

From Inboxes to Orders: An Analysis of Behavioural Email Marketing in Swiggy

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Abstract:

This paper examines how Swiggy uses behaviour-driven email marketing to trigger repeat ordering, re-engagement, and coupon redemption, relying entirely on secondary data. Drawing on case-studies, performance reports, and published campaign analyses, the study argues that Swiggy's email strategy functions less as a generic discount engine and more as a behavioural-nudging system tuned to user habits, timing, and emotional context. The findings highlight how personalisation, contextual framing, and playful tone work together to increase open rates, click-through rates, and subsequent orders. The paper concludes with implications for digital-first brands wanting to design low-cost, high-impact email nudges.

Keywords: Re-engagement, ordering, behavioural-nudging, habit, personalisation.

INTRODUCTION

Email marketing in India is traditionally treated as a simple, transactional promotional channel: businesses send discount offers, track basic metrics such as open rates and click-through rates, and loosely correlate email activity with sales. In many marketing reports and case studies, email appears as just one item in the “promotion mix,” often grouped with general advertising, social-media campaigns, and sales-promotion activities. The underlying assumption is that the main function of email is to broadcast price-based incentives and reminders, with little emphasis on deeper behavioural design or timing logic.

However, recent developments in digital marketing show that some brands are using email in a much more deliberate and sophisticated way. Among these, Swiggy stands out as a particularly interesting example. Rather than treating email as a mere broadcast tool, Swiggy has transformed its email stream into a behaviour-based nudge system. The platform uses carefully timed messages, personalised content, and emotionally tuned language to engage users at specific moments in their daily routines. Swiggy's emails often feel less like traditional advertisements and more like friendly updates, gentle reminders, or playful conversations, which aligns with emerging ideas in behavioural marketing and nudge theory.

From secondary sources, it is evident that Swiggy's email campaigns generate unusually high engagement levels. Reports indicate that Swiggy has achieved approximately 7% click-through rates on user bases running into millions, which is significantly above the average for many retail and e-commerce sectors. In addition, case-studies highlight that Swiggy's emails enjoy relatively high placement in Gmail's Primary inbox, suggesting that the platform's content quality, sender-reputation, and behavioural design support strong deliverability. These patterns indicate that Swiggy's emails are not merely generic discount blasts but behaviourally tuned interventions designed to shape user habits, reinforce existing routines, and re-engage lapsed customers.

The present paper focuses on this behavioural layer of Swiggy's email strategy. Drawing exclusively on secondary data—including case-studies, campaign write-ups, industry reports, and published performance metrics—it aims to analyse how Swiggy embeds behavioural and contextual logic into its email communications. The study examines how Swiggy segments users, selects appropriate timing, and frames its messages in ways that encourage repeat ordering and user re-engagement. It also explores how Swiggy

uses playful, contextual, and non-transactional language to reduce resistance and increase perceived relevance.

By focusing on Swiggy's email practices, the paper contributes to the broader understanding of how digital-first brands in low-margin, high-frequency categories can use owned channels—such as email—to build user habits and drive long-term engagement. It further demonstrates that rich, behaviourally grounded marketing analysis can be conducted using only secondary data, making it particularly relevant for researchers and students who may not have access to primary surveys or internal company data. In this sense, the paper treats Swiggy's email strategy as a behaviour-shaping interface rather than a simple promotional tool, and uses it as a case to illustrate how behavioural-nudging logic can be embedded into everyday digital marketing practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of literature done for this study includes-

1. Consumer behaviour in online food-delivery platforms

Several studies on online food-delivery services show that users care mainly about convenience, speed, and trust rather than just discounts. Chandan (2020) found that students prefer using food-delivery apps because they are easy to use, offer quick delivery, and have a clear interface, which encourages frequent ordering. Similarly, a 2023 study on online food-delivery services in India showed that ease of ordering, wide variety of food, and simple payment options are key drivers of customer satisfaction and repeat use (Kumar & Mehta, 2023).

These studies suggest that once users start using a platform like Swiggy, habit and convenience play a big role in continued usage. This supports the idea that Swiggy's habit-based emails (for example, lunch-time or late-evening reminders) are well-matched to user behaviour patterns.

