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EXPLORING THE REASONS AND PATTERNS BEHIND ONLINE FOOD ORDERING PREFERENCES

Mrs. Sumathi[1], Dr. Veena M[2]

[1]*Research Scholar, Department of Studies in commerce, Vijayanagara Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Jnana Saagara Campus, Vinayak Nagar, Ballari-583105, Karnataka*

[2]*Assistant Professor, Department of Studies in Commerce, Vijayanagara Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Jnana Saagara Campus, Vinayak nagar, Ballari-583105, Karnataka*

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ABSTRACT

This study with the aim to suggest enhancing convenience features, introducing subscription models and improving service reliability examines the reasons and frequency of online food ordering among customers. The researchers use primary data(structured questionnaire) to analyze various reasons and reveal that convenience, including home delivery and time-saving, emerges as the primary motivator, followed by factors like avoiding traffic and bad weather. The findings reveal that most customers order food online occasionally, reflecting situational rather than habitual usage.

KEY WORDS: *Online food ordering, Reasons for ordering online.*

INTRODUCTION

The rise of digital technology has significantly reshaped how individuals access food services, with online food delivery platforms becoming a cornerstone of urban living. Consumers now benefit from the ease of exploring menus, placing orders, and receiving meals at their doorstep with minimal effort. This shift in food consumption habits necessitates an examination of the underlying reasons for the popularity of online food ordering and the frequency with which individuals utilize these services.

Understanding these preferences is crucial for restaurants and delivery platforms to optimize their offerings and elevate customer satisfaction. Several factors, such as convenience, time-saving, accessibility, and flexibility (Alalwan (2020), Jadav et al. (2023)) are frequently cited as primary drivers for online food ordering. Moreover, the frequency of ordering exhibits significant variation, influenced by demographic characteristics, lifestyle patterns, and situational requirements.

This research attempts to investigate the motivations behind consumer preference for online food delivery services and to analyze the patterns of their ordering frequency. By identifying these trends, the study aims to provide valuable insights for businesses to refine their service strategies and effectively address the evolving demands of their clientele.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research by Peng (2024) explored the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in online food ordering and delivery. The study emphasized that timely delivery, accurate orders, and food quality are critical factors that enhance customer satisfaction, which in turn influences the frequency of online ordering.

Jadhav et al. (2023) evaluated consumer behavior towards food delivery apps in India, focusing on attributes like restaurant variety, food packaging quality, and application design. The study revealed that a diverse range of restaurants and user-friendly interfaces significantly influence overall satisfaction, leading to increased app usage and ordering frequency.

A study published in MDPI Proceedings (2021) applied the stimulus–organism–response model to understand factors influencing consumers' continuous use intention of food delivery platforms. The research considered aspects such as store product quality, delivery personnel quality, and platform quality, finding that these factors significantly impact consumers' intentions to continue using online food delivery services.

Marathe et al. (2021) conducted a literature review on consumer perception towards online food delivery apps. The study examined various factors affecting consumer behavior, including the variety of restaurants, food packaging quality, and application design. The findings suggest that a diverse range of restaurants and user-friendly interfaces positively influence consumer satisfaction and the frequency of app usage.

Madani and Alshraideh (2021) utilized machine learning models to predict consumer purchasing decisions in the online food delivery industry. The study analyzed data from consumers in Bangalore, India, identifying key factors such as customization

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options, easy payment methods, and fast delivery that influence purchasing decisions and ordering frequency.

A study by Alalwan (2020) examined the factors influencing consumers' adoption of online food delivery services. The research identified convenience, time-saving, and ease of use as primary motivators for consumers preferring online food ordering. The study also highlighted the role of social influence and trust in the service provider as significant determinants in the adoption process.

The reviewed studies highlight that timely delivery, order accuracy, food quality, and user-friendly app design are key factors driving customer satisfaction and repeated use of online food delivery services. Restaurant variety, packaging quality, and easy payment options also influence consumer behavior. Additionally, convenience, time-saving, trust, and social influence play significant roles in the adoption and continued use of food delivery platforms.

