PARADIGM SHIFT IN THE EATING CULTURE OF HILL PEOPLE: PERCEPTION OF CUSTOMER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS ONLINE FOOD DELIVERY SERVICE IN KALIMPONG

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Abstract

In recent times, a growing trend has been noticed in the usage of online food delivery service as technology has completely revolutionized the business world. The increased usage of technology is forcing industries to revamp itself to withstand the ravages of time and help it proliferate its revenue. To meet the evolving expectations of customers and carve a niche for itself, business needs to be upgraded on a regular basis. The dining out culture is now being transformed into the eating in culture as people prefer ordering food online rather than going out to restaurants. This trend is prominent among the young generation and as an aftermath a large number of Indians are turning to online food delivery service as an easier and more convenient alternative. Surprisingly it is not only the metropolitan cities in India, but even smaller cities, towns and districts where this trend is augmenting and a small district in the Indian state of West Bengal, Kalimpong is no exception.

An attempt has however been made through this paper to analyse the perception of local customers towards e-food ordering service in Kalimpong.

Keywords: online food, delivery services, customer, perception, Kalimpong

Introduction

Online food ordering is the process of getting food from a local restaurant through a web page or an online application. It is similar in many aspects to ordering consumer goods online. A customer can choose their preferred restaurant, type of cuisine and mode of payment. With individuals becoming increasingly busy these days, the service provided by

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online food delivery system puts them in an advantageous position by allowing them to place their orders and receive delivery within few minutes at competitive price. The introduction of advanced technological solutions is leading to the growth of new market segments in food industries. A variety of online services are creating a new business field, such as food delivery or booking. Online food delivery (OFD) refers to online channel that consumers use to order food from restaurants and fast-food retailers (**Elvandari et al., 2018**). In OFD system, consumers have a better choice in terms of restaurants and food items (**Pigatto et al., 2017**). By adopting OFD, restaurants and fast-food retailers can increase their reach among consumers in a cost-effective manner while consumers can order the meal of their choice without spending much time and effort (**Ray et al., 2019**). In the recent past, OFD has witnessed several technological advancements. For instance, restaurants have transitioned from offline into online platforms by developing their own websites and allowing customers to order food using restaurants' own website (**Yeo et al., 2017**). Development of e-commerce has largely contributed to changing food consumption patterns, and more and more consumers prefer to use online platforms to order foods (**Hwang et al., 2019**). Further, due to the increasing use of smartphone applications, restaurants have launched their apps which also serve as online food ordering platforms for consumers (**Ray et al., 2019**). However, due to operations and/or financial reasons, not all restaurants use their own delivery channels for food delivery (**Hwang et al., 2019**). Hence, restaurants opt for third-party platforms and food aggregators to facilitate online food delivery, helping them to reach out to a wider market in a cost-effective manner (**Williams et al., 2020**). Foodpanda, Swiggy, Zomato and Uber Eats are a few examples of third-party food delivery platforms (**Lo et al., 2020**). However, such platforms, i.e., third-party food delivery services, are normally limited to metro cities. Thus, to geographically expand the availability of OFD services, restaurants opted for AI and drone-based channels for food delivery, another form of OFD (**Hwang et al., 2019**).

Moreover, customers have switched to solutions that ease their lives and help to better serve guests with the increase of mobile ordering across industries. The number of downloads of delivery apps is up 380 percent, while revenues are also increasing relative to three years ago (**Wang,2020**). Indian consumers are drawn to online shopping interactions with utmost ease through portals and digital apps and would like to encounter the same when it applies to ordering food online as well. The digital call for ordering is genuine and hassle-free. Many people know about Swiggy, UberEats, Zomato, etc. for their quick and reliable service and exceptional taste for customers from different regions, areas and customers (**Ravichandra,**

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2019, Alalwan 2020). Customers prefer to repurchase and suggest the food in future when the food is of good quality. This suggests that food quality is a key component, not only in the context of conventional restaurants, but also in the sense of online food delivery services. Thus, it is important that fast food restaurants and rapid restaurants providing online food delivery services provide elevated food that not only meets the needs of consumers, but is also comparable to the foods of competitors. They should focus on food presentation, taste, variety and healthiness to outperform competitors. It is crucial in deciding food quality, perceived value and efficiency in terms of e-service quality (**Bigliardi,2013, Fauzi, 2019, Tribhuwan ,2020**).

