marketing Mix**

### **2.1 Service Product and Positioning (265)**

The taxi and limousine transport industry accounts for \$5.57 billion revenue in Australia and forecast growth by 2.3% (Magner, 2015). With the emergence of ridesharing as a new class of transportation, this has transformed the Australian economy through the adoption of digital tools (Deloitte, 2016). Companies like Uber, have caused a digital disruption in the taxi industry, having no physical asset but rather operate their service, utilising their driver ‘partners’ own vehicles and matching them with passengers who are seeking a transport service (Deloitte, 2016; Preseton, 2015).

Uber’s marketing strategy is to position themselves as a taxi service operated from an app, delivering the promise to be ‘everyone’s private driver’ and targeting the business professionals and millennials (Milson, n.d). In Australia, the main target age that travel by Uber and use the app are 18-34 year olds, typically smartphone users (Roy Morgan Research, 2016). This segment are highly image driven and prefer products that customise their unique needs. Consequently, attracting this segment requires introduction and updates to new products or services in order to drive traffic and improve service quality (Williams & Page, 2011). Furthermore having a portfolio of customers which aims to serve several segments, requires greater investment in the marketing communication for the brand position (Lovelock et al., 2015).

Uber has adopted an unfocused service strategy, offering wide range of services to a broad market audience in order to retain their competitive edge and enhance service quality (Lovelock et al., 2015). The table below outlines five popular Uber services available in Australia.

<b>Car</b>	<b>Type of Service and Target Audience</b>
UberX	Lowest price option
UberSUV	Transportation service for up to 6 people (Uber, 2016)
UberBLACK	Affordable yet luxury alternative, primary targeting business professionals (Uber, 2016)
UberASSIT	Accommodates for wheelchairs, walkers and scooters (Uber, 2016)
UberEATS	Providing meals along with the service, targeting the ‘foodies’ and partnering with well-know restaurants to offer this premium home dining service (Ubereats, 2016; McCauley, 2016)

**Table 1: Uber Service Offerings to Different Target Segments**

## **2.2 Pricing, Productive Capacity and Demand (284)**

Uber utilises its app to determine its pricing. When the user completes their ride, the individual's credit card will be charged automatically (Ansari et al., 2015). Under competition-based pricing, Uber implements cost-leadership pricing strategy by offering lower rates than taxis. According to Deloitte Access Economics (2016), Uber rides was on average 19.8% cheaper than taxis. Uber partners generally do not need to travel to look for customers, therefore this allows them to save time and fuel (Chan, 2014).

Additionally, Uber does not own any vehicles which means it does not need to incur maintenance costs which makes the firm more agile (Chan, 2014). In summary, Uber's efficient production reduces production costs and hence allowing them to offer low-cost rides to customers without affecting their bottom line cost (Chan, 2014). Low pricing is key factor that attracts customers to try Uber services because cheap prices offer savings benefits and improves consumer welfare. However, Uber's expected market share may be diluted as its new direct competitor GoCatch is providing cheaper fares without surge pricing by paying their drivers more (Tucker, 2016).

Uber is well-known for its dynamic pricing strategy such that during peak season, customers are willing to pay a higher rate for Uber's rides due to the shortage of transport supply (Deloitte Access Economics, 2016). Similarly, during normal operations, loyal customers are also paying a dynamic price to receive enhanced service offerings instead of searching for alternatives (Deloitte Access Economics, 2016). Consequently, the high demand during

normal operations has prompted Uber to use value-based pricing strategies in calculating their fares. However, surge pricing is negatively viewed by customers as a form of “price gouging” (Ansari et al., 2015).

