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To Study the Impact of Online Platforms on Consumers of Food Delivery Market with Special Reference to Uttar Pradesh.

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Abstract
Online food delivery has become extremely popular in India, and represents a market, which although in its infancy, runs into billions. The penetrations of internet technology, mainly mobile phones, and vast use of app-based services have given impetus to the online food delivery services in India. There has been some research into the use of online food delivery platforms, but mainly the comparisons between online delivery and in-house dining. This research looked into the use of online platforms for food delivery in Uttar Pradesh, investigating the factors that impact the choice of online platforms, and customer satisfaction. Underpinned by the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), the research adopted a quantitative approach, surveying 356 users who were frequent users of at least one of the major online food delivery platforms. The research found evidence for a number of factors such as on-time delivery and discounts as guiding users' choices when selecting food delivery platforms. Swiggy and Zomato were found to be the undisputed leaders in the field, with over 90 % of the sample units favouring either of the two platforms.
Keywords: Online food delivery platforms, Customer satisfaction with food delivery, On-time food delivery, UTAUT

Introduction

The concept of food delivery to homes and offices in India is over 200 years old. It started in 1890, under the British empire, with dabbawalla, a concept where cycle-borne men would carry food orders across Mumbai (Thistle Thoughts, 2023). With revenue running in a few thousands in the 19th century, today, it is projected to reach USD 43 billion by the end of 2024 (Online Food Delivery–India, 2024). Before the introduction of internet, food delivery services mainly operated over the phone, with restaurants accepting orders on calls, and delivering through in-house staff. With internet having become a household name, and smartphones available in almost every household, online food delivery services have picked up like never before (Suhartanto, Helmi, Ali, Tan, Sjahroeddin, &Kusdibyo, 2019).

While it is true that technology has been the major factor responsible for this increase in online food delivery, a number of personal and social factors such as long-working hours, staying away from family, and odd work hours have also contributed to the popularity. Additionally, rise in the number of working women, and college going students who are living away from their families are also contributing factors (Katoch& Sidhu, 2021). While many players have tried their hands in this promising Indian market, Swiggy and Zomato are the two key names that control over 80 % of the business (Agarwal, 2023).

Since it is a lucrative business, many players in the past have tried to enter the field, and likely to continue in the future too. However, customer service, mainly in the form of quick delivery, competitive delivery charges and food quality, has and in the future too, set to decide the success and failure of new entrants. The possible entry of foreign players with huge capital and modern technology poses a threat to the existing Indian enterprises. These foreign entities with superior technology at their disposal and capital influx may be in a position to offer better services such as improved ordering experience and reduced delivery times, thereby forcing their Indian counterparts to match the standards, which in many instances, might not be easy.

Customer retention is one aspect, which is critical to the performance and competitive edge that most firms desire. In the online food delivery industry, they must stay agile and relevant in the long run. The ability to retain customers is largely

dependent upon customer satisfaction, which is attained through good ordering experience and quick order delivery. Users have expectations with both efforts put in by the delivery service partner and the actual performance delivery. Any significant deviation between the expectation and the actual performance is likely to result in low confidence in the delivery partner, in the mind of the user.

Similarly, social influence in the form of recommendations and/or reviews from the social group such as friends and peersis also likely to exert a strong influence on users. Good positive word of mouth tends to do a better job than some other traditional and expensive forms of advertisement. When selecting an online food delivery service from the available options, customers are also influenced by the variety that one provides. Many customers have been found to be ready to pay even more if there are plenty of food choices available (Shankar, Jebarajakirthy, Nayal, Maseeh,Kumar, & Sivapalan, 2022). Online reviews also tend to play an important part in the choice of online food delivery service. Modern customers are technology savvy, and have internet readily available on devices such as computers and mobile phones. They find it easier to check for information online rather than contacting friends and family, for their views on the choice of online food delivery options. Online reviews come in handy when they come from a reputed third party than in-house reviews which are posted on own website or social media pages (Alalwan, 2020).

Literature Review

Existing scholarship in relevant fields such as online food delivery, customer satisfaction issues with restaurants and mobile applications for online delivery were studied to look for research gaps that could be filled with this study. This research was underpinned by the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology(UTAUT), which has been used by researchers in the past, to explain the technology-driven factors behind people's choices when there are alternatives available (AbuShanab& Pearson, 2007).This theory has been quite popular among researchers investigating the role of mobile technologies for problem-solving (e. g., Arfi, Nasr, Khvatova, &Zaied, 2021; Alghazi, Kamsin, Almaiah, Wong, &Shuib, 2021; de Luna, Liébana-Cabanillas, Sánchez-Fernández, & Munoz-Leiva, 2019).