Genesis of online food industry

The origin of the online food industry goes back to 1994 where the first online food order was a pizza from Pizza Hut. The first online food ordering service was initiated in 1995i.e. Worldwide Waiter (now known as Waiter.com). With a population of over 1.417 billion, India is undeniably one of the biggest consumer markets in the world today. 50% of this population fall under the age of 25, making India one of the countries with the youngest population in the world. Moreover, e-commerce has been expected to grow from US \$2.9 billion in 2013 to a mammoth US \$100 billion by 2020 and US \$111 billion thereby making it the fastest growing e-commerce market in the world. With this backdrop it should be noted that a growing trend has been observed showing that a majority of the fast-food demand occurs within the age group of 10 – 40 years. The recent rise in the number of productively employed young Indians in sectors such as IT services has resulted in an increase in the spending capacity of the individuals. According to statistics provided by the World Bank, there has been a 50% increase in the per capita income from 2006 till date. This growing appetite and increased spending capability of young Indians has made the food industry an attractive and lucrative area to start a business in. The increase in dual income families in urban areas of India, where both parents work, is dramatically changing the ways people live in. The changes in routine, lifestyle, food habits, increase in the number of working women, culture of nuclear family, increase in the amount of disposable income is a key demand driver for the online food delivery business.

Present scenario of online food delivery business

With the augmentation of digital technology, consumers are getting accustomed to shopping and ordering online through Apps and websites. With these Apps and websites providing

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maximum convenience and transparency, consumers have now come to expect an experience similar to what they would receive from the outlet itself. There's a plethora of competition in the Indian market and every online food delivery business is in an attempt to win over the hearts of their consumers. Although technological developments do matter in the context of food technology, ultimately it is the customer's food experience that decides the success or failure of these kinds of startups. The Indian food delivery market has been valued at 15 billion dollars and is set for an exponential growth. The growth of online food ordering delivery platforms like Swiggy, Food Panda, Uber Eats, and Zomato are feeding the world online and making profits at the same time.

Challenges encountered by online food delivery business

- ➢ poor quality of food
- ➢ lack of innovation
- ➢ timely delivery issues
- ➢ paucity of delivery staff
- ➢ customers lacking loyalty
- ➢ inability to handle large volume of orders i.e., both dine in and take out

Growth of online business in India

With the tremendous increase in the number of vehicles and the heavy population density leading to heavy traffic jams, which is seen in most of the metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, a growing trend has been seen towards households preferring to use the services of online food delivery Apps rather than cooking at home. Global food brands are now strengthening their relationship with food delivery service providers like Zomato and Swiggy. Recently, Café Coffee Day, India's largest homegrown coffee shop chain launched a virtual restaurant which will cater to orders only through Uber. At present, India's online food delivery market has been estimated to be valued at $7 billion. A large chunk of the market is occupied by Zomato and Swiggy who have a combined share of 80%.

New trends in online food delivery business

- ➢ **Demand Delivery**

On demand delivery is the immediate or scheduled delivery of food to the customer; initiated immediately after the customer has placed an order. On-demand delivery platforms hold on to a large number of part-time local delivery partners in order to bring products to customers

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immediately. It is the express delivery of products done with the help of a highly efficient transportation system after an online order is received.

➤ Cloud Kitchen

A cloud kitchen is a takeaway outlet that does not provide a dine-in facility. It functions as a production unit with space for the preparation of food. The food can be ordered online, which is the reason behind the name 'cloud kitchen'.

➤ Full Stack

Food Stack food delivery service is a brand - new concept in the food delivery market. It is a fresh view on the meal delivery service. It lies in controlling the entire process, which means that the company runs the customer interaction management, cooking and logistics. A customer is provided with the photo of the dish, the list of ingredients, and the name of the chef. The order usually comes within an hour of the customer placing the order, or the customer can pre – order one day in advance.

➤ Drone Based Food Delivery

Drone deliveries are a solution to some of the logistical problems faced by online food delivery service providers. They will pick and deliver food parcels from the restaurant to the customer hub i.e., a landing station located close to a densely populated area. The drones have sensors that are in-built and computers onboard to guide in the taking off, landing and to avoid objects. Recently Zomato successfully tested its maiden drone delivery technology.