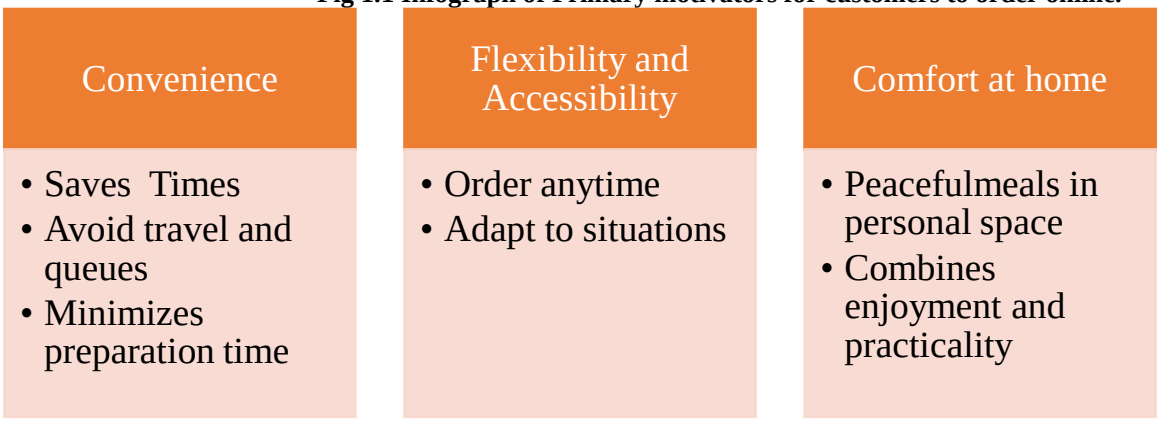
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The preference for online food ordering is driven primarily by the need for convenience, flexibility, and comfort. Convenience theory highlights that consumers increasingly prioritize services that save time and reduce effort. Factors such as avoiding travel, long queues, and minimizing meal preparation align with this. Meuter et al. (2000) underscore that self-service technologies, such as online food platforms, thrive because of the convenience they offer. Similarly, Kapoor and Vij (2020) emphasize that online food delivery services cater to busy schedules and modern lifestyles, providing a hassle-free solution for dining needs.

Flexibility and accessibility are also crucial motivators. Online food platforms offer the freedom to order at any time, catering to specific situational needs like environmental conditions, external restrictions, or personal preferences for eating at home. Studies by Yeo et al. (2017) and Alalwan (2020) indicate that the ability to adapt to these diverse requirements is a significant factor influencing customer adoption of these platforms. Furthermore, the comfort of home-centric lifestyles, where individuals value peaceful meals in their own space, adds to the appeal. These platforms effectively combine hedonic and utilitarian benefits, allowing customers to indulge in a seamless and enjoyable dining experience without logistical hassles (Choudhury et al., 2019).

In summary, motivations such as convenience, stress management, flexibility, and the comfort of home are pivotal in shaping consumer behavior toward online food ordering. By addressing these needs, food delivery platforms continue to attract diverse customer segments, fulfilling both practical and emotional dining requirements.

Fig 1.1 Infograph of Primary motivators for customers to order online.



OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To know why people prefer to order online.
2. To know the frequency of ordering online.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

a) Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design to explore the factors influencing customer preferences for online food ordering and analyze their ordering frequency.

b) Data Collection

The study relies on both primary data and secondary data. Primary data is collected directly from customers using a structured questionnaire. Respondents were approached through online surveys using google forms app. Secondary data is used for identifying reasons behind ordering online through research papers and various websites.

c) Sampling

- **Population:** Customers who have used online food delivery platforms at least once. Population size is unknown.
- **Sampling Technique:** A convenient sampling method is employed to collect data from respondents. Efforts were made to ensure diversity in age, gender, and geographical location.
- **Sample Size:** A total of 60 respondents were approached for the study, out of which 51 fully filled questionnaires

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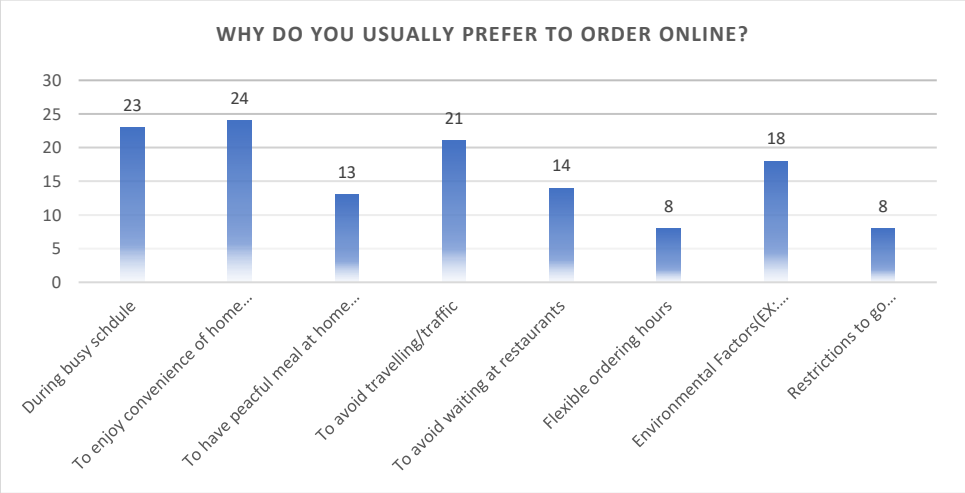
were considered valid, resulting in a response rate of 85%. The sample element for this study comprises customers who have used both online and offline services of domestic restaurants.