### **2.3 Physical and Electronic Distribution (214)**

E-distribution is a distribution concept which refers to online buying and selling of services from the internet using consumer devices (Mihic et al., 2015). Digital distribution enhance firm's capability to access to greater target markets and also increase consumers' access to wider range of possibilities and option (Ozretić et al., 2004). With the adoption of e-distribution, Uber has undergone drastic changes to introduce a new app. With that, this has altered the way customers purchase taxi service as it becomes more easier to acquire the service by simply providing the location and destination to the driver (Steinberg, 2012). The survey conducted on Uber users shows that out of 50 respondents, 79.6% of them are satisfied with their experience with the Uber app (Appendix A). This indicates that customers are informed and are able to perform service tasks for themselves. However, research suggests that certain customers are reluctant to change their way of purchasing taxi service because they are not tech-savvy or their devices are incompatible to use the app (Lovelock et al., 2012, p128). Given this, Uber app is created to be user-friendly and to suit all types of device models. To achieve this, Uber implements the 4 petals of the flower service into its online channels.

<b>Flower of Services</b>	<b>Descriptions</b>
<b>Information</b>	Provide both timely and accurate information through software-driven tutorials or Uber website (Uber, 2016).
<b>Payment and Billing</b>	In most cases, the direct debit-paid service works by sending a paper bill to the customer after deducting the customer's account for the service fee charged. For example, when a passenger purchases Yellow Cab service using a Visa Card, a 10% service fee will be incur to the customer's account (Yellow Cab Co, 2016). However, as customers hardly check their receipt, they are unaware of the amount of service fee charged. Unlike Yellow Cab, the Uber app process payment directly to the customer's account without incurring a service fee. The app will also send an email of the receipt to the customer, thus enabling customer to easily check and make payments without having to carry excessive amounts of cash.
<b>Safekeeping</b>	Uber app reduces time constraints and improve customer's convenience and security for using their service because it allows users to hail for a car from any location, simply by choosing the ride and setting their location and destination. The customer will receive a full profile of the driver and details of the vehicle booked, therefore this eliminates the hassle and worries of the traditional method of purchasing a taxi service (Uber, 2016). With advanced technology used in establishing the Uber app, customers are able to keep their personal information private. Lastly, the app will provide the customer a rating system in order to gauge customers' overall experience of their ride (Uber, 2016). All in all, customer will feel secure and safe when using the online application.

**Table 2: Flower of Service Model**



## **2.4 Integrated Service Marketing Communication (354)**

Uber utilizes several marketing initiatives to increase their brand awareness specifically 'buzz marketing'. Buzz marketing maximises word-of-mouth (WOM) thus allowing for brand recognition and producing demand (Kavitha & Reddy, 2016). To appeal to the public, Uber has captured consumer's imagination by developing "UberKittens", "UberPuppies", "UberIceCream" and "UberUMPIRE" campaigns. These campaigns has exhibited their capacity, utilising popular culture to create publicity and social buzz (Hayes, 2015). Consumers who participated in these campaigns were encouraged to engage in digital platforms by incorporating hashtags of these events (Wallace, 2016).

Although these public relations strategies are a strong point for Uber, individuals have different opinions about these campaigns where some perceive the "UberKittens" and "UberPuppies" campaigns as cruelty to animals (Fletcher, 2015). Therefore, Uber should mitigate this issue and avoid bad publicity by informing the public that animals welfare were prioritise during the campaign in which it is handled by knowledgeable shelter staff (Gleeson, 2015).

Additionally, Uber also employs social media channels to advertise promotions to customers such as free rides to targeted cities (Moffat, 2015). Uber utilise their website as part of their marketing strategy in which they have efficiently designed their homepage (Appendix B) with oversized

background images, large headlines and good call-to-action (Cleanthous, 2014). These digital elements has assisted Uber in increasing their conversions, providing customers a sense of arrival, establishes the quality of Uber, effectively directing users attention to the central call-to-action and headlines (Cleanthous, 2014). However, Uber’s website is not responsive in which the call-to-action button disappears depending on the screen size resolutions (Cleanthous, 2014).

