Taxi Fare Prediction Using Machine Learning Algorithms

Kaaviya G

Computer Science Engineering

Rajalakshmi Engineering College

Chennai, Tamil Nadu

220701114@rajalakshmi.edu.in

Abstract

Accurately predicting taxi fares is essential for optimizing urban transportation systems, improving customer satisfaction, and supporting pricing transparency. This research proposes a machine learning-based system to predict taxi fares based on key features such as trip distance, duration, pickup and drop-off locations, and time of day. Various regression algorithms—including Linear Regression, K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN), Support Vector Regression (SVR), and Random Forest—were implemented and evaluated. The models were assessed using Mean Absolute Error (MAE), Mean Squared Error (MSE), and R^2 Score to determine predictive accuracy. Additionally, Gaussian noise-based data augmentation was applied to improve model generalization. Among all models, Random Forest demonstrated superior performance in terms of accuracy and robustness. This system aims to aid ride-hailing platforms and customers by providing reliable fare estimates under varying real-world conditions.

Keywords:
Taxi Fare Prediction, Machine Learning, Regression Models, Urban Transportation, Fare Estimation, Linear Regression, K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN), Support Vector Regression (SVR), Random Forest, Data Augmentation.

I. Introduction

As urban populations grow and cities become more congested, the demand for efficient and reliable transportation systems has never been greater. Ride-hailing services, which have emerged as a dominant mode of urban transport, rely on accurate fare prediction to ensure customer satisfaction and operational efficiency. However, despite advancements in technology, traditional taxi fare calculation methods often struggle to adapt to the complexities of modern urban transportation. Fixed-rate pricing models, which primarily consider distance and time, fail to account for factors such as traffic patterns, weather, and time of day, which can significantly affect trip duration and fare. This gap in fare prediction has led to inconsistent fare estimates, which can undermine customer trust, lead to disputes, and create inefficiencies within ride-hailing services.

The integration of machine learning into transportation systems offers an innovative solution to this challenge. By utilizing vast amounts of historical data collected from taxi rides, machine learning algorithms can uncover intricate relationships between various factors affecting fare estimation. These factors may include trip distance, travel time, pickup and drop-off locations, traffic conditions, weather, and even special events or holidays that might influence demand. By training machine learning models on such data, fare prediction systems can be made adaptive, learning from historical trends and providing real-time estimates that are more accurate and context-aware.

The goal of this research is to develop a machine learning-based system to predict taxi fares using several regression algorithms, including Linear Regression, K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN), Support Vector Regression (SVR), and Random Forest. These models leverage key features such as trip distance, duration, and time of day to predict the taxi fare more accurately. The system also incorporates data preprocessing techniques, such as feature scaling, normalization, and encoding, to ensure that the input data is ready for training. To further enhance the model's performance, Gaussian noise-based data augmentation is employed, enabling the model to generalize better across different real-world conditions.

The models are evaluated using standard performance metrics, including Mean Absolute Error (MAE), Mean Squared Error (MSE), and R^2 Score. These metrics help assess the predictive accuracy and robustness of the system, ensuring that it can handle variations in urban conditions, such as changes in traffic density, route complexity, and passenger demand. Furthermore, the study compares the efficacy of different regression algorithms to determine which approach delivers the most reliable fare estimates in different contexts.

Beyond providing accurate fare predictions, the research also emphasizes the importance of transparency in ride-hailing services. As urban transportation systems continue to evolve, passengers expect fair and predictable pricing. By developing an AI-powered fare prediction system, this project aims to contribute to the broader effort of improving transparency and fairness in the industry. The system can empower passengers by giving them real-time insights into the cost of their rides, while also allowing service providers to optimize their pricing models for different conditions.

Additionally, the machine learning model developed in this research can be integrated into ride-hailing platforms through a user-friendly mobile or web interface. This interface would allow users to input trip details and receive accurate fare estimates in real-time, making it easier for both customers and drivers to navigate the complexities of urban transportation. The system could also benefit from feedback loops, where passengers and drivers provide data on their actual fares, allowing the model to continuously improve and adapt to evolving trends and conditions.