Data Analysis and Interpretation based on Objectives.

Table No. 1 Table showing reasons for ordering food online.

Reasons for going online	No. of Respondents
During Busy Schedule	23
To enjoy convenience of home delivery	24
To have peaceful meal at home with one self	13
To avoid travelling/traffic	21
To avoid waiting at restaurants	14
Flexible ordering hours	8
Environmental Factors (Ex: Raining, Sunny)	18
Restrictions to go out (Strikes, Natural calamities)	8

Chart No. 1 Chart showing reasons for ordering food online



Interpretation: The data indicates that the most significant reason for preferring online food delivery is "To enjoy the convenience of home delivery" with 24 respondents selecting this option. This aligns with the increasing demand for services that simplify daily routines and eliminate physical effort. Following this, "During busy schedules" (23 respondents) and "To avoid travelling/traffic" (21 respondents) are also prominent reasons, highlighting how time constraints and commuting challenges drive the adoption of online food ordering.

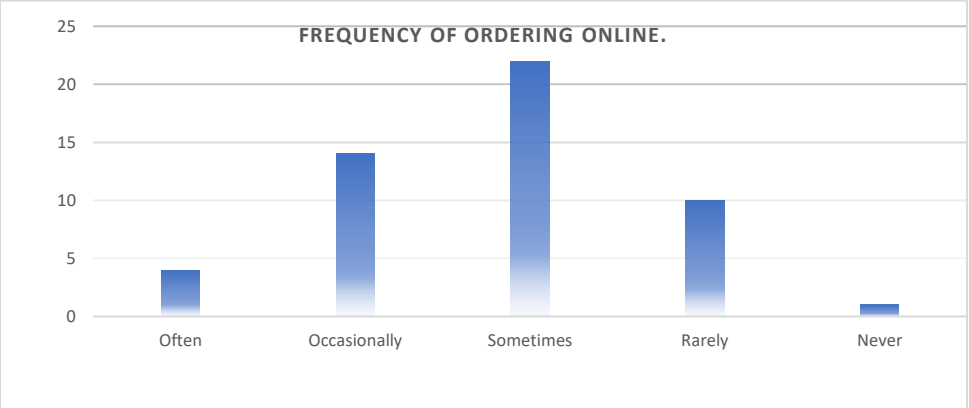
Additionally, "Environmental factors" such as weather conditions were selected by 18 respondents, indicating that adverse weather can influence consumer decisions. Other notable reasons include "To avoid waiting at restaurants" (14 respondents) and "To have a peaceful meal at home" (13 respondents). However, motivations like "Flexible ordering hours" and "Restrictions to go out" are comparatively less impactful, with only 8 respondents selecting each.

Table No. 2 Table showing Frequency of ordering food online.

Frequency of ordering online.	Respondents
Often	4
Occasionally	14
Sometimes	22
Rarely	10
Never	1

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Chart No. 2 Chart showing Frequency of ordering food online.



Interpretation: The frequency analysis reveals that most respondents order food online "Sometimes" (22 respondents), followed by "Occasionally" (14 respondents). This suggests that online food ordering is not a daily habit for most but is integrated into consumers' routines for specific needs or situations.

Interestingly, only 4 respondents order "Often", while 10 stated they order "Rarely." One respondent reported "Never" using online food delivery, indicating that a small fraction of the target group might either lack access to such services or prefer traditional dining methods.
Overall, while online food ordering is popular for convenience and situational needs, its frequency reflects occasional rather than habitual use for many customers.

FINDINGS

1. Convenience of home delivery is the top reason for online food ordering, selected by 24 respondents, followed closely by the need to save time during busy schedules (23 respondents).
2. Avoiding travel/traffic (21 respondents) and unfavorable weather conditions (18 respondents) are significant motivators for online food ordering.
3. The majority of respondents use online food delivery "Sometimes" (22 respondents), reflecting occasional, situational usage rather than habitual behavior.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Food delivery platforms should enhance convenience-oriented features, such as faster delivery and personalized recommendations, to meet customer needs effectively.
2. Subscription-based models offering perks like discounts or free delivery should be introduced to encourage frequent usage among customers.
3. Delivery platforms should focus on marketing their ability to cater to adverse environmental or traffic conditions and ensure reliable services during such situations.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that convenience is the primary reason customers prefer online food ordering, with home delivery and time-saving being top motivators. Factors like avoiding traffic and bad weather also influence this preference. Most customers order online occasionally or situationally, indicating that online platforms complement rather than replace traditional dining. To boost usage, platforms should enhance convenience, introduce subscription models, and ensure reliable service during challenging conditions.

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