While a number of studies around the world have looked into the consumers' perspectives on online food delivery services (e. g.,Alrwashdeh, Emeagwali, &Aljuhmani, 2019; Aldaihani& Ali, 2018;Almohaimmeed, 2017), these are mainly related to just a select few reasons why they order online, and it is mainly related to ease of time and lifestyles. There is a need for a study that investigates the issue of customer satisfaction and the reasons why customers choose a particular service provider over others, especially in the Indian scenario.

Katoch and Sidhu (2021), in a study, found evidence that time was a critical factor in customer satisfaction. Their study found evidence that customers expected online food orders to be delivered in under 20 minutes; anything above it resulted in dissatisfaction, consequentially customers looking for other available options. While this study is one of the few ones looking into the Indian industry, it only investigated the time factor, and so, limited in scope. In a similar study, Kapoor and Vij (2018) found evidence that customers were likely to prefer those mobile apps that provided information visually, which is pictures of food or dishes over text-based information. While this study shed important light on the issue of customers' preference for service providers, just like the work of Katoch and Sidhu (2021), it was limited to just one factor.

Panse, Rastogi, Sharma, and Dorji(2019) in a research found evidence that convenience, in the form of being able to order online rather than having to physically visit a restaurant, was an important factor that led to people buying food online. While this study, just like the other studies quoted above, provides insights into the Indian scenario, it makes no attempt to examine the factors that lead to people choosing one service provider over another. In a similar study, Suhartanto,Ali, Tan, Sjahroeddin, and Kusdibyo (2019) found evidence that the quality of food ordered online was the reason why people ordered online. While this study reveals an important factor, it makes no attempt to discover why people choose one platform over another.

Sethu and Saini (2016) in a study investigated the major factors that guided young students to order food online. They found evidence that college-goers were ordering food mainly during exam time, so as to save time, which they could utilise towards studies. They also found that the students were in the habit of preferring mobile applications over websites as those were convenient to use. In a similar study, Hong (2016) examined the use of online food delivery services by working professionals, and found that it was mainly their busy schedule that left them with hardly any time to cook for themselves. As a result, they found online platforms convenient to use for food.

Research Objectives

On the basis of the literature review, the following research objectives were formulated:

- To investigate the impact of social influence on users 'intention to use online food delivery.
- To identify factors contributing towards customer satisfaction when ordering food online.

A total of six hypotheses, along with the null hypotheses, listed below, were designed to investigate these ROs:

$H_0$1: There is no relationship between social influence and customers' intentions to use online food delivery services.

$H_1$1: There exists a relationship between social influence and customers' intentions to use online food delivery services.

$H_0$2: There is no significant impact of visual food presentation (on the app) on customer satisfaction with the online food delivery services.

$H_1$2: There is no significant impact of visual food presentation (on the app) on customer satisfaction with the online food delivery services.

$H_0$3: There is no significant impact of customer services performance on customer satisfaction with the online food delivery services.

$H_1$3: There is a significant impact of customer services performance on customer satisfaction with the online food delivery services.

$H_0$4: There is no relation between delivery person's behaviour and customer satisfaction with the online food delivery.

$H_1$4: There is a relation between delivery person's behaviour and customer satisfaction with the online food delivery.

$H_0$5: The impact of secure online transactions on customer satisfaction with the online food delivery services is not significant.

$H_1$5: The impact of secure online transactions on customer satisfaction with the online food delivery services is significant.

$H_0$6: There is no relationship between users' payment preference and customer satisfaction with the online food delivery.

$H_1$6: There is a relationship between users' payment preference and customer satisfaction with the online food delivery.

Methods and Measures

The study was conducted through a survey on 356 users of online food delivery services, those who had ordered food at least once in the last one month. The survey was randomly sent out to a total of 1900 individuals, to study a number of facets related to online food delivery such as performance expectations and factors affecting the choice of online delivery services. A total of 377 responses were received, out of which, 21 surveys were unusable due to either incomplete survey or multiple options ticked/selected. Only 356 surveys were usable. A response rate of about 19 % was achieved.

Measures

A total of nine measures were used to investigate the impact of online platforms on consumers of food delivery market. Additionally, a number of standard demographic details were also recorded. These included a range of characteristics such as age group, gender, educational qualification, marital status, income, and online shopping experience.