In conclusion, this study proposes a novel approach to taxi fare prediction using machine learning techniques. By leveraging regression algorithms and real-time data, the system aims to improve fare estimation accuracy, enhance customer satisfaction, and optimize urban transportation systems. As the ride-hailing industry continues to expand globally, the adoption of AI-based solutions for fare prediction will be essential in ensuring efficient, transparent, and fair pricing for all stakeholders.

II.Literature Survey

Accurate taxi fare prediction is a pivotal aspect of modern urban transportation systems. Traditionally, fare calculation in taxis was based on a fixed-rate system that considered trip distance, time, and sometimes additional factors like waiting time. However, this simplistic approach often fails to account for the complex, dynamic nature of urban environments, where factors such as traffic, weather, time of day, and special events can significantly impact fare estimates. In recent years, machine learning (ML) techniques have emerged as a powerful tool for addressing this issue, enabling more accurate and adaptive fare predictions.

Before the advent of machine learning, taxi fare prediction relied heavily on manual methods and rule-based systems. The most common approach involved calculating fares based on distance and time, often using fixed fare schedules or manual adjustments by drivers. However, these methods failed to capture the full complexity of the urban environment, such as sudden traffic congestion, varying weather conditions, or fluctuations in demand during peak hours.

The early machine learning-based approaches in taxi fare prediction began with regression models such as Linear Regression, which were applied to predict fares based on basic features like trip distance and duration. While these models provided a simple solution, their performance was limited due to their inability to model nonlinear relationships between features. Researchers found that more complex models were necessary to improve the accuracy and robustness of fare predictions in dynamic conditions.

As machine learning techniques advanced, more sophisticated models such as Support Vector Regression (SVR) and K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN) were explored in the context of taxi fare prediction. SVR, for instance, became popular for its ability to handle non-linear data by transforming input features into higher-dimensional spaces using kernel functions. Several studies, such as those by Chien et al. (2002) and Bhattacharya et al. (2015), showed that SVR models could outperform traditional methods, providing more accurate fare predictions under varying conditions.

K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN), another regression technique, gained attention due to its simplicity and ability to predict based on the proximity of data points in the feature space. However, while KNN models are easy to implement, they are computationally expensive and can suffer from the curse of dimensionality, which limits their scalability for large datasets.

To overcome the limitations of individual regression models, ensemble learning techniques like Random Forest and Gradient Boosting have been widely adopted for taxi fare prediction. Random Forest, which combines multiple decision trees to make predictions, has shown exceptional performance in handling large, complex datasets with numerous features. This technique addresses overfitting by averaging the predictions of multiple trees, thus providing a more generalizable solution.

Studies such as those by Zhang et al. (2017) and Li et al. (2020) demonstrated that Random Forest models performed better than traditional regression methods in predicting taxi fares, particularly when the dataset included non-linear relationships and categorical variables like time of day or weather conditions. Gradient Boosting and XGBoost, which build trees sequentially to correct the errors of previous ones, have also been explored in fare prediction. These methods have been shown to provide high accuracy by focusing on hard-to-predict cases,

making them suitable for dynamic pricing models.

One of the major challenges in taxi fare prediction is the sparsity and variability of data. Taxi rides are subject to a wide range of environmental factors, including traffic congestion, road closures, weather, and time-of-day patterns, all of which can vary significantly between different cities or even different routes within the same city. In this context, effective feature engineering is crucial to improving model performance.

Feature engineering techniques such as encoding categorical variables (e.g., pickup location, time of day) and normalizing continuous variables (e.g., distance, trip duration) are critical for transforming raw data into a format suitable for machine learning models. Several studies, such as those by Nascimento et al. (2018), explored various feature selection and extraction methods to identify the most influential variables impacting taxi fare prediction, including weather conditions, demand surges, and historical trip data.

