The State of Taxis in Singapore

Description



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I remember a time when taking cabs used to be a reliable option for transport, especially if you were running late. The streets had a good amount of cabs and one would seldom be waiting for more than 10 minutes before you get to flag down a cab.

Today? On more than one occasions in the past year, the state of taxis have been declining. I canâ??t say Iâ??m not disappointed.

Investors would surely know about how ComfortDelGro has been seeing a surge in revenue past the $4 billion mark recently, even reporting record profits earlier in February. Yet, the stock fell to 2.86 not too long after. Iâ??ve been watching the stock closely since then, and today, the stock has since climbed by 34 cents to 3.20. Thatâ??s more than 10% in just 2 months!



I told myself that if I were to invest in this stock, I would put $10,000 (half of my savings last year, or one-third of my savings to date).

Buy: 3,500 lots at $2.86 = $10,010
Sell: 3,500 lots at $3.20 = $11,200
Profits = $1,160 (after deducting transaction costs)

As a newbie investor, I have this (silly) little game Iâ??m currently playing with myself to test out my investment thesis and â??gut feelâ?• about stocks. I still have much to learn about proper calculations, but from reading their annual reports and looking at their historical operations, I identified 3 blue chips that I had a good feeling about and divided my savings equally between them. Of course, one can never time the market. I made a choice between the 3, and unfortunately that was not ComfortDelGro. No wonder they say hindsight is always the best decision.

Anyway, I digress.

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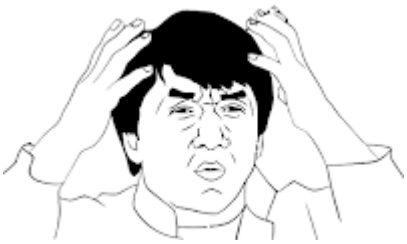
The point is, **given how much profits ComfortDelGro is making, donâ??t you think they can afford to spend a little more on training their taxi drivers properly?** Hereâ??s what I observed among taxis in the past few years, and Iâ??m pretty sure Iâ??m not the only one:

More taxi drivers are now choosing their passengers.

Iâ??ve seen taxis skipping customers and further down the road, picking up someone they want to drive instead. While I can understand wanting to avoid drunkards at night lest they make a mess in the cab, why are these drivers getting away with discriminating against other types of passengers too?

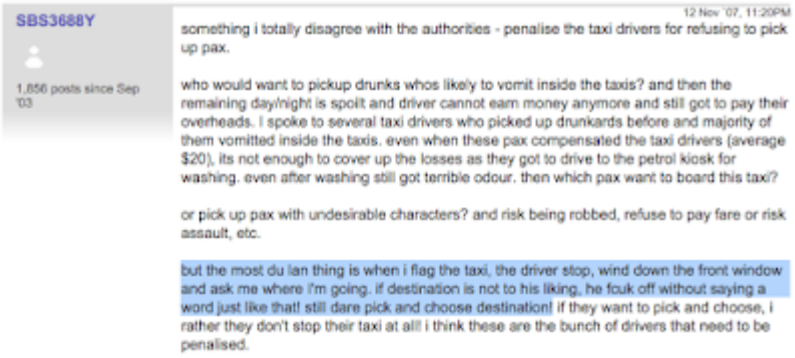
Just 2 weeks ago, I got off a taxi just as a fragile old woman walked over to board. It was 3pm, and her location was just a few streets down, but the driver refused to take her. Was it because she looked too shabby? I wanted to give him a piece of my mind, but he had already sped off. On a another occasion, a driver skipped the plump guy who had been waiting further down the road, and picked me up instead. When I asked how come he didnâ??t pick up the other passenger, since he was technically before me, he said he didnâ??t want his taxi to smell. I didnâ??t know what to say.



Taxis with the green call-sign are not stopping.

Now, if you have your call-sign on green, thatâ??s sending a signal that youâ??re AVAILABLE. If your choice location is not shown on your call-sign, then you effectively have no right to pick your

passengers based on their destinations.



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something i totally disagree with the authorities - penalise the taxi drivers for refusing to pick up pax.

who would want to pickup drunks whos likely to vomit inside the taxis? and then the remaining day/night is spoilt and driver cannot earn money anymore and still got to pay their overheads. I spoke to several taxi drivers who picked up drunkards before and majority of them vomitted inside the taxis. even when these pax compensated the taxi drivers (average $20), its not enough to cover up the losses as they got to drive to the petrol kiosk for washing. even after washing still got terrible odour. then which pax want to board this taxi?

or pick up pax with undesirable characters? and risk being robbed, refuse to pay fare or risk assault, etc.

but the most du lan thing is when i flag the taxi, the driver stop, wind down the front window and ask me where i'm going. if destination is not to his liking, he fcuk off without saying a word just like that! still dare pick and choose destination! if they want to pick and choose, i rather they don't stop their taxi at all! i think these are the bunch of drivers that need to be penalised.

