

Consumers' Adoption of Online Food Ordering Services in Tier-II Cities: An Empirical Analysis

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Abstract:

In recent times, the cities in India are witnessing growing preference for online food ordering and delivering services. India's online food services industry is growing at a rate of 15 % every quarter in terms of daily food orders with the revenue touching US\$ 7730 million in 2019. Statistics indicate that consumers of the country have welcomed these services wholeheartedly. On the supply side, the industry is becoming highly competitive with several international, national and local players. Logistics, faster deliveries, a wider selection of menu and competitive prices seem to be important in garnering competitive advantage and wider acceptance. This study is an attempt to understand the factors influencing consumers' adoption of online food ordering services among consumers residing in tier-II cities with special reference to Coimbatore city. The conceptual model is proposed based on the constructs adopted from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory. Primary data has been collected using a validated questionnaire. 414 respondents who took up the survey constituted the sample for the study. The significance of relationships among the constructs has been analyzed to arrive at meaningful insights. The results of the study can guide the marketers in understanding consumers better and framing suitable strategies for meeting their expectations.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the cities in India are witnessing growing consumer preference towards online food ordering and delivery services. Statistics reveal that India's online food services sector is growing at the rate of 15 % every quarter in terms of daily food orders with the average food orders per day growing to 4 lakhs during September 2017. The revenue generated by the online food delivery segment has touched US\$ 7730 million in 2019. Of this, the largest segment is the restaurant to consumer delivery amounting to about US\$ 5825 million in 2019. With an expected market growth rate of 12.8 % CAGR (2019-2023), the market volume is expected to rise to US\$ 12,536 million by 2023.

Though many local and national players occupy this space, it is predominantly served by two major

companies - Zomato and Swiggy. The platforms allow customers to get the varieties of food they wish to have with a single tap on their mobile phones. Logistics and faster deliveries seem to play an important role in garnering competitive advantage, rather than the discovery of the restaurants around. With Google launching Google Aero and Uber launching Uber Eats recently, the segment is becoming highly competitive. The players fight with each other for a strong foothold in the market by offering a wider selection of menu at competitive prices. With appropriate delivery partners or in-fleet logistical arrangements, all these players are enabling restaurants to connect with their customers better. For consumers, such services make eating their favorite food an effortless task.

With over 12,000 partners in 8 cities, the market leader Swiggy currently fulfils close to 1 lakh orders per day using its own fleet. With a market share of 35-38 %, Swiggy operates on the food-aggregation model. They have also launched the cloud kitchen with kitchen only facility as a part of its offering to restaurant partners wishing to serve in those areas where they do not have any physical presence. Through its speed, consistent logistic network, easy to use the app and large network of restaurants, Swiggy has emerged as the largest food delivery service player in the country.

Zomato that started as a restaurant discovery platform moved into online food delivering service business. With a market share of 25-30 %, they fulfil close to 80,000 orders per day using their own fleet. Ola too entered the sector by acquiring Food Panda. For bigger national players, the competition also comes from hyper-local companies. Statistics show that there are about 400 food delivery apps functioning across the country from 2013 till 2016. Convinced by the growth potential, big players are eyeing the market through various forms of acquisitions, funding and consolidations. On the demand side, there is a clear indication that consumers of the country have welcomed the online food delivery services wholeheartedly and the reception is on a rise day by day.

With Internet penetration reaching beyond the metro cities, various online services are being introduced in smaller cities. Bansal (2019) reported that “Swiggy and Zomato have launched operations in 185 and 300 towns and cities, respectively” Zomato, which moved beyond tier-I cities during summer 2018 has now around 40% of its business coming from these areas. Bansal (2019) highlighted that “in metros, ordering-in is the new going out”, but in smaller towns, people still prefer to go out to dine. However, takeaways from the restaurant by one family member are getting converted into an online order. Research shows that online food ordering services are growing better than other internet commerce business like grocery or product market. With the business having more focus on tier-II cities and

building strategies for the markets in a smaller town, research on the consumer adoption of online food ordering services and the different factors affecting them is imperative.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There are limited studies available in the literature that measures the factors influencing consumer adoption of online food ordering services. Earlier researches of online food ordering services were focused on the transactions made through website. Kedah et al., (2015) studied the factors like website trust, customer satisfaction and loyalty which are the critical determinants of the customer's ordering experience. They found that there is a relationship between website quality and website trust, and also between service quality and customer satisfaction. Alagoz and Hekimoglu (2012) investigated the factors that influence the attitude of online food ordering undergraduate and graduate students in Turkey. They avoided the possible biases arising out of a group with diverse internet usage habits, and focused on a homogeneous group. They used the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as a theoretical grounding to consider the adoption of using the Web environment for ordering food. They also added other factors like trust, innovativeness and external influences to the TAM.