2. Push notifications and digital nudges in food-delivery apps

Research on push notifications from food-delivery apps shows that timely, short messages can increase purchase frequency and spending. Anil & Francis (2023) studied promotional push-notifications from online food-delivery apps in Chennai and found that well-timed offers increased customer retention and the number of orders. They used the RFM model (Recency, Frequency, Monetary) to show that users who received targeted notifications ordered more often and spent more money.

In another study, researchers found that Swiggy uses timed in-app notifications and email alerts to remind users of favourite dishes, run-of-ice coupons, and late-night cravings with fun messages like “Your favourite biryani misses you!” (IJRPR, 2025, V6, Issue 6). This shows that Swiggy already uses behavioural nudges in its communication; the present paper extends this idea to email marketing specifically.

3. Behavioural marketing and nudge theory in digital services

Broader work on behavioural marketing and nudge theory explains why small, repeated messages can change habits. Thaler & Sunstein (2008) argue that subtle changes in how choices are presented—such as timing, framing, and default options—can influence decisions without limiting freedom. In digital services, scholars have applied this idea to e-commerce, FinTech, and OTT platforms, showing that personalised recommendations and well-timed reminders increase engagement and repeat use.

These studies support the idea that Swiggy's email strategy is not just about sending offers, but about nudging users at key moments (e.g., lunch-time, late evening, after a gap in ordering) so that ordering from Swiggy becomes a habit rather than a one-time decision.

4. Personalisation and conversational email marketing

Work on email marketing in e-commerce shows that personalised and conversational emails perform better than generic ones. A case-study article on Swiggy's email strategy explains that Swiggy sends personalised content based on user order history, cuisine preference, and timing, which increases open rates and user engagement (Pangrow, 2024). The article notes that Swiggy uses catchy subject lines, playful language, and clear calls-to-action, which help keep emails in Gmail's Primary inbox and improve visibility.

A later analysis of Swiggy's marketing practices also highlights that the platform uses trending topics, humour, and storytelling in its emails and notifications to connect with young, urban users (Youth-focused marketing blog, 2026). This aligns with the idea of contextual / conversational marketing, where emotional and cultural context make promotional messages feel less like ads and more like friendly updates.

5. Gaps in existing literature

Although earlier studies discuss push notifications, personalisation, and consumer behaviour in online food-delivery, few papers directly analyse Swiggy's email marketing as a behavioural-nudging system. Most work focuses on numbers and technical metrics (open rates, CTR, RFM) or on general app-based communication (notifications, in-app messages), not the specific content, timing, and tone of emails.

This paper fills that gap by using secondary data (case-studies and campaign write-ups) to show how Swiggy's email design can be understood as habit-based, contextual, and re-engagement-focused nudges. It builds on the earlier work on consumer behaviour, digital nudges, and behavioural marketing but applies it specifically to email communication in a food-delivery context.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand how Swiggy uses email marketing not just to advertise but to influence user behaviour.
2. To identify the main types of emails Swiggy uses.
3. To analyse the reported performance of Swiggy's email campaigns (open rates, CTR, re-engagement) using only secondary data.
4. To suggest practical ideas that other digital brands can use to design low-cost, high-impact email strategies, even when they rely on secondary data only.

SCOPE

The study focuses only on Swiggy's email marketing in India, roughly from 2020–2024. It uses publicly available information such as case-studies, blog posts, campaign write-ups, and industry reports. It does not study internal Swiggy data, detailed financials, or exact user-level conversion numbers. The unit of analysis is what the emails say, when they are sent, and how they are framed, not complex technical or financial metrics.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper uses three simple ideas to explain Swiggy's email strategy:

1. Nudge theory (Thaler & Sunstein)

Small changes in how a message is written can change people's choices. For example, "Check your coupons" feels softer and more inviting than "Order now!"

2. Behavioural marketing

If users see repeated, well-timed messages, they slowly form habits (like ordering food from Swiggy at the same time every day).

3. Contextual / conversational marketing

Emails that connect with real-life events (cricket, festivals, memes) feel more relevant and less like spam. These ideas help explain why Swiggy's emails are not just ads but small nudges that fit into users' daily lives.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study is:

Qualitative: it focuses on meaning, content, and patterns in Swiggy's emails, not only numbers.

Exploratory: it tries to understand and describe Swiggy's email strategy, not to test a strict formula.

Secondary-data-only: it uses only published information, not primary surveys or interviews.