8 years later, this behaviour is still happening.
I personally experience them mostly with ComfortDelGro drivers. What are you guys doing?!

I recall an incident earlier this year when I was in my stiletto work heels and lugging around my bag and a heavy laptop after a client presentation. I had boarded a cab at the taxi stand, and right after I sat down and told him my location was to Dhoby Ghaut, he said that was not where he wanted to go and demanded me to get off.

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Is that how you treat a passenger?!

More taxis are camping around waiting for a booking.

Another reason why these â??greenâ?• cabs are not stopping: many of them are basically just driving around waiting for a call to come in on GrabTaxi or Uber, so they can earn that extra booking fee.

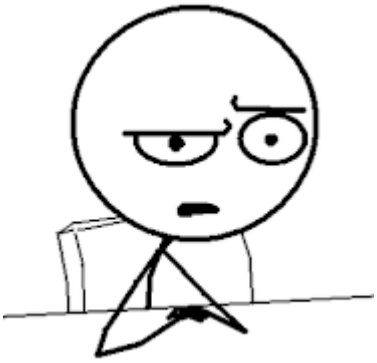
They disappear when it rains.

If they disappear because theyâ??re poor drivers and are not confident of driving in the rain, then thatâ??s understandable (although we should then question why they were given their taxi license in the first place). But the REAL reason why many of them disappear? Refer to the point above.

They donâ??t really know their directions.

Do you think it is acceptable for taxi drivers not to know their directions? It is akin to a designer not knowing how to use Photoshop.

Even so, with GPS nowadays, thereâ??s no reason to not know the directions to a place. However, even if you use GPS, please donâ??t just blindly follow the directions given, especially when a customer is trying to direct you otherwise. I had one incident previously where a taxi driver was relying completely on his GPS to get to my place because he didnâ??t know the way. I gave him the directions, and told him to exit at a specific part of the expressway, but he brushed me off and said the GPS was bringing him to another route despite my insistence that I had taken my route a thousand times before. In the end? His route cost an extra $6, because it was a huge detour. Who ended up paying for HIS mistake?



Excuse me, I live here. Do you really think your GPS knows my estate better than I do?

They overcharge on New Yearâ??s Day.

After 2 years of bad experience, Iâ??ve resolved last year never to go partying on the night of 31 December anyway, because rogue taxi drivers overcharged me (and my friends in other locations downtown) each time.

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It is near impossible to book a cab on this night, and those Comfort DelGro cabs on the street had their windows rolled down, either not stopping, or telling us that we needed to pay $50 as a base fare before they would take us at all. We ended up waiting until the first train before we could head back.

Although Singapore now has laws against over-touting, I heard from some friends last year that there were still such incidences. Have you encountered them too?

If you want a foreignerâ??s point of view, read this expatâ??s rant on the incompetency of taxi drivers in Singapore.

What we can do

Change for the better can only happen if we play a part. To give taxi drivers credit, not all of them behave like this. And there are horror passengers as well. So I urge everyone to start doing two things:

1. Report errant drivers.

If you encounter such rude or selective drivers, please take down their license plate number (or just snap a photo) and report them to their respective companies. The more complaints a driver gets, the more pressured are the companies to take action against the driver. Social media has been a powerful policing tool as well with recent incidents in Singapore, so feel free to report on Facebook or your blog as well. If there are multiple reports surfacing and the company still does not take the driver to task, then the company has to be held responsible.



Taxi Complaint

If you wish to report a complaint against the service of a taxi driver or provide feedback, you may contact the customer service hotlines of the respective companies.

Taxi Company	Customer Service Hotline
CityCab Pte Ltd	6552 1111
Yellow Top Taxi	6293 5545
Trans-Cab Services Pte Ltd	6555 3333
SMRT Taxis Pte Ltd	6555 8888
Prime Car Rental & Taxi Services Pte Ltd	6898 2000
Smart Automobile Pte Ltd	6485 7777
Comfort Transportation Pte Ltd	6552 1111
Premier Taxis Pte Ltd	6363 6888

2. Practise good passenger etiquette.

I generally like to chit-chat with taxi drivers during my journey, and many of them tell me that their biggest pet peeve is with no-show customers. So what Iâ??ve been doing ever since is to wait for a cab to arrive once I book one, even if there are other available cabs that come in the meantime. Otherwise, if I am in a rush and cannot wait, then Iâ??ll be sure to cancel the booking so the driver knows not to come anymore.

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I have uncles who are taxi drivers, so I can relate. But that doesnâ??t mean I allow errant behaviour to happen without consequence. As you guys know, my sense of justice and fairness is pretty strong (if you recall how I sued my unethical former employer who refused to pay me my salary).

If we want change in Singaporeâ??s taxi scene, we have to first be that change.

From the passenger,
Budget Babe

Category

1. Family