Yeo, Goh, and Rezaei (2017) studied factors such as “convenience motivation, price saving orientation, time-saving orientation, post-usage usefulness, hedonic motivation, prior online purchase experience, consumer attitude and behavioural intention towards Online Food Delivery (OFD) services”. The study implied that the website must be user-friendly; it should be able to process the customer's request fast; having discounts can draw price-sensitive consumers. Kim Dang et al. (2018) examined the role of Internet in changing the online food-buying behavior and other factors among Vietnam consumers. They also studied the consumers' concern about safety information on online food products. They found that two most crucial factors influencing food purchases through

the Internet were convenience and price. Also, the study found that female and people having difficulty in doing usual activities are more likely to look for online food products.

Similar studies were also conducted in Indian context. Bagla and Khan (2017) analyzed the factors that are rising popularity of online ordering of food in India. They studied the user's expectation and satisfaction level with popular apps such as Food panda, Zomato, and Swiggy. Results of their study showed that lack of time to prepare food, availability of variety, rewards and cashback are the significant factors contributing to the popularity of online food ordering. The users' satisfaction levels can be improved by precisely understanding their expectations and offering more attractive options.

Kimes (2011) studied customer perception of electronic food ordering by surveying 470 users in NY. She found that about half of respondents have ordered food online using mobile app. The chief reasons for electronic ordering by the users are convenience and control. The major factors that inhibit adoption are the desire for interaction and technology anxiety. The most important attributes of electronic ordering are order accuracy, convenience and ease of ordering. The most common ordering channel was the telephone call.

Sethu & Saini (2016) studied customer perception and satisfaction towards online food ordering in Manipal. The survey revealed that the rate of adoption was 100 percent and that the buying decisions were largely influenced by opinions of friend's family and discussions on online forums. McKinsey (2016) studied the changing market for food delivery across the globe. They revealed that platforms were sticky. Most of the orders were from home, they increased during weekends, and waiting time was critical for continued patronage. Word of mouth (WOM) influences consumers in making such choices (Dang et al., 2011). Younger consumers with at least college education and households having large food budgets are likely to avail the online food services (Hossain & Adelaja, 2000).

The study draws from two major theories that analyse the adoption of innovation – Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). According to Everett Rogers (1995), the adoption of innovation is influenced by the characteristics of innovation, the decision-making process and the characteristics of the individuals concerned, the consequences of adoption and the communication channels used in the process. The characteristics of innovation that can influence the adoption decision are relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability. Technology Acceptance Model evaluates the impact of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use on consumer's acceptance and adoption of new technology (Davis et al., 1989; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

On analysis of the major theories explaining consumer adoption of innovation and technology as well as the relevant research studies, constructs have been identified and defined for the purpose of the present study. The predictor variables are relative advantage, compatibility, perceived ease of use, technology anxiety, perceived risk and trust. The dependent variable is consumer adoption. The variables have been defined as below:

- Relative advantage is “the degree to which something new is perceived as being better than the idea it supersedes” (Rogers, 2003).
- Compatibility refers to “the degree to which an innovation is perceived as consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters” (Rogers, 2003).
- Perceived ease of use is “the level in which a person understands that the use of new technology will be less complex for him/her” (Davis, 1989; O' Cass & Fenech, 2003).
- Technology anxiety refers to “the degree to which the usage or idea of using the technology in question arouses unfavourable feelings and fear” (Meuter et al. 2005).