Moreover, Uber also participate in sales promotion such as promotional codes. Uber’s promotion of “Give 10 Get 10” in which new customers who sign-up using existing customer’s promotion code would get a \$10 discount for their first ride whilst the existing customer would receive a \$10 credit to their account (Flynn, 2015). However, customers might abuse this referral system. For instance, US’s Uber user, Blake Jareds have exploited these codes to earn a ton of cash in credits for Uber’s services, providing him free Uber’s services for life (Kosoff, 2015).

Types of Promotion	Recommendations	Justifications
<b>Word-of-mouth (WOM)</b>	Recognised brands or individuals popular amongst the target audience should be appointed for these campaigns to ensure WOM is maximised, since these influentials have the ability to garner media attention and consumer support.	<p><b>Advantage:</b> This is because they have the ability to garner media attention plus their huge fanbase would mean that they can use their fame to influence these followers to become supporters to these campaigns (Istanboulian, 2012).</p> <p><b>Disadvantage:</b> However, these individuals and companies could overshadow the campaigns as the spotlight they</p>

		bring to these campaigns may focus only on them (Istanboulian, 2012).
<b>Website</b>	To make sure Uber's website is mobile and tablet-friendly, Uber should redesign their website into a responsive website, to provide customers better brand engagement.	<p><b>Advantage:</b> When Uber's mobile and tablet experience are optimised for consistency and functionality it could boost affinity and trust with user (Maunsell, 2015).</p> <p><b>Disadvantage:</b> However, if Uber's mobile and tablet website is difficult to navigate users and they are more likely to switch to their competitor's website, hence Uber could risk losing their consumers permanently to their competitors (Maunsell, 2015).</p>
<b>Promotional code</b>	To prevent customers from exploiting Uber's promotion code, Uber should add a section for discount codes to its terms of service to prevent users exploiting Uber deals.	<p><b>Advantage:</b> By setting a clear terms of services, it would enable ease of resolving conflicts and unpaid accounts and also decrease the cost of monitoring payments, thereby conveying to customers that Uber is a credible business and should be taken seriously (Nielsen, 2015).</p>

**Table 3: Recommendations for promotion**

## 2.5 Service Process (188)

The service process blueprint helps formulate an organisation's planning tool to ensure the quality of the service process, demonstrating the service cycle to the clients. Uber's service process blueprint which exhibits the contact between the customer and the partner helps the firm to identify possible failure points and thus allows for areas in improving service cost (Seyring et al., 2009).

The blueprint below outlines the Uber's service process which is simply request, ride and rate. Uber service delivery works through an app or mobile website which is accessible through a smartphone that is connected to the Internet (Harper, 2014). Firstly, the customer registers an account and sign-in to request a ride, selects a vehicle type and pickup location. The customer is then provided an estimated fare quote based on the specific destination (Harper, 2014). In this stage, Uber provides an efficient matching system on its app unlike the traditional taxis delivery service. At the end of the service, a rating system will be offered to customers. These ratings indicates the level of customers confidence thus assisting drivers in maintaining their service quality.