Literature review

➤ In the research paper 'Consumer experiences, attitude and behavioral intention toward online food delivery (OFD) services' (2017), released by **Vincent Cheow Sern Yeo, See-Kwong Goh, Sajad Rezaei**, concluded that customers were attracted to technology that could provide them convenience through saving time and effort. Thus, the website must be user friendly and be able to process the customer's request as quickly as possible. This in return would enable customers to complete a transaction quickly, which would be both beneficial to the customers and marketers. Having certain discounts or promotions attracted price-sensitive consumers, as they were likely to choose the channel which provided them with the best value for money.

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➢ Hamid, Sood and et al. (2020) studied about consumer behavior while ordering food online using apps. The main objective of this study was to identify the factors affecting the buying behavior of professionals in teaching sector and students' community. Sample size was selected of 100 respondents with the help of questionnaires. Random sampling was used. IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) Version 20.0, two-way ANOVA, Levene's and t-test were used for data analysis. They concluded that various factors such as changes in lifestyle, increase in income due to urbanization, busyness because of private jobs, a greater number of working women, availability of high-speed internet, smart phones, etc. played an important role.

➢ Abraham (2021) analyzed about the effectiveness of online food ordering applications in terms of their cost, sales and brand image. This study was descriptive in nature and data has been collected from primary and secondary sources from Kerala. Questionnaire has been used to collect the data through judgment sampling. She found that Zomato was most preferable application by all the restaurants because it has improved the sales of the restaurants through offers and reducing their commission. The brand images of all restaurants have been increased by registering on these online food ordering applications.

➢ Vinish, Pinto and et al. (2021) investigated about the behavioral target to the use of online food delivery applications. They used exploratory factor analysis and multiple regressions on 385 respondents. This data collected by the primary and secondary sources mainly structured questionnaire. They analyzed that there was positive relation between the purchasing motives and customer satisfaction level. They also analyzed that various factor such as convenience, quality of food, reviews of restaurant and faster delivery affect the customer satisfaction level.

➢ Roopa and Kumar (2020) studied about the digitalization and food ordering in Bangalore. The chief objectives of this research paper were to identify the factors and analyze the satisfaction level of consumers and their preferences on online food aggregators. To achieve these objectives a sample of 318 customers in Bangalore was collected through questionnaires and Google forms. Convenience and purposive sampling techniques were used for collecting the samples. The data was analyzed using factor analysis, multiple regression, and chi square. It was discovered that ratings and reviews, ranking on search engine, carousal advertisements, live order tracking, delivery time, coupon code, discounts, notifications on mobile applications

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had more impact on the consumer's choice to order food online than preferring for dine out at restaurants.

➢ Anita Vinaik, Richa Goel, Seema Sahai and Vikas Garg (2019) in the research paper titled "The Study of Interest of Consumers in Mobile Food Ordering Apps" aims at understanding customers' awareness with respect to online food delivery apps in India and the factors which influence its adoption. For the purpose of data collection, the survey method is used. Factor analysis is used to determine the factors which influence the adoption of these apps. The findings of the study suggest that customers prefer mobile food ordering apps as it is convenient to use and offers easy payment options.

Objectives:

➢ To see the demographic profile of Kalimpong people who order online food.

➢ To determine the factors accountable for online food purchase by local customers of Kalimpong.

➢ To suggest ideas to the online food delivery business to win over the hearts of customers and enhance their revenue.

Limitations

➢ The study is confined to Kalimpong only (a small district in the Indian state of West Bengal).

➢ Small sample size i.e., 40 people has been chosen for the study.

➢ Amongst non-probability sampling technique convenient sampling has been used for analysis purpose.

Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Structured questionnaires were designed for the collection of primary data and supplied in different areas of Kalimpong following convenient sampling technique. Various online journals, newspapers and websites have been referred to for the collection of secondary data.

Study Area: Ringkingpong Road, Ongden Road, Justice Biswas Road, Eastmain Road

Sample size: 40 (forty)

Demographic profile

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Table 1: Respondents based on gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	22	55
Female	18	45
Others	0	0
Total	40	100

From **Table:1** it is evident that more percentage of males are into buying food online compared to females. The reason being their laziness in cooking food and the convenience of ordering food online without much hassle.