- Perceived risk refers to “the uncertainty regarding possible negative consequences of using a product or service” (Peter & Ryan, 1976; Gwinner et al., 1998).
- Trust is “the belief of the trustor that the trustee will fulfil the trustor’s expectations without taking advantage of the trustor’s vulnerabilities” (Mayer et al. 1995; Flavian & Gunaliu, 2006).
- Consumer adoption is “the acceptance and the continued use of innovation” (Robertson 1971).
- The relative speed with which an innovation is adopted by members of a social system is called the rate of adoption (Rogers, 2003; Collier & Sherrell, 2010).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The data reveals that consumers of the country have welcomed the online food delivery services. What could be the reasons for this? What factors motivate consumers to avail the services of these food delivery companies? Is this just a fad or is the trend here to stay? With these research questions in mind, the researchers proposed to conduct an empirical study to understand the factors influencing consumer adoption of online food delivery services, with special reference to Coimbatore city in the state of Tamil Nadu. Based on the review of literature, the constructs of the study have been identified and the research objectives and hypotheses have been framed to test the significance of the relationship between the constructs. The major objectives of the study are:

- To understand the rate of adoption of online food ordering and delivering services among the respondents of Coimbatore city
- To analyze the impact of the independent variables (relative advantage, compatibility, perceived ease of use, technology anxiety, perceived risk, trust) on consumers’ adoption of such services (dependent variable)
- To examine the factors considered while choosing such services

- To analyze the challenges faced while adopting such services

The major hypotheses of the study are:

H1: The predictor ‘relative advantage’ will have a significant positive influence on ‘consumer adoption.’

H2: The predictor ‘compatibility’ will have a significant positive influence on ‘consumer adoption.’

H3: The predictor ‘perceived ease of use’ will have a significant positive influence on ‘consumer adoption.’

H4: The predictor ‘trust’ will have a significant positive influence on ‘consumer adoption.’

H5: The predictor ‘technology anxiety’ will have a significant negative influence on ‘consumer adoption.’

H6: The predictor ‘perceived risk’ will have a significant negative influence on ‘consumer adoption.’

H7: All the predictors will together influence consumer adoption of online food ordering services significantly

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is descriptive in nature. The consumers residing in Coimbatore city constitute the population of the study. A validated questionnaire measuring the constructs was developed and tested for reliability using Cronbach’s alpha. Likert’s five-point scale of agreeableness has been adopted to measure the agreement of the respondents on various dimensions associated with the adoption of online food services. The survey instrument was published using Google Form and circulated using email and social media. 414 respondents who responded to the survey constituted the final sample for the study. Descriptive and inferential statistics were analyzed to arrive at meaningful insights and conclusions.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The reliability of scales was analyzed using Cronbach’s alpha. The results show that there is very

good reliability for all the constructs identified for the study.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Construct	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Relative advantage	5	.806
Compatibility	3	.882
Perceived ease of use	3	.791
Technology anxiety	4	.902
Perceived risk	4	.897
Trust	4	.886
Adoption	4	.912
Overall	27	.887

Source: Primary data)

The demographic profiles of the respondents were analyzed using frequency and percentage analyses. It may be observed that majority of the respondents (68.4 %) are women. 42.5 % of the respondents belong to the age group of 18-24 years. 75.4 % are residing in the urban area. 80.2 % of the respondents are either doing or completed their post-graduation. 58 % of the respondents are employed. 71 % of the respondents are married. 65.2 % of the respondents belong to nuclear families. Monthly family income of the majority of the respondents (33.8 %) is above Rs.80,000.

Table 2: Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic variables		Frequency (N=414)	Percent
Gender	Male	131	31.6
	Female	283	68.4
Location	Urban	312	75.4
	Semi-urban	84	20.3
	Rural	18	4.3
Age (in years)	18-24	176	42.5
	25-34	148	35.7
	35-49	72	17.4
	50-64	18	4.4
Occupation	Student	144	34.8
	Employed	240	58
	Entrepreneur	18	4.3
	Not employed	12	2.9
Education (current status)	Under-graduation	52	12.6
	Post-graduation	332	80.2

	Others	30	7.2
Marital status	Married	294	71
	Unmarried	120	29
Family structure	Nuclear family	270	65.2
	Joint family	120	29.0
	Single parent household	12	2.9
	Others	12	2.9
Monthly family income	Less than Rs.20,000	54	13.0
	Rs.20,000- Rs.40,000	108	26.1
	Rs.40,001- Rs.60,000	54	13.0
	Rs.60,001- Rs.80,000	54	13.0
	Above Rs.80,000	144	34.8

(Source: Primary data)

Table 3 indicates the adoption status with regard to online food ordering and delivering services. It may be observed that 78.7 % of the respondents have used online food services in the past.