# Uber Service Blueprint

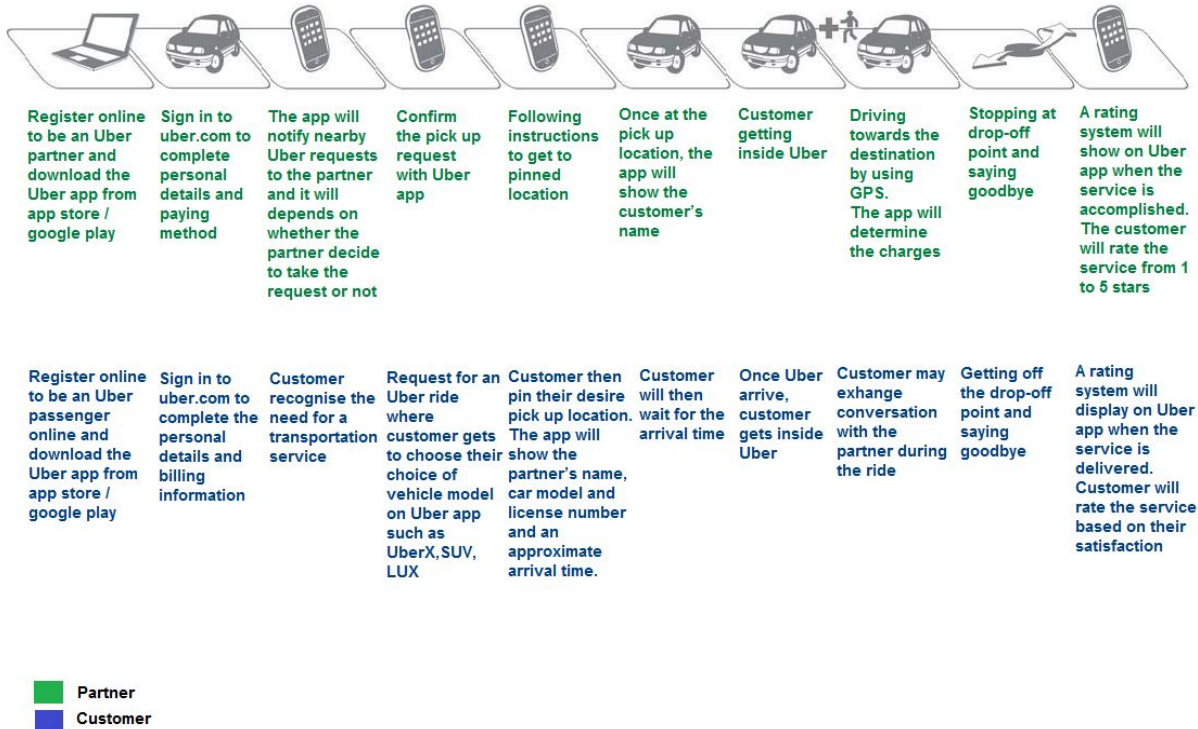


Table 4: Uber Service Blueprint (Uber, 2016)

## **2.6 Managing People (282)**

Research asserts that frontline employees are not directly responsible for sales, or affect the quality of the service and product value delivered (Keller et al., 2006). However, for Uber, frontline employees (drivers) are essential aspects of the organisation such that it helps increase the organisation's performance and customer satisfaction. Therefore, to better serve customers, organisations need to focus beyond external markets and customers by also considering the organisation as a market and employees as internal customers (Barnes & Morris, 2000). Based on the wheel of successful HR, Uber refers their employees as 'partners' and not drivers which suggests the firm intends to recognize and respect its employees as important contributors to the company, thus empowering frontline employees to perform high quality services (Uber, 2016; Lovelock, et.al., 2015). To maintain quality assurance, Uber establishes recruitment policies which require drivers to be of at least 21 years of age, drives a registered four-door vehicle and pass a rigorous criminal history screening (Alex, 2015). Furthermore, the firm ensures that all the drivers always have access to a convenient, reliable and affordable way for getting where they need to go (Alex, 2015). However, most UberX drivers are struggling to even earn the minimum wage. In 2014, Uber applied the low fare strategy by cutting 20% the price of an UberX ride with the purpose of increasing demand (Kosoff, 2014). However this reduces the wages for the driver, ultimately affecting their performance and emotional sentiments. Additionally, customers are not obligated to provide a tip for driver when using Uber's app. Therefore, Uber should consider upgrading the application that allows customer tip through its

application, which could further encourage and motivate the drivers. (Lovelock, et al.,2015).

**2.7 Servicescape and Physical Evidence (396)**

The servicescape and physical evidence model are mainly utilised for intangible services. Studies prove servicescape influences customers’ choice, expectations, satisfaction and other related behavior (Rao, 2011). Servicescape is vital as it is the organisation’s outward appearance which affects the attainment of the company’s external and internal goals (Bitner, 1992). Hence, it is crucial for Uber to invest more in enhancing its servicescape to achieve greater competitive advantage in the market.