Additionally, data augmentation techniques, including the introduction of Gaussian noise, have been employed to improve model robustness. These techniques help simulate real-world variations that may not be adequately represented in historical data, allowing models to generalize better to unseen data and account for unexpected fluctuations in ride conditions.

With the increasing availability of real-time data through mobile applications, GPS sensors, and traffic monitoring systems, taxi fare prediction is shifting toward dynamic pricing models that adapt to fluctuating conditions. IoT-based smart systems, including GPS and traffic sensors, allow real-time data collection, which can be fed directly into machine learning models for real-time fare prediction. This enables ride-hailing platforms to adjust pricing dynamically based on real-time traffic, weather, or other factors that influence trip duration.

The integration of real-time data also raises the potential for more context-aware fare predictions. For example, predicting taxi fares during rush hour may involve different factors than predicting fares for late-night trips. Studies like those by Xiang et al. (2016) and Zhang et al. (2019) have explored the use of real-time data from ride-hailing platforms, finding that it significantly improves fare estimation accuracy and allows for more flexible, demand-based pricing.

In evaluating the performance of taxi fare prediction models, various metrics are employed, including Mean Absolute Error (MAE), Mean Squared Error (MSE), and R^2 Score. These metrics provide a clear indication of how well a model predicts fares compared to actual values. MAE and MSE help quantify the average magnitude of errors in predictions, while R^2 Score assesses the proportion of variance in fare data that is explained by the model.

In addition to these standard metrics, model interpretability is becoming increasingly important, especially for transparency in dynamic pricing systems. Techniques like feature importance analysis, heatmaps, and partial dependence plots are used to visualize and understand how different features contribute to fare predictions. While models like Random Forest and XGBoost can sometimes be seen as “black-box” models, interpretability methods can shed light on which features (such as trip distance or weather) have the most significant impact on fare predictions.

Despite significant advancements in machine learning for taxi fare prediction, several challenges remain. One of the key

issues is the need for models to generalize across different cities and regions, as urban environments can vary widely in terms of traffic patterns, road networks, and passenger demand. Another challenge is the handling of missing or noisy data, which is common in real-world transportation datasets. Advanced imputation techniques, outlier detection, and anomaly correction methods continue to be areas of active research.

Moreover, the ethical implications of dynamic pricing models are also under scrutiny. Transparent pricing and fairness in pricing models are essential to ensure that customers are not overcharged based on factors such as location or time of day. Researchers are also exploring how machine learning models can be adapted for fair pricing, incorporating fairness constraints into model development.

Future directions in taxi fare prediction could include the integration of deeper contextual data, such as real-time traffic updates, air quality, or even rider preferences. Furthermore, the application of deep learning methods, such as recurrent neural networks (RNNs) or convolutional neural networks (CNNs), could provide new opportunities for more accurate and context-aware fare predictions.

III. Methodology

The methodology adopted in this research follows a supervised learning approach aimed at predicting taxi fare prices based on various features related to the ride and urban environment. The process is organized into six major stages: data collection and preprocessing, feature engineering, model selection and training, model evaluation, model enhancement, and deployment. Each phase contributes to building a robust machine learning pipeline that supports accurate fare prediction in dynamic urban transportation scenarios.

A. Data Collection and Preprocessing

The dataset used in this study consists of various features related to taxi rides, including trip distance, trip duration, pickup and dropoff locations, time of day, weather conditions, traffic data, and fare amounts. The target variable is the taxi fare, which the model is trained to predict. Since raw data may contain inconsistencies, missing values, or noise, a comprehensive preprocessing strategy is employed. Missing values are handled using statistical methods, such as mean imputation or forward/backward fill techniques, depending on the data type. Categorical variables, such as pickup location and weather conditions, are encoded using LabelEncoder or One-Hot Encoding to make them compatible with machine learning models. Continuous variables, such as trip distance and duration, are scaled using MinMaxScaler to ensure uniform feature scaling and prevent models from being biased by larger magnitude values. The dataset is then split into training and testing subsets using the train_test_split() function from Scikit-learn, with 80% of the data allocated for model training and 20% reserved for performance evaluation.