Table 2: Respondents based on age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 20	10	25
20-30	15	37.5
30-40	12	30
Above 40	3	7.5
Total	40	100

From **Table 2** it is clear that more of young people especially in the age group of 20-30 years and 30-40 years prefer using online food delivery services compared to people in other age groups.

Table 3: Respondents based on occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Students	6	15
Govt job	10	25
Pvt job	15	37.5
Business owners	5	12.5
Others	4	10

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| Total | 40 | 100 |

From **Table 3** we get to know that maximum of the respondents using online food delivery services are the private job holders followed by the government job holders and then the students. Since private job holders have deadlines and tight schedules, they prefer ordering food online to save time.

Table 4: Respondents based on education

Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Matriculation	5	12.5
High secondary	7	17.5
Graduates	12	30
Post graduates	16	40
Total	40	100

Table 4 shows the educational qualification of the respondents. The inference we can draw from the above table is that maximum of the customers taking advantage of the online food delivery system have either completed their post-graduation or simply graduation.

Table 5: Respondent's perception about online food delivery system

Perception about online food delivery system (EASY)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	33	82.5
No	7	17.5
Total	40	100

Table 5 demonstrates the perception about the local customers towards online food delivery system and it is pretty interesting to note that 82.5% of the customers find it easy to order food online and a very small percentage i.e., 17.5% find some sort of difficulty in placing online food order.

Table 6: Respondent's answer as to why they prefer online food delivery system

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Reason to use online food delivery system	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Time saving	15	37.5
Don't want to go out	8	20
Convenient	10	25
Others	7	17.5
Total	40	100

Table 6 clarifies the reason as to why people prefer taking the help of online food delivery system in Kalimpong. 37.5% prefer this system as it saves their time, 25% find it to be a convenient alternative to cooking food at home and 8% don't want to go out to restaurants and 7% have specified other reasons.

Table7: Respondent's frequency usage per week

Frequency usage per week	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1st time	15	37.5
2nd time	12	30
3rd time	8	20
More than 3 times	5	12.5
Total	40	100

Table 7 shows the number of times the customer has ordered food via electronic means. 37.5% claimed to be first time users,30% second time users ,20%third time users and 12.5% to have used the service more than three times.

Table 8: Respondents mode of payment

Mode of payment	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Credit card/ debit card	8	20
Net banking transfer	5	12.5
E-wallet	2	5
Cash on delivery (COD)	25	62.5
Total	40	100

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Table 8 demonstrates that maximum of the people of Kalimpong ordering food online prefer to use COD mode of payment and rely less on other methods of payment.

Recommendations

- To use the best packing products to keep the food unaltered during transit in order to meet customer's expectations over food quality.
- Supply fresh, aromatic and nutritional food.
- Provide quick delivery by integrating online food delivery platform with features like location tracker, delivery router and order schedule. A delivery router will provide a detailed view of routes to the delivery staff and help them deliver the order promptly.
- Organize training sessions for delivery boys and appraise their work performance on a daily basis.
- Ensure hygiene factors throughout the delivery cycle.
- Ensure optimum allocation of manpower and resources for the smooth delivery process.
- Customise the product to the needs of the local market as food habits change with every mile travelled on the map.
- Analyse consumer behaviour and understand price sensitivity of customers to create a profitable pricing strategy. Accordingly keep an eye on the food prices offered by established players and competitors in the market.
- Customer retention is important for any business and to keep the customers engaged and to ensure revisit intention a referral programme must be run and introductory offers and discounts must be provided to frequent users.
- Start-ups should take the help of social media platform and connect with food bloggers to solidify their brand presence.
- To cut down operating costs online food delivery business must come up with new business models such as ghost kitchens or delivery only outlets.

Conclusion

With the continuous flood of professionals into cities and rapid urbanization, the food delivery and restaurant segments are now thriving. While at present, cash on delivery is the most preferred option of payment, but other digital techniques are also seeing significant growth. It is safe to say that online food delivery Apps are not a passing phase and in order to keep up with the growing demand and competition they need to constantly examine and re-

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examine their operations and processes and be sensitive to opportunities. With consumers now spending lesser time in food preparation due to various factors such as increase in wages, less free time and work pressure there is a huge market for online food delivery startups. Therefore, it is now a waiting game to see how well, the industry progresses.

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