Collett (2008) purports that there are 3 types of service usage which is self-service, interpersonal and remote service. Uber falls into the interpersonal services category due to its active involvement with customers and employees during the service process. Given that customers find evaluating service quality is subjective, the servicescapes model is used to allow customers to assess service quality based on the ambiance, spaces and symbols of the interior and exterior environment along with its physical evidence. (Nargundkar, 2010).

The table below shows the findings for the importance of Uber’s servicescape (Refer Appendix C)

<b>Bitner’s servicescape model (Ambient condition)</b>	<b>Ambient features that existed in Uber</b>	<b>Rankings for importance</b>
<b>Sight</b>	The interior and exterior cleanliness of the car	1
<b>Touch</b>	The comfort and space of the seats	2
<b>Hearing</b>	The music being played during the ride	4
<b>Smell</b>	The scent of the interior environment of the car	3

From the survey, Uber users ranked the interior and exterior cleanliness of the car as the most important service feature that largely influences their behavior towards Uber. Studies implies

cleanliness affects consumers' perception of services such that consumers indirectly connect cleanliness with the servicescape quality (Shashikala, 2013). Seeing this, odour is related to cleanliness as foul smell indicates that Uber's cleanliness is neglected. According to Ferrera (2015), scents influence human behaviors because scents trigger a message or an emotion that impacts consumer behavior. Given this, certain odours are used as part of stores or services' segmentation and positioning strategy as it carries a sense of harmony which influences the store's value and environment. Uber's apps, website and its partners are the two physical evidences of its service processes.

The table below shows the survey results on the characteristics and importance of Uber partners (Refer Appendix D):

<b>Characteristics of an ideal Uber partners</b>	<b>Rankings for importance</b>
<b>Sociable</b>	3
<b>Experience and knowledgeable</b>	2
<b>Has professional appearance</b>	4
<b>Polite and well mannered</b>	1

Uber's partners are essential evidence because consumers generally based their decision making process on the treatment they received on the ride (Verma, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial for Uber to identify which partner's characteristics or personalities that consumers will prefer in order to differentiate itself from competitors (Balaji, 2014).

<b>Servicescape</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Justifications</b>
<b>Ambient condition</b>	As mentioned above, cleanliness contributes the most when it comes to influencing Uber's consumers' behavior. Foul smells would be present if the ride's interior cleanliness is being neglected. Hence, makes this is a good opportunity for Uber to utilize scent as a positioning and segmentation strategy. Studies showed that our sense of smell strongly influences our emotional factors (Khan, 2014). That being said, Uber could provide all Uber partners with a car purifiers according to what type of Uber product they are providing.	<p><b>Advantages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adds value to the product (Bradford &amp; Desrochers, 2009).</li> <li>- Puts a person in good mood if the scent is appealing (Bradford &amp; Desrochers, 2009).</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not all consumers will appeal to the scent, as scent is a subjective and might convey a negative behavior. For</li> </ul>



	<p>The best example for scent marketing would be Peter Alexander or Abercrombie and Fitch. Both of these companies adopt scent marketing as a psychologically factor to impact the consumer's purchasing behavior (Drysdale, 2014).</p>	<p>instance, study suggests that Abercrombie and Fitch's in store aroma could cause anxiety issues to a shopper (Weiss, G. 2014).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Having a good scent in the car does not mean that the car is actually clean. According to Holland, Hendriks, &amp; Aarts, (2005), we often misinterpret that when it smells good, it is clean. An alluring smell could affect our cognitive behavior without being consciously aware of the influence, thus it might create a wrong perception.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Physical evidence</b></p>	<p>Uber should develop a personality test according to consumer's expectations then evaluate potential candidates based on the test results before recruiting them as partners (Weber, 2015).</p>	<p><b>Advantages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Standardization of service quality (Weber, 2015).</li> <li>- Understand the candidate's strengths and weaknesses beforehand (YEC, 2016)</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing a personality test is costly (Butler, 2016)</li> <li>- Not always accurate, might not be able to provide confidential insights (Butler, 2016)</li> </ul>