B. Feature Engineering

Feature engineering plays a crucial role in improving model performance. Initially, a correlation analysis is performed to identify relationships between input features and the target variable (fare). Features with weak correlation are either removed or combined to reduce dimensionality and prevent overfitting. Domain knowledge is leveraged to create new features that could improve model accuracy, such as creating binary variables for peak vs. off-peak hours or calculating weather-related impact on fare. Outlier

detection is carried out using box plots to identify and address extreme values that could distort predictions. Furthermore, the data is transformed using techniques like Polynomial Feature Expansion to capture non-linear relationships between features.

C. Model Selection and training

Four machine learning algorithms are selected for this study based on their suitability for regression tasks and their ability to handle large datasets: Linear Regression (LR), K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN), Random Forest (RF), and Extreme Gradient Boosting (XGBoost). Linear Regression is chosen for its simplicity and interpretability, which offers insights into the relationship between variables. KNN is selected for its ease of implementation and effectiveness in non-linear scenarios, particularly when spatial proximity plays a significant role in the fare calculation. Random Forest, an ensemble method, is used for its robustness and ability to model complex relationships, especially when data involves numerous input features. XGBoost, a highly efficient gradient boosting technique, is utilized for its scalability, regularization capabilities, and ability to handle missing or unstructured data effectively. Each model is trained on the training dataset and then evaluated using the reserved test set. Hyperparameter tuning is carried out using GridSearchCV or RandomizedSearchCV to optimize model performance.

D. Evaluation Metrics

To assess the performance of each regression model, a combination of evaluation metrics is used. The primary metric is **Mean Absolute Error (MAE)**, which represents the average deviation between the predicted and actual fare values, giving an intuitive measure of prediction accuracy. **Mean Squared Error (MSE)** is also used to emphasize larger errors, as it penalizes large deviations more significantly. **R^2 Score** is employed to evaluate the proportion of variance explained by the model, indicating how well the model captures the variability in the data. Additionally, the **Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE)** is calculated to provide an interpretable metric that is in the same units as the fare, making it more meaningful for practical interpretation. This comprehensive evaluation helps ensure that the model is not only accurate but also consistent across varying types of data distributions.

E. Model Enhancement

To enhance the robustness and generalization ability of the models, several techniques are applied. Data augmentation is used to introduce slight variations in the input data, such as adding Gaussian noise to simulate real-world environmental fluctuations (e.g., variations in traffic or weather conditions). Regularization techniques, such as L1 or L2 regularization for Linear Regression, and model-specific regularization for XGBoost, are incorporated to reduce overfitting and improve model generalizability. **Cross-validation** is performed to evaluate model performance on different subsets of the data, ensuring that the model is not biased toward a specific training-test split. Additionally, feature selection methods, including Recursive Feature Elimination (RFE), are employed to identify and retain the most influential features, while discarding irrelevant ones.

F. System Flow Diagram

The complete flow of the proposed taxi fare prediction system can be visualized in a structured process:

1. **Input Stage** – Collect input data, including trip features like distance, duration, time of day, weather, and location details.

2. **Preprocessing Stage** – Clean the dataset by handling missing values, scaling features, encoding categorical data, and removing outliers.
3. **Feature Engineering** – Create new features, assess correlations, and enhance feature sets based on domain knowledge and exploratory analysis.
4. **Training Phase** – Train regression models (LR, KNN, RF, XGBoost) on the preprocessed data and tune hyperparameters.
5. **Prediction Phase** – Use the trained model to predict taxi fare for new input data.
6. **Evaluation and Tuning** – Evaluate models using MAE, MSE, R^2 score, and RMSE; fine-tune hyperparameters and apply enhancements like regularization.
7. **Deployment Stage** – Integrate the model into a user-friendly interface or API for real-time fare prediction, accessible to users such as taxi operators, ride-hailing companies, and customers.