Performance Expectancy was measured by the performance perception scale (Alawan, 2020) (4 items, on a five-point Likert scale, e.g., "Online food delivery services help me to accomplish tasks more quickly"; $\alpha = 0.82$). *Effort Expectancy* was measured by Quality Expectation scale (Alawan, 2020) (4 items, on a five-point Likert scale, e.g., "My interaction with online food delivery services is clear and understandable"; $\alpha = 0.87$). *Facilitating Conditions* was measured by Helping Conditions scale (Cheng, Chang, & Chen, 2021) (4 items, on a five-point Likert scale, e.g., "I have the knowledge necessary to use online food delivery services"; $\alpha = 0.89$).

Social Influence was measured by Societal Impact scale (Alawan, 2020) (3 items, on a five-point Likert scale, e.g., "People who influence my behaviour think I should use online food delivery services"; $\alpha = 0.88$). *Visual elements* was measured by Online Performance scale (Belarmino, Raab, Tang, & Han, 2021) (3 items, on a five-point Likert scale, e.g., "Pictures of food items help me choose better"; $\alpha = 0.84$).*Customer services* was measured by Services Criterion scale (Namin, 2017) (3 items, on a five-point Likert scale, e.g., "Quick response from agents makes me happy"; $\alpha = 0.88$).

Delivery person's behaviour was measured by Purchase Motivation scale (Alawan, 2020) (3 items, on a five-point Likert scale, e.g., "I am satisfied by the delivery agent's behaviour"; $\alpha = 0.85$). *Secure online transactions* was measured by Payment security scale (Namin, 2017) (3 items, on a five-point Likert scale, e.g., "I am concerned about online payments when ordering food online"; $\alpha = 0.82$).*Payment preference* was measured by Payment options scale (Belarmino, Raab, Tang, & Han, 2021) (3 items, on a five-point Likert scale, e.g., "I prefer variety of payment options when ordering"; $\alpha = 0.89$).

Data Analysis

Initially, correlation ships between the nine constructs were calculated followed by scale validity and reliability tests, using Cronbach's Alpha. Next, data from the survey administration were used to test the hypotheses. In the analysis of the survey, mean figures for each section were calculated; along with the SD. One-sample *t-test* was conducted to test the hypotheses.

Construct Correlationships

These were calculated and majority of the correlation ships were found to be significant at $p < .01$ and $p < .05$. The correlation ships were all positive, and below .50. Majority were between .10 and .20 (see Table 1). Next, construct validity and reliability were calculated.

Table 1

Construct Correlationships

		M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Performance expectancy	2.17	.21	1								
2	Effort expectancy	1.76	.63	.16**	1							
3	Facilitating Conditions	3.47	.44	.21**	.17**	1						
4	Social influence	2.67	.38	.18**	.19**	.14*	1					
5	Visual elements	3.18	.76	.19**	.25**	.34**	.22	1				
6	Customer services	1.87	.30	.24**	.33**	.27**	.04	.19**	1			
7	Delivery person behaviour	2.56	.57	.31*	.19	.11*	.06	.14*	.13*	1		
8	Secure online transactions	2.01	.62	.15*	.14	.19*	.20	.18**	.30**	.10*	1	
9	Payment preference	2.32	.50	.22*	.17	.28**	.11*	.24**	.31**	.14*	.24**	1

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire was designed to investigate the impact of online platforms on consumers of food delivery market with special reference to Uttar Pradesh. Although it was adapted from existing scales, which were originally tested, reliability and validity tests were carried out for all the constructs, to establish the suitability of the scale for this study. Validity helps establish whether the item measures what is supposed to. Through various review processes discussed earlier and evaluation by the pilot study participants, content validity was established. Criterion validity helps establish the extent to which the instrument measures what it is supposed to, and it can be measured by comparing the results against other existing procedures (DeVellis, 1991; Lee, 1999). Construct validity establishes whether a construct measures what it is purported to (Taherdoost, 2016), and it focuses on the role of theory (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996). Since hypothesis was tested within the questionnaire, the instrument demonstrates construct validity too.

Reliability of an instrument is the measure of its stability, and consistency (Taber, 2018) in achieving same results when repeat measurements are made under constant conditions (Lee, 1999). According to Nunnally (1978), reliability of a scale or construct refers to the repeatability of the measurement. A construct or scale demonstrating high repeatability is said to be highly reliable. When the individual items in a scale are found to demonstrate the measuring of the same construct, the scale is demonstrative of high internal consistency (Huck, 2007).

Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha (Cronbach &Meehl, 1955) is a popular reliability test tool that researchers use to establish the suitability or fitness of scales (both original and adapted) for the work being undertaken (Taber, 2018). It has been established as one of the most important statistics towards creating and testing scales (Cortina, 1993). Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach &Meehl, 1955) was used to test the reliability of the items (see Table 2). It is a widely used measure

(DeVellis, 1991), and has been utilised regularly towards questionnaire validation (e.g., Landers & Callan, 2014; Ragu-Nathan, Tarafdar, Ragu-Nathan, & Tu, 2008; Bock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005).

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha

	Original Cronbach	Calculated Cronbach
Performance expectancy	.82	.79
Effort expectancy	.87	.74
Facilitating Conditions	.89	.88
Social influence	.88	.79
Visual elements	.84	.71
Customer services	.88	.72
Delivery person's behaviour	.85	.76
Secure online transactions	.82	.81
Payment preference	.89	.76

As is evident from the table, the calculated Cronbach's alpha for all the constructs was above the threshold of .70, suggesting good reliability.For two of the constructs, *facilitating conditions*and*secure online transactions,*the values were above .8, suggesting very good reliability.

Demographics

Majority of the respondents were below 50, with the major group being 30-40, represented by 32 %, closely followed by the 20-30 age-group. The below 20 age group represented 19 % of the sample, and the 40-50 age-group comprised 12 % of the sample. The 50-60 and above 60 age-groups represented about 12 % of the sample. Overall, the sample was a good representative of the age demographics, with all age-groups being represented. The sample was a good representative of the gender demographic. It was represented by 56 % males and 44 % females. While the respondents had the option 'prefer not to say' in the survey, nobody chose that option. In the marital status category, 58 % of the respondents were single and 42 % married.

In the educational qualification category, the maximum representation was by graduates at 42 %, followed by postgraduates, at 32 %. About 14 % were above postgraduate/doctorate, and 12 % had school education only. In terms of occupation, maximum of 33 % were students, followed by 23 % business owners. Homemakers/housewives represented 19 % of the sample, followed by 18 % salaried individuals and just 7 % unemployed.

In the income category, maximum 25 % reported an income in the INR 30-40K range, followed by 19 % in the INR 10-20K range. The INR 20-30K category was represented by 18 %, and 14 % were in the above 60K range. For the online shopping experience, 32 % of the respondents reported less than a year, followed by 25 % with less than a year experience. Next were those with above 4 years of experience at 18 %, followed by 12 % with 3-4 years of experience. In the frequency of usage of online food delivery services category, maximum 44 % said they ordered food 2-3 times a week, followed by 19 % who ordered it 2-3 times a week. Those who ordered it multiple times a day were represented by 14 %, followed by 12 % who ordered it once a week.

For the average per order value variable, majority of the respondents at 44 % were in the INR 101-500 range, followed by 25 % in the INR 501-1000 category. Next, 18 % were in the above 1000 category, followed by 14 % in the less than 100 category. In the mode of ordering food category, a very high 74 % of the respondents said they used mobile app to order food. Only 14 % and 12 % said they used restaurant websites and phone respectively. For the last variable, preferred online platform, majority of the respondents said they used Swiggy (49 %) or Zomato (40 %). This was followed by 6 % of Uber Eats users, 3 % of Food Panda users, and only at 2 % who preferred Dunzo.

Likert scale data was compiled, and mean scores for each construct were calculated. A one sample *T*-test was conducted to test the hypotheses. As discussed earlier, the survey was based on a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 representing 'Strongly Agree', 1 representing 'Strongly Disagree', and 3 denoting 'Neutral', which shows indifferent to the question being asked. When means are calculated for each construct, this value of 3 is indicative of an indifferent attitude towards the construct. Table 3 summarises the results of the hypotheses test.