Table xx: Recommendations on enhancing Uber's servicescape

### 3.0 Recommendations

Marketing Mix	Recommendations	Justifications
<p><b>Managing People</b></p>	<p>Given that the demand and supply for Uber rides fluctuates every hour, thus causing users to pay extra high surge pricing when there is imbalanced demand and supply of Uber rides (M. Dholakia, 2015). This acts as one of the major drawbacks for Uber users as surge pricing could increase as high as 7 to 8 times more than usual (Robertson, 2016). This usually occurs throughout the time of really odd hours in the midnight when supply of Uber rides might be low or busy rush hours during lunch time or after work when there is excessive demand (M. Dholakia, 2015). Hence, Uber could resolve this matter by implementing a system which balance out the demand and supply of the Uber rides. Firstly, this could be achieved by identifying the few most popular locations and destinations that has the highest demand, then Uber partners on lower demand locations gets notified via this system to stay on standby around those areas. Furthermore, Uber can utilise human resource planning to strategize in order to reduce the frequency of price instability, this will enable Uber to achieve necessary supply and demand requirements of Uber rides at appropriate time and and cost, hence, allowing the service process to be carried out in a more effective and efficient manner (Bulmash, Speers, &amp; Chhinzer, 2010).</p>	<p><b>Advantages:</b>  Executing the human resource planning strategy could not only help stabilize the surge pricing on Uber rides. Consequently, due to the increase of competitiveness in the ridesharing industry, it is generally beneficial for Uber’s human resource as it allows the company to quickly adopt into any expansions or diversification (M. Dholakia, 2015). In addition, Uber can achieve competitive advantage if Uber’s human resource is able to determine and predict the skill set and imperative types of positions needed in the company’s future plans (Johnson, 2016). In short, human resource planning can support Uber by being getting everything planned ahead of time before any enhancement to the company’s service process is being implemented (Lunenburg, F. 2012).</p> <p><b>Disadvantages:</b>  This might contradict the objectives of Uber’s surge pricing. As Uber’s surge pricing was aimed to encourage partners to work during odd hours or when the traffic is busy during peak hours (Kerr, 2015). However, if the human resource planning system is being implemented and Uber will be able to achieve a balanced demand and supply. Consequently, this will stabilise surge pricing thus no longer make surge pricing to act as a motivator for Uber partners.</p>
<p><b>Promotion</b></p>	<p>The promotion factor in the service marketing mix plays an essential role in communicating the positioning of service to customers along with delivering information about the service and its quality (Wirtz, Chew &amp; Lovelock, 2012, p189-213). Hence, besides using the website and specific campaign to promote the service, Uber should consider using a</p>	<p><b>Advantages:</b> Loyalty schemes allow firms to identify, maintain and increase customer gratification as a strategic tool for managing customer relationships. For the consumer, loyalty programs provides a rewarding benefit for purchase, avoiding additional costs. Furthermore the information recorded from these loyalty cards prove to be essential insights into consumer purchase behaviour in</p>

loyalty program especially using the tiered system. Different than a point system loyalty program, tiered system provided different rewards based on what tier a customer is in (Kolowich, 2015). This assists to increase customer engagement, encourages more frequent purchase cycles, maintain contact with an organisation's existing customer as well as build a relationship with them (Berman, 2006). According to the research by McEachern (2014), Cargo Cosmetics can be a great example for using a loyalty program by setting their tier milestones, which based on loyalty point earned. After creating a customer account, a customer can receive 1 mile for every dollar spend. When the customer receives 300 miles, they can receive a gold card. When the customer becomes a gold member, they can get a 10% sale day, receive an annual birthday gift and access to local Cargo Events (McEachern, 2014). The reward can increase when a customer becomes platinum member. This strategy assists increase the customer engagement, encourage more purchase, increase demand in slow season and help company, which became the one to watch, garnered worldwide recognition as one of the most creative and innovative brand in the beauty industry (Cargo Cosmetics, 2016). Based on the Cargo Cosmetic strategy above, Uber can set the tier milestones based on loyalty points earned when customers use the service. When a customer acquires 500 miles (points), they become a gold member and get a free ride in a luxury car. If customer moves to platinum at 1000 miles, they can receive two free drives in a luxury car with a drink and snack and have a chance to win a free flight to Tasmania.