Table 3: Adoption of online food delivering services

Adoption	Frequency	Percent
Yes	326	78.7
No	88	21.3

(Source: Primary data)

Table 4 indicates the consumer behaviour with regard to usage of online food ordering and delivering services. With respect to the channels adopted for ordering food, mobile apps of food aggregators are found to be the most used channel (73.91%), followed by the restaurant telephone number to order via phone (14.49%) and restaurant websites (13.04%). The most prominent source of information regarding the availability of such services is advertisements by service providers (59.42%) followed by social media (49.28%) and word of mouth (44.93%). Respondents are interested in availing the services any time (55.07 %) followed by unexpected requirements (44.93%).

Convenience is the most important factor influencing the decision (66.67%) followed by offers and discounts (40.58%), choice of menu (28.99%) and speed of delivery (28.99 %). Majority of the respondents have been availing the services for the past 6 months only (39.61 %). Though 30.4% of the respondents have experienced other difficulties while availing the services, 21.7 % of the respondents have mentioned poor internet connectivity as a challenge. 53.6 % of the respondents spend up to Rs.1000 per month on an average for online food services.

Table 4: Consumer behaviour with respect to online food services

Consumer behaviour		Frequency	Percent
Channels adopted*	Mobile app of food aggregators	306/414	73.91
	Website of food aggregators	12/414	2.90
	Restaurant website	54/414	13.04
	Restaurant app	36/414	8.70
	Restaurant telephone number to order via phone	60/414	14.49
	I have not done any of the above listed activities	42/414	10.14
	Sources of information*	Advertisements	246/414
	Word of mouth	186/414	44.93
	Social media	204/414	49.28
	Internet sources	108/414	26.09
	Others	12/414	2.90
	None of the Above	6/414	1.45
Ideal occasion to order food online*	Get-togethers & parties	48/414	11.59
	Special functions	36/414	8.70
	Unexpected requirements	186/414	44.93
	Any time	228/414	55.07
	None of the above	48/414	11.59
Factors influencing the choice of service*	Convenience	276/414	66.67
	Offers and discounts	168/414	40.58
	Choice of menu	120/414	28.99
	Price	78/414	18.84
	Speed of delivery	120/414	28.99

	Recommendations by family, friends etc	36/414	8.70
	Location	72/414	17.39
	Need felt during the time	114/414	27.54
	Entertainment	18/414	4.35
	Others	12/414	2.90
	None of the above	48/414	11.59
Duration of using the service	Less than 6 months	164	39.61
	6 months - 1 year	110	26.57
	Above 1 year - up to 2 years	32	7.73
	Above 2 years - up to 3 years	20	4.83
	Never used such service	88	21.26
	Total no. of respondents	414	100.00
Difficulties faced while adopting such services	Poor internet connectivity	90	21.7
	The platform is less functional	24	5.8
	Poor response time	48	11.6
	Poor delivery	42	10.1
	Poor tracking mechanism	54	13.0
	Others	126	30.4
	Not faced any difficulties	30	7.2
	Total no. of respondents	414	100.0
	Average monthly spending on such services	Nothing	88
Up to Rs.1000		222	53.62
Rs.1001-Rs.2000		80	19.32
Rs.2001-Rs.3000		18	4.35
Rs.3001-Rs.4000		6	1.45
Total no. of respondents		414	100.00

**Multiple choice questions
(Source: Primary data)*

Table 5 indicates the descriptive statistics comprising the mean and standard deviation summaries of the constructs of the study. Among the independent variables, perceived ease of use has the highest mean value (M=4.04) followed by relative advantage (M=4.02). These values indicate that respondents have indicated a high level of

agreeableness on the importance of these dimensions in adopting online food ordering and delivering services. The least level of agreeableness is associated with technology anxiety (M=2.17) followed by perceived risk (M=2.64). These values indicate that respondents have a disagreement with regard to anxiety and risk. The rate of adoption is high (M=4.15).