Table 3

Hypotheses Results

Construct	**Hypothesis**	**p-value**	**Outcome**
Social influence/ Intentions to use	**$H_0$1:** μ(Intentions to use) = 3	.09	p-value > .05
	$H_1$1: μ(Intentions to use) ≠ 3		Accept H_0
Visual food presentation / Customer satisfaction	**$H_0$2:** μ (Visual food presentation) = 3	.00	p-value < .05
	$H_1$2: μ (Visual food presentation) ≠ 3		Reject H_0
Customer services performance / Customer satisfaction	**$H_0$3:** μ (Customer services performance) = 3	.01	p-value < .05
	$H_1$3: μ (Customer services performance) ≠ 3		Reject H_0
Delivery person's behaviour/Customer satisfaction	**$H_0$4:** μ (Delivery person's behaviour) = 3	.00	p-value < .05
	$H_1$4: μ (Delivery person's behaviour) ≠ 3		Reject H_0
Secure online transactions/ Customer satisfaction	**$H_0$5:** μ (Secure online transactions) = 3	.00	p-value < .05
	$H_1$5: μ (Secure online transactions) ≠ 3		Reject H_0
Payment preference/Customer satisfaction	**$H_0$6:** μ (Payment preference) = 3	.01	p-value < .05
	$H_1$6: μ (Payment preference) ≠ 3		Reject H_0

As is evident from Table3, except H1, the other five hypotheses were accepted. Analysis of the data does not support the first hypothesis (H1) that 'there exists a relationship between social influence and customers' intentions to use online food delivery services.'

Discussion

The findings suggest that social influence in the form of advice or information from one's social group such as peers or friends has no impact on people's online food ordering behavior. These findings are contrary to those of Shankar, Jebarajakirthy, Nayal, Maseeh, Kumar, and Sivapalan (2022), who found evidence for a positive relationship between social impact and online food ordering behaviour. These findings are suggestive that users are not influenced by the societal members in deciding whether or not they should be ordering food online and from where.

There was evidence to support a positive relationship between visual elements and customer satisfaction withthe food delivery service partner. Users were found to be making use of online pictures and videos while deciding on the service partner to choose from the available options. Users were of the view that these pictures helped them get a clear pictureof the available food choices and choose the service partner accordingly. These findings are contrary to those of Katoch and Sidhu (2021), who found that there was no relationship between the two factors.

The study found evidence for a positive relationship between customer services and customer satisfaction. Users were found to be satisfied more with the delivery service partner who offered quick response to their queries, professional advice in terms of available options when something went wrong, and quick refund or adjustment in case of missing/failed orders.

The findings found evidence for a direct relationship between delivery person's behaviour and customer satisfaction. Users were found to be happy with the food delivery services whose agents were polite, respectful, and courteous. Factors such as available until late night, updates on the various stages of order processing such as preparation, packing, dispatch and enroute updates, and in some cases, free or discounted delivery, were all considered integral components of

an agent's performance These findings are different from those of Panse, Rastogi, Sharma, and Dorji (2019), who did not find evidence for any relationship between delivery agent's behaviour and customer satisfaction.
A direct relationship was found between the security of online payments and customer satisfaction. Users were found to be highly concerned about the security of their cards and bank details they were entering during payments. These findings are contrary to those of Kapoor and Vij (2018), who found evidence that customers had an innate feeling that their transactions were secure and therefore, this factor did not affect their choice of a service and the resultant satisfaction. Further, there was evidence for a positive relationship between the availability of payment choices and customer services with online delivery services. Users were found to favour those providers who offered them variety in payment options, mostly those that had cash-on-delivery feature. These findings are different to those of Shankar, Jebarajakirthy, Nayal, Maseeh, Kumar, and Sivapalan (2022), who found that the 'payment options'was not a significant factor affecting customer satisfaction.

Conclusion

This research found evidence for the impact of several factors on customer satisfaction when ordering food online. Users were found to prefer service provider that offered them visual menus with variety of pictures. Variety in payment options and peace of mind in terms of online payment security were also found to have a significant impact, with customers favouring those with cash on delivery option. At the same time, social influence was not found to have any role in customers' intentions to use the online food delivery services. This could imply that customers are more influenced by other systems such as online feedback or reviews than those coming from their social network; through word-of-mouth Behaviour of the delivery agents was also found to have a significant impact on customer satisfaction. This research contributes to literature by offering insights into the major factors affecting customer satisfaction and their intentions to use the platform in the future.

Limitations and directions for future research

This research was limited in scope due to a number of factors listed below, along with possible suggestions for future researchers, to overcome those:

- Due to time and financial constraints, this research was conducted on only 356 units. This might be a small number based on which generalizations could be made for the large state of Uttar Pradesh. Future researchers could possibly conduct research on a much larger sample.
- This research was a quantitative study, based only on surveys. While quantitative research is feasible for a large sample, a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research brings about better generalization. Future researchers could explore the possibility of a mixed methodology involving other methods such as interviews and/or observations.
- This research was based on a single state (Uttar Pradesh). This makes countrywide generalizations difficult. Future researchers could look at the possibility of picking data from other states as well, and possibly comparing.

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