relation to the firm's marketing mix, helping to develop strategies to increase customer satisfaction. Another advantage of loyalty programs will encourage repeat purchase behaviour especially for customers who relate the rewards to being appreciated by the company and treated as a special customer (Meyer-Waarden, 2008; Meyer-Waarden,2013).

**Disadvantages:** Despite many advantages of loyalty scheme, there are view disadvantages that could be costly for the firm in regards to implementing and maintaining this strategy. Consequently, firms would require more efforts from a logistics point of view as well as extra efforts in promotional activities will need to be implemented to educate the customer about the benefits in investing in this program. Additionally, data collection from these programs could also be misleading since the consumer may feel obligated to respond in the perceived manner. Consumers tend to believe that loyalty schemes could be deceiving methods in convincing them to purchase therefore the loyalty rewards program may not appeal to to consumer and the efforts done to implement this would be wasted (Acatrinei & Puiu, 2012).

<p><b>Pricing</b></p>	<p>Price influences consumer choice because price acts as a measure of purchase cost (Monroe, 1973). Uber should utilise surge protection model as an alternative to surge pricing. For instance, the surge protection model outlines that anyone who takes 1 ride in Uber surged prices would have a higher chance to be protected from dynamic pricing for the following month in which it would grant the customer to pay normal price whilst others pay the surge price (Chadha, 2015). To continue the surge protection, Uber could boost their surge prices to align them with the actual prices and customer must avails 1 Uber ride per week (Chadha, 2015).</p>	<p><b>Advantage:</b> As consumer knows that by taking just 1 surged price ride, he or she can potentially alleviate the burden of dynamic pricing for a month. The notion of this future advantage could improve Uber’s conversion rate as well as increasing customers’ loyalty (Chadha, 2015). This is because when such a customers have a choice from variety of players, they will be more inclined to use Uber just to maintain the surge protection (Chadha, 2015).</p> <p><b>Disadvantage:</b> However as surge protection works similarly to differential pricing, this pricing model does not target for those who have lower income. This is because to lower income users the price for at least 1 Uber ride per week is considered costly, thereby these consumers could not maintain their surge protection (Chadha, 2015). On the hand, for middle to high-range income customers, this model would be appealing to them as they have higher disposable income and purchasing power (Chadha, 2015).</p>
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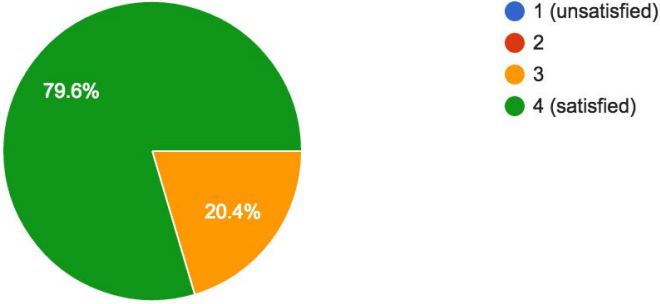
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Appendix A:

4. From 1 (unsatisfied) to 4 (satisfied), what do you think about Uber App?  
(49 responses)





WANT TO DRIVE WITH UBER?

[BECOME A DRIVER](#)



☰ MENU

U B E R

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[SIGN UP](#)



# MOVING PEOPLE

TAP A BUTTON, GET PICKED UP IN MINUTES

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8. On the scale of 1 to 5, 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important, rank which characteristics do you prefer in your Uber driver?