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation
Relative advantage	4.0176	.57483
Compatibility	3.5784	.90442
Perceived ease of use	4.0392	.70188
Technology anxiety	2.1691	.95558
Perceived risk	2.6360	.98443
Trust	3.6544	.75561
Adoption	4.1471	.98139

(Source: Primary data)

The significance of the association between the predictor variables and the dependent variable has been tested using regression analyses. The results indicate that the independent variables such as relative advantage, compatibility, perceived ease of use and trust have a significant positive influence on consumer adoption (P<0.05). Perceived risk has a significant negative influence on consumer adoption (B=-0.140). However, there is no significant association between technology anxiety and consumer adoption (P>0.05). Among the predictor variables, perceived ease of use has a more significant influence on consumer adoption, followed by relative advantage. Except for the hypotheses related to the association between technology anxiety and consumer adoption, all other hypotheses between the predictors and dependent variable are accepted.

Table 6: Regression results of causal paths between predictor variables and consumer adoption

Relationship among constructs	B	T	Significance
Relative advantage → Consumer adoption	0.210	2.977	0.003
Compatibility → Consumer adoption	0.143	2.003	0.047
Perceived ease of use → Consumer adoption	0.244	3.479	0.001
Technology anxiety → Consumer adoption	0.009	0.121	0.904
Perceived risk → Consumer adoption	-0.140	-1.962	0.050
Trust → Consumer adoption	0.157	2.199	0.029

(Source: Primary data)

The predictability of the regression model is tested from the R-Square value and the model significance through F value. The results are presented in Table 7. The model has average fit as 44.2 % of the variation in the dependent variable is predicted by the independent variables. The result indicates that the interplay of all the predictor variables significantly influences consumer adoption (P<0.05). Hence the hypotheses framed in this regard is accepted.

Table 7: Model summary and Anova

R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
.442	.438	3.914	.001

CONCLUSION

The study showed that a large number of consumers had adopted online food ordering services. The demography of the respondents reveals that the majority of them are in the age group of 18 to 24 years and having a nuclear family. This shows that more young people are adopting online food ordering services than older people. Younger people

feel better-perceived ease of use, and have less technology anxiety and perceived risk. Many respondents adopting online food ordering system are also from a nuclear family. Most of the younger generation families are dual-earning and time available for preparing food at home is reduced. The online services have come as a boon to such families and are adopted by many. Smartphone-based apps are the major base of the application. The penetration of the Internet and Smartphones has been the backbone of such online food ordering services. Consumers find it convenient in using Smartphone apps. They have reported a high relative advantage, compatibility and perceived ease of use. The trust in online food ordering is also high and promotes the adoption of technology. Among the factors that influence the adoption, perceive ease of use has the most impact. Searching for the menu, the restaurant and placing an order is easier and can be easily learned by all age consumers. In addition, the change in lifestyle and the services provided by the online apps provides an advantage over the other food services.

This study is an attempt to understand consumer behaviour with respect to online food ordering and delivering services. As the market statistics indicate that there is growing adoption of such services in our country, the researchers had the curiosity to understand the factors influencing such behaviour. By reviewing literature and major theories associated with consumer adoption, the constructs for the study were identified. The results indicate that the predictors (relative advantage, compatibility, perceived ease of use and trust) have a significant positive influence on consumer adoption. The predictor 'technology anxiety' do not significantly influence 'consumer adoption'. The predictor 'perceived risk' has a significant negative influence on 'consumer adoption'. Among the predictors, 'perceived ease of use' has a more significant influence on adoption followed by 'relative advantage'. All the predictors together influence

consumer adoption of online food ordering services significantly.

As the sample size is smaller, the study provides an understanding of the subject to a limited extent. The scope of the study can be enhanced by increasing the size of the sample and by comparing all consumer cohorts. Comparison among various consumer generations can be made and unique needs and priorities can be understood. Larger geographic coverage can also be attained in the future. Consumers adopt online food ordering services based upon the ease of use, relative advantage, trust etc. they find in them when compared to the traditional channels. Perceived risk influences consumers to avoid those services. Advertisements, social media and word-of-mouth largely influence adoption decisions; hence conscious efforts can be taken to create and disseminate them using various social media platforms and develop consumer broadcasters. Though the rate of adoption is positive, marketers should continuously strive to understand consumer needs, expectations and difficulties in order to serve them better. Continuous fine-tuning of marketing mix strategies is required to face the heat of competition.

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