

# Online Food Ordering and Delivery Services: Consumer Behaviour, Growth Trends and Service Challenges in the Digital Economy

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## Abstract

The rapid expansion of online food ordering and delivery services has significantly reshaped food consumption patterns in the digital era. With the growing penetration of smartphones, internet accessibility, and digital payment systems, consumers are increasingly shifting from traditional dining practices to app-based food ordering platforms. The present study examines the growth of online food delivery services, changing consumer behaviour, major influencing factors and the operational challenges faced by digital food platforms. The study is descriptive in nature and based on secondary data collected from research articles, academic literature, and industry reports. The findings indicate that convenience, lifestyle changes, technological accessibility and service variety are the primary drivers of online food ordering behaviour. However, issues related to service quality, delivery reliability, pricing transparency and consumer trust continue to influence long-term usage. The paper concludes that online food delivery services have become an essential component of the digital service economy, but their sustainable growth depends on consistent service performance and enhanced consumer confidence.

**Keywords:** Online food delivery, consumer behaviour, digital platforms, service quality, digital economy

## 1. Introduction

The digital transformation of the service sector has brought significant changes in the way consumers access and consume food services. Among various digital innovations, online food ordering and delivery services have emerged as one of the fastest-growing segments of the platform-based economy. These services enable consumers to order food through mobile applications and websites, offering convenience, accessibility and a wide range of food choices.

Traditionally, food consumption was largely dependent on home-cooked meals, dine-in restaurants, or takeaway services. However, the increasing pace of urban life, changing work culture and growing dependence on digital services have gradually shifted consumer preferences towards online food delivery platforms. The integration of technology into food services has simplified the ordering process and reduced the time and effort involved in traditional food purchasing methods.

The increasing use of smartphones, affordable internet services, and digital payment systems has further accelerated the adoption of online food delivery platforms. Consumers today prefer services that are quick, reliable, and easily accessible. As a result, online food delivery services are no longer limited to

convenience but have become a regular part of modern consumption behaviour. This shift highlights the need to understand the behavioural and service-related aspects associated with the growth of digital food delivery platforms.

## 2. Review of Literature

The growing adoption of online food ordering and delivery services has been widely discussed in recent academic research, particularly in the areas of digital consumer behaviour and service marketing. Previous studies suggest that convenience, accessibility and technological ease are the primary factors influencing the use of online food delivery platforms.

Ray, Dhir, Bala, and Kaur (2019) found that ease of use, time-saving benefits, and mobile application accessibility significantly influence consumers' intention to order food online. Their study emphasized that digital platforms enhance consumer experience by providing real-time tracking, multiple payment options and easy navigation features.

Das (2018) observed that doorstep delivery, application usability, and promotional offers are key determinants of consumer preference towards online food delivery services. Similarly, Bagla and Khan (2017) highlighted that lack of time for cooking, changing lifestyle patterns, and availability of diverse food options have contributed to the rapid growth of online food delivery platforms.

Trust plays an important role in the adoption of digital services. Gefen, Karahanna, and Straub (2003) argued that trust in online platforms significantly affects users' willingness to engage in digital transactions. When consumers perceive a platform as secure and reliable, their intention to continue using the service increases. Pavlou (2003) further noted that trust helps in reducing uncertainty and enhances online purchase intention.

Perceived risk is another significant factor influencing online consumer behaviour. Featherman and Pavlou (2003) explained that financial, privacy, and performance risks may negatively affect consumers' confidence in digital platforms. In the context of online food delivery, concerns related to food quality, delayed delivery, hidden charges, and payment security can influence customer satisfaction and repeat usage.

The role of e-service quality has also received considerable attention in digital service research. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malhotra (2005) introduced the concept of electronic service quality and emphasized that efficiency, responsiveness, and system reliability are essential for improving customer experience. Higher service quality leads to greater customer satisfaction and long-term usage of online platforms.

Furthermore, Anderson and Srinivasan (2003) stated that satisfaction and trust are major predictors of customer loyalty in online environments. Li, Miroso and Bremer (2020) also pointed out that online food delivery platforms increase convenience and market reach but require consistent service performance to maintain customer satisfaction. Overall, the literature indicates that convenience, service quality, trust, and technological accessibility are the major factors influencing the growth and sustainability of online food delivery services.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the growth and development of online food ordering and delivery services.
2. To analyse changing consumer behaviour towards online food delivery platforms.
3. To identify the major factors influencing the usage of online food delivery services.