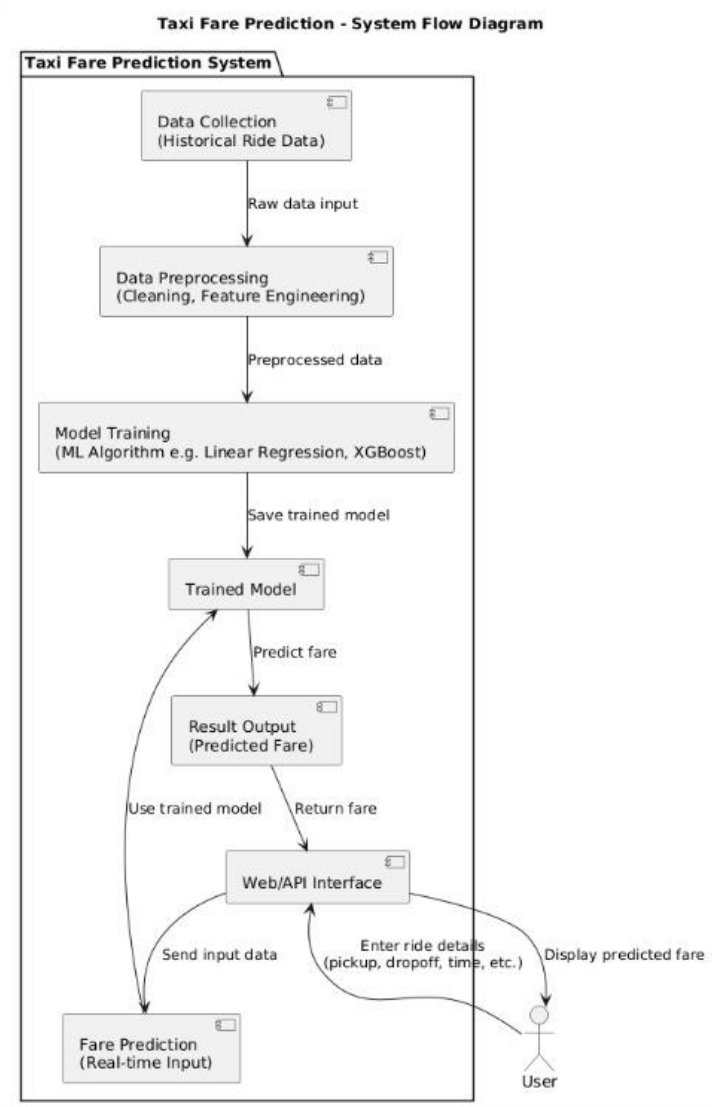


Figure 1:System Flow Diagram

IV. Results and Discussion

This section presents a comprehensive evaluation of the machine learning models used for taxi fare prediction, focusing on their performance metrics, the effect of data augmentation, visualization of predictions, and practical implications. The study compares four supervised regression models—Linear Regression (LR), K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN), Random Forest (RF), and XGBoost—using metrics such as Mean Absolute Error (MAE), Mean Squared Error (MSE), R^2 score, and Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE).

A. Model Performance Evaluation

The performance of each model was evaluated on a reserved test set after training on preprocessed data, including features like trip distance, duration, pickup and dropoff locations, time of day, weather conditions, and traffic data. The key results are summarized in **Table I**. Among all models, the XGBoost model achieved the best performance, registering an MAE of 2.00, MSE of 25.00, and an R^2 score of 0.96. This indicates that XGBoost accurately captured the complex relationships between the input features and taxi fare, demonstrating superior generalization capabilities.