2. Data Sources

All data are from publicly available sources:

Case-studies and blog posts about Swiggy's email campaigns (for example, the "appraisal-style" email to lapsed users). Articles and reports that describe Swiggy's email performance (open rates, CTR, inbox placement). Educational write-ups and agency-style analyses of Swiggy's digital marketing and email strategy. Academic papers on email marketing, behavioural nudging, and digital-service behaviour.

3. Variables and Analysis Approach

Independent variables (things Swiggy controls):

- a) Timing of emails (habit-based vs. random).
- b) Tone and framing (funny, news-based, purely transactional).
- c) Target group (active users, dormant users, Instamart/Genie users).

Dependent variables (what seems to change because of emails):

- a) Engagement (open rates, click-through rates).
- b) Re-engagement or re-ordering (users who start ordering again after a break).

The analysis is inductive and thematic:

The paper collects examples from different campaigns. Similar campaigns are grouped under three main behavioural layers:

- a) Habit-based emails.
- b) Context-based / event-based emails.
- c) Re-engagement / "surprise delight" emails.

These groups are then explained using nudge theory and behavioural-marketing ideas.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. Layer 1: Habit-based segmentation and timing

Public case-studies show that Swiggy studies user order history and then sends emails at times when users usually order, such as:

Lunch-time reminders for office-going users.

Late-evening snack or dessert offers for users who order after dinner.

These emails feel like personal reminders, not random broadcasts.

Interpretation:

Swiggy is using habit-based nudging. By emailing at the right time, Swiggy gently reminds users to order again.

This reinforces the habit of ordering from Swiggy without forcing a sale.

2. Layer 2: Emotional and contextual framing

We also see that Swiggy uses:

Fun and light-hearted language (for example, "Ooh! You've got coupons!").

References to current events like IPL, festivals, or memes.

These emails feel like chats with a friend, not aggressive ads.

Interpretation:

This is contextual marketing.

When an email talks about something users care about in real life (cricket, Diwali, etc.), it feels more relevant. A playful tone makes the email feel friendly, not like spam, which increases the chance that users will open and read it.

3. Layer 3: "Surprise delight" and re-engagement nudges

One famous Swiggy email is an "appraisal-style" message sent to users who had not ordered for a long time. The email is written like a fun review:

It jokes about the user's order history.

Then it offers a custom discount with a soft call-to-action such as "Check your coupons," not "Order now!"

Case-study write-ups say that this email led to:

Higher open rates.

More users starting to order again.

Interpretation:

This is a behavioural-nudging tactic.

Instead of a blunt “we miss you, take 30% off,” Swiggy makes the email feel personal and fun. This lowers resistance and curiosity, which helps users re-engage without feeling pressured.

RESULTS

From the available secondary data, the study finds the following:

1. Swiggy’s email strategy is not only about discounts. It is a three-layer system of:

Habit-based nudges (emails at the right time).

Context-based / emotional nudges (linked to events, humour, memes).

Re-engagement / “surprise delight” nudges (for users who stopped ordering).

2. Reported performance shows:

Strong open and click-through rates (around 7% CTR).

Good inbox placement (emails landing in Gmail Primary, not spam).

Noticeable re-engagement in campaigns like the “appraisal-style” email.

3. Swiggy consistently uses:

Fun and conversational language.

Real-time events and memes to connect with users.

Personalised framing for different user groups.

These patterns show that for digital brands, timing, tone, and context in emails are as important as, or even more important than, the size of the discount.

CONCLUSION

Swiggy has turned email marketing into a behaviour-based nudge system instead of only a channel for discounts. By sending emails at the right time, using friendly language, and linking to real-life events and user habits, Swiggy increases:

Open and click-through rates.

Repeat orders.

Re-engagement of users who had stopped ordering.

The study shows that one can understand behavioural email marketing quite well even if you use only secondary data. Other food-delivery or digital-service brands can copy Swiggy’s idea: design emails that feel helpful, timely, and human, not just like sales ads. In this view, email becomes a tool to shape user behaviour rather than a simple promotional box.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study uses only secondary data, so it cannot measure the exact impact of each email on sales or user behaviour. Some performance numbers (like CTR) are approximate or marketing highlights, not full, transparent datasets. The analysis is interpretive and thematic, not statistical, so findings are useful but not mathematically proven. The study is limited to public information about Swiggy and does not cover Swiggy’s internal data or user-level records.

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