



## ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

## Marketing

### ONLINE FOOD AGGREGATORS: ORDERING TRENDS OF URBAN CUSTOMERS POST COVID

**KEY WORDS:** Online Food Ordering, Online Food Aggregators, Food Delivery Apps, Pandemic, COVID

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#### ABSTRACT

The advent of technology in service sector has revolutionized the way the service industry works. Food delivery at the doorsteps has become the need of today with people craving for convenient ways for anything and everything. The answer to the quest for convenience lies in concepts such as online food aggregators. Whether the trend has gained momentum post COVID or has the pandemic put a halt to the use of the food delivery platforms is the focus of this study. For this research paper the authors collected data from 130 respondents residing in Mumbai suburban area of the Indian subcontinent. The paper concludes that people are well aware of online food aggregators and are using their services. The study also came up with the fact that demographics such as gender, family type and family income did not influence the perception of consumers post COVID about the use of online food aggregators.

#### INTRODUCTION

Online food aggregators are the companies that provide third party assistance to restaurants on their domain to connect to the customers. The logistics and delivery are taken care of by the aggregator. Their popularity is on the rise due to the convenience they provide to the consumers and the wide reach they provide to the restaurants. Some 15 years back the aggregators were like a link for a restaurant to the customer where the customer could compare meals from different vendors and put the order. The delivery was the responsibility of the restaurant. The more recent model of aggregators takes up the work of logistics and delivery for itself.

The pandemic has changed lives of many in many ways. There were lock downs world-wide resulting in total disruption of the restaurants and food delivery services. The easing out of lockdown slowly led to the rise of the online food aggregators as is evident from the fact that Zomato's annual revenue showed a 100% increase in the year 2020 as compared to pre COVID times (The Restaurant Times, 2023). Restaurants also started shifting focus to the online food delivery platforms and with greater emphasis on sanitization and hygiene. Online delivery became the boon in the times of pandemic when lockdowns were there and safety requirements were stringent (Kabir Ahuja, 2022).

#### Literature Review

E-commerce is flourishing rapidly and so is the food industry. In their research paper the authors have used the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as a ground to study the acceptance of online food ordering system (Serhat Murat Alagoza, 2012). The analysis shows that the approach towards online food ordering differs according to the facilities, convenience, originality, their faith in E-retailers and various external influences.

Another research project was aimed at exploration of the students' awareness, conduct and satisfaction of online food ordering and delivery services (H S Sethu, 2016). It is observed that easy accessibility and availability and on time delivery of the desired food products are the main reasons for using the online food delivery apps.

As per the Cornell hospitality report, the easiness and access related to online food ordering apps are significant for both who use it and who don't use it (Kimes, 2011). People who are not very familiar with technology and who need more personal assistance find it difficult to use.

According to a study about the interest of consumers in mobile food ordering apps, it was found that consumers are

quite well aware of various food ordering apps and use such apps quite frequently (Anita Vainik, 2019). They use such apps primarily due to convenience and variety of food options available.

According to another study, it is because of the use of smart devices that the online food delivery systems are flourishing (Varsha Chavan, 2015). Technology has made it possible for the customers to compare the menu, price and reviews of other customers and thus has helped in providing information for decision making by the customers. It has also helped restaurants to manage customer orders quickly and serve customers to their satisfaction.

A study was undertaken in which the authors compared the top four food delivery apps namely, Zomato, Swiggy, Food panda and Uber Eats (Das, 2018). It was found that providing better discounts and better choices of restaurants made Zomato the first choice for customers. Delivery speed and good service to the customer were also found to be the factors making Zomato preferred by most customers.

According to another study, the food delivery system in India has been growing at a larger pace due to technology (See-Kwong, 2017). Food aggregators have helped the customers in various ways, from making orders on call to ordering online. They have also helped food businesses by satisfying customers according to their changing needs. Now everything can be delivered to the customers at their doorstep.

#### Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study are:

- To assess consumer awareness about online food aggregators
- To find out if there exists any relationship between various demographic factors (gender, income, family type) and the usage of online food aggregators
- To understand if the pandemic has influenced the usage of online aggregators

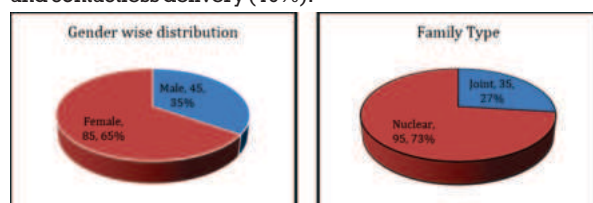
#### Research Methodology

The study is conducted by taking the responses from adults of various age groups, educational, marital and employment status and income groups residing in the city of Mumbai, India. No intended categories for age groups are created before collecting the data. Similarly for educational, employment and marital status too, no quota was intentionally decided. The Google form questionnaire is circulated online through platforms such as WhatsApp and emails. Thus,

convenient sample comprising 130 respondents constitutes the basis of the study. The questions in the questionnaire are varied such as enquiring about the usage of online food delivery apps, their preference, mode of payment and factors that influenced the selection of an online food aggregator. Questions also focused on the use of online food aggregators post COVID specially to find out if there was any change the frequency of their usage by respondents.

### Data Analysis