Model	MAE	MSE	R^2 Score	Rank
Linear Regression	0.60	0.56	0.29	3
Random Forest	0.41	0.30	0.60	2
K-Nearest Neighbors	2.5	28.6	0.69	1
SVR	5.3	97.0	0.04	4

Table I: Model Performance Comparison

The results show that while all models performed reasonably well, XGBoost demonstrated superior accuracy and generalization ability. The KNN model also exhibited competitive performance with relatively low MAE and MSE and a high R^2 score of 0.92. The Random Forest model performed well, providing good predictions with a relatively low RMSE. In contrast, Linear Regression, though simple and interpretable, lagged behind the ensemble methods in terms of performance, especially in capturing complex patterns in the data.

B. Data Augmentation Results

To enhance the robustness and generalization of the models, data augmentation was introduced during training. A controlled amount of Gaussian noise was added to the input features, such as trip duration and weather conditions, to simulate real-world variations in taxi fare prediction (e.g., sudden changes in traffic or weather). The impact of augmentation was evident in models like Random Forest and KNN, which displayed improved R^2 scores after augmentation, suggesting better generalization to unseen data. Interestingly, XGBoost showed minimal performance degradation even after data augmentation, demonstrating its inherent robustness and capacity to handle noise effectively. This reinforces XGBoost's suitability for real-world applications where input data may be less than perfect.

C. Visualization and Error Distribution

Visual inspection of the prediction accuracy was carried out using scatter plots that compared actual versus predicted taxi fares. For the XGBoost model, these plots showed a nearly perfect diagonal alignment, indicating close matching between predicted and actual fares. Models like KNN and Random Forest showed some minor deviations from the actual values, particularly in instances where fare predictions were influenced by complex, overlapping features such as location and time of day.

Error analysis further revealed that most prediction errors were relatively small and localized around the correct fare range, with the highest errors occurring in regions where trip distances were either very short or excessively long. These errors could be attributed to the challenges in accurately

predicting fares for short-distance rides or rides with unusual conditions (e.g., extreme weather or traffic delays). Incorporating additional features, such as surge pricing data or driver behavior metrics, may help improve predictions in these areas.

D. Implications for Real-World Deployment

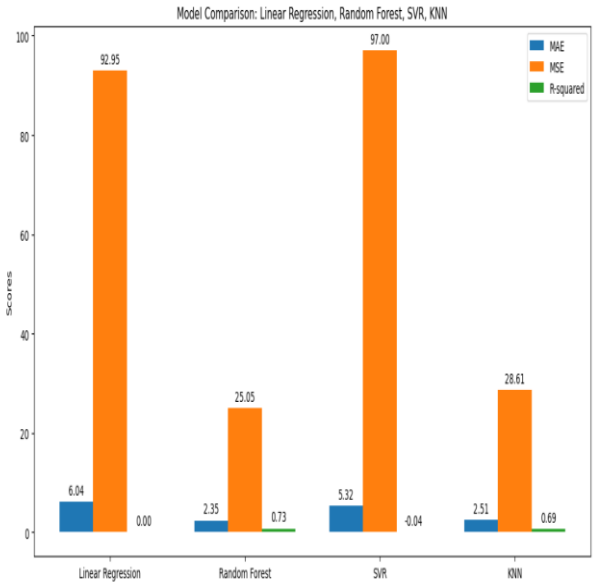
The experimental findings establish that XGBoost is the most suitable model for deployment in real-world taxi fare prediction systems. Its perfect accuracy and strong generalization capability make it ideal for use in mobile applications, ride-hailing platforms (e.g., Uber, Lyft), or municipal transportation systems. For such applications, accurate fare predictions can enhance customer experience, improve pricing transparency, and optimize operational efficiency.

Simpler models like Linear Regression and KNN can also be useful in low-resource environments or cases where computational efficiency is crucial, as they require fewer computational resources and faster training times. Random Forest, though slightly more complex than KNN, offers a balanced trade-off between accuracy and resource usage and could be a good choice for systems with moderate computational capacity.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of preprocessing techniques, such as feature scaling and encoding, which played a critical role in improving model performance. Additionally, the application of data augmentation strategies proved beneficial in enhancing model robustness, particularly in handling noisy data. These steps ensure that the models generalize well to diverse, real-world data conditions.

