Connecting Cabbies with Customers

Written by Abha Chopra
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As Raghu and Aprameya, two graduates from IIM Ahemedabad brainstormed and stumbled upon ideas, they realized that there is a need to reduce the time of prolonged wait for a taxi in the country. "Our previous jobs took us around the country, and frequent delays on these trips due to unreliable cab services had set the thinking" says the duo. And the seed of TaxiForSure was sown. TaxiForSure, as the name suggests, is a cab aggregation business started its operations in June 2011. Since 2 years of inception and one year of seed funding, TaxiForSure.com now had recorded a 40% month on month growth.

"As frequent travellers, we felt the lack of a reliable, comfortable and organised taxi service in the major Indian cities" says Raghunandan G. Unlike Meru and other cab operators, TaxiForSure.com doesn't own a fleet of cars; they make use of available cabs in the city. They focus highly on technology and backend link to ensure that customers get an easily accessible, safe, reliable taxi ride 'for sure'.

TaxiForSure raised an angel round of funding from Accel Partners, Helion and Blume last year

in May 2012. They have closed Series A round with US$4 million showcasing the investors' confidence in the model being both sustainable and scalable. After clocking 2000 bookings per day in 2 cities -Bangalore and Delhi/NCR, Aprameya Radhakrishna and Raghunandan G, looks forward for an expansion into 15 cities by the end of 2015.

Taxiforsure.com gives you a wide range of taxis and operators across India to choose from based on your specific need. Their approach is different from a lot of mainstream companies who work with drivers. As they get a request, all free cabs in their network, within a 5 kilometer radius will get alert. Taxis can then bid and the result is based on various parameters like how long taxis been waiting, their earnings, customer feedback and of course the distance from the point. Customers will receive a confirmation from them via sms. The driver and vehicle details will be sent to you by the operator at least 30 mins prior to pick-up time.

They call the starting of their business as pure 'serendipity'. "We believe that the consumer deserves a better way to choose from vast available taxi options. You do not need to call 2 to 3 operators with just a small hope that you would get the right taxi when you need one. You have all the rates available to you with all kinds of operators, International or Local, and all kinds of cars at your disposal to make a choice" says Aprameya. Their client list includes corporate employees, business travellers, tourists, pub hoppers etc which makes up to around 2,000 bookings per day across Bangalore and Delhi.

The duo says that one of the biggest challenges they face while creating a footprint in new cities is "hiring the right people who can scale to the next level". There is also a real challenge for them to provide awesome services at affordable prices. "Drivers are our customer face. Making them believes in superior service delivery using technology and making them part of our story is important for us" says Aprameya. Enabling technology in a space which isn't very tech savvy is also challenging. But as operators and drivers start seeing benefits, they change their attitude towards technology.

Taxiforsure's first set of customers came from intranet posts in companies by employees who had used their service. Later, Facebook ads and radio campaigns widened their reach. Today, they have various online and offline marketing activities and they have acquired a large number of customers through their cab branding. "Most operators are more than happy to display on their cars thanks to the business we give them" says Raghu. Word-of-mouth plays a big role in helping them reach out to newer segments, since satisfied customers are more than happy to recommend.

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They are actively engaged in digital & social media to reach out to existing customers, engage with potential customers, communicate their marketing offers, and to come up with cool contests and fun quizzes to keep the brand buzzing. "We have a unique TweetaTaxi initiative where customers can book by simply tweeting @ taxiforsure.com . At offline we partner with various local events, reaching out to relevant communities" says Aprameya.

They say that their team is the biggest inspiration for them. "The very fact that we are responsible for livelihoods of 250 plus employees, 50 plus operators and 1500 plus drivers keeps us on our toes" says the duo.

They plan to become the Makemytrip of taxi services by expanding pan India and creating a brand that customers can trust. "We are looking at expanding to 15 cities by 2015" says the duo. In the next 2-3 months they are planning their launch in Chennai and Hyderabad. They already have a taxi booking app launched on iOS and Android devices, where a customer can book a taxi in just 2 taps. They are now working on rolling it out on other platforms as well. "Apart from this, we're working on innovative improvements in our technology, so as to improve customer experience", says Aprameya. They also believe that if a company can crack a business model in India, it can do well anywhere in the world.