4. To examine the operational and service-related challenges faced by online food delivery platforms.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

The present study adopts a descriptive and conceptual research design. The analysis is based on secondary data collected from academic journals, published research papers, books, and industry reports related to online food delivery services and digital consumer behaviour. The study focuses on understanding trends, behavioural patterns, and service challenges associated with online food delivery platforms. Since the study is conceptual in nature, it does not involve primary data collection or statistical analysis.

#### **5. Growth of Online Food Ordering and Delivery Services**

The online food delivery industry has experienced remarkable growth over the past decade. This is due to rapid technological advancement and increasing digital adoption. The widespread use of smartphones and internet connectivity has made digital food platforms more accessible to a larger segment of the population. Features such as menu browsing, digital payments, order tracking and customer reviews have enhanced the efficiency and convenience of online food ordering.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the growth of online food delivery services as consumers preferred contactless transactions and doorstep delivery. During this period, online platforms became a primary source of food access for many households. Even after the pandemic, the habit of online ordering has continued due to convenience and familiarity with digital services.

#### **6. Changing Consumer Behaviour towards Online Food Delivery**

Consumer behaviour has significantly evolved with the increasing use of online food delivery platforms. Modern consumers, particularly students and working professionals, prefer quick and convenient food options due to their busy schedules and changing lifestyle patterns. Online platforms provide flexibility, ease of access and a wide range of food choices, which influence consumer decision-making.

The younger population shows a higher inclination towards online food delivery applications due to their familiarity with technology and digital payment systems. Features such as ratings, reviews, estimated delivery time and promotional offers also affect their ordering behaviour. Additionally, online food ordering has become more frequent during weekends, late evenings, and special occasions, reflecting a shift in consumption habits.

#### **7. Factors Influencing the Use of Online Food Delivery Services**

##### **7.1 Convenience and Time Efficiency**

Convenience is the most significant factor contributing to the growth of online food delivery services. Consumers can order food anytime and from any location, which reduces the time and effort required for traditional food purchasing.

##### **7.2 Variety and Accessibility**

Online platforms offer a wide range of restaurants and cuisines at a single interface, increasing consumer choice and satisfaction.

##### **7.3 Technological Advancement and Digital Payments**

The availability of user-friendly mobile applications, secure payment options and real-time tracking systems has made online food ordering more efficient and reliable.

#### **7.4 Changing Lifestyle and Work Culture**

Urbanization, busy work schedules and increasing academic and professional commitments have increased dependence on ready-to-eat food and delivery services.

#### **7.5 Promotional Strategies and Pricing Benefits**

Discounts, cashback offers and loyalty programs play an important role in attracting and retaining customers on online food delivery platforms.

### **8. Challenges Faced by Online Food Delivery Platforms**

Despite rapid expansion, online food delivery platforms face several operational and service-related challenges. Maintaining consistent food quality and timely delivery remains a major concern that directly affects customer satisfaction. Delays in delivery, incorrect orders and packaging issues can negatively influence consumer experience and trust.

High operational costs related to logistics, delivery personnel and platform management also pose significant challenges for service providers. Additionally, limited-service coverage in semi-urban and rural areas restricts the expansion of online food delivery services. Concerns related to data privacy, hidden charges and payment security further influence consumer confidence in digital platforms.

### **9. Managerial Implications**

Online food delivery platforms should focus on improving service efficiency, delivery accuracy and food quality standards to enhance customer satisfaction. Strengthening digital payment security, transparent pricing policies and responsive customer support can help in building long-term consumer trust. Investment in advanced logistics systems and technology-driven solutions can further reduce delivery delays and operational inefficiencies. Customer-centric strategies such as personalized recommendations, subscription models and loyalty programs can play a crucial role in improving customer retention in a highly competitive digital market.

### **10. Conclusion**

Online food ordering and delivery services have transformed the traditional food service industry by integrating technology, convenience and accessibility into the consumption process. The increasing penetration of smartphones, internet services and digital payment systems has significantly contributed to the rapid growth of these platforms.

The study concludes that convenience, technological accessibility, changing lifestyle patterns, and service variety are the primary factors driving the adoption of online food delivery services. However, service quality issues, operational challenges and trust-related concerns continue to influence long-term customer satisfaction. As the digital economy continues to expand, online food delivery platforms are expected to play a more significant role in shaping modern consumption behaviour. Sustainable growth in this sector will depend on consistent service performance, improved customer experience and enhanced consumer confidence in digital platforms.

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