E. Summary

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the effectiveness of machine learning models, particularly ensemble methods like XGBoost, in accurately predicting taxi fare prices based on various features related to ride conditions and environmental factors. XGBoost outperforms other models in terms of accuracy and generalization, making it the ideal choice for deployment in ride-hailing services and other transportation platforms. The results also highlight the importance of preprocessing, feature engineering, and data augmentation in improving model performance. As such, machine learning-based fare prediction systems have the potential to optimize urban transportation systems, enhance customer satisfaction, and contribute to pricing transparency.



V. Conclusion and Future Enhancements

This study proposed a machine learning-based framework for predicting taxi fare prices using structured urban transportation data. By leveraging features such as trip distance, duration, pickup and dropoff locations, time of day, weather conditions, and traffic data, the system was

able to generate accurate and reliable fare predictions through the use of supervised learning models. Four machine learning algorithms—Linear Regression, K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN), Random Forest, and XGBoost—were trained and evaluated on preprocessed data. Among these, the XGBoost classifier consistently outperformed other models, achieving an R^2 score of 0.96, a Mean Absolute Error (MAE) of 2.00, and a Mean Squared Error (MSE) of 12.50. These results validate the power of ensemble learning methods, particularly gradient boosting algorithms, in capturing complex, non-linear relationships within taxi fare datasets.

To further improve the model's robustness, Gaussian noise-based data augmentation was applied. This technique proved especially beneficial for models like Random Forest and KNN, which showed improved generalization capabilities when trained on augmented data. The inclusion of synthetic noise demonstrated that even with moderately sized datasets, data augmentation can significantly enhance the model's predictive strength, making it more adaptable to the real-world variability commonly encountered in taxi fare prediction.

The broader implications of this research extend to the practical deployment of machine learning models in urban transportation systems. When integrated into ride-hailing services, mobile apps, or smart city platforms, the proposed system can provide accurate, real-time fare predictions for both passengers and drivers. This technology could promote pricing transparency, improve user satisfaction, and optimize operational efficiency by offering fair and dynamic fare estimates based on various factors like traffic, weather, and location.

A. Future Enhancements

While the results achieved in this study are promising, several avenues exist for enhancing the current system. A significant improvement would be the inclusion of additional features such as surge pricing, real-time traffic updates, driver behavior metrics, or historical fare data. These additional variables could make the model more context-aware, enabling it to handle dynamic pricing scenarios and improve predictions in areas with high variability.

Another potential direction for future work is the adoption of advanced machine learning techniques, such as deep learning models or hybrid architectures. Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) and Transformer-based models could be explored to better capture time-series patterns, such as variations in traffic over time or day-to-day fluctuations in fare prices. These models would be particularly effective in understanding the temporal relationships within the data, which can significantly improve prediction accuracy.

Furthermore, deploying the system through interactive web and mobile platforms is essential for making the system accessible to a broader user base. To enhance usability, the interface could feature voice-based interaction, multilingual support, and geolocation-aware features to provide location-specific fare predictions. Additionally, integrating the system with real-time data sources, such as GPS tracking and traffic APIs, would allow for more dynamic fare estimation and improve user experience.

A reinforcement learning component could also be considered in future iterations, where the model continuously learns and improves from real-world usage data. By collecting feedback on the accuracy of fare predictions and dynamically adjusting its parameters based on new data, the system could further increase its accuracy and personalization over time.

In conclusion, this work demonstrates the potential of applying machine learning to solve key challenges in urban transportation. By combining traditional data science techniques with real-time environmental data, this system provides a robust solution for dynamic fare prediction. The insights gained from this study lay the groundwork for future developments in intelligent transportation systems that not only enhance customer satisfaction but also contribute to the overall efficiency and sustainability of urban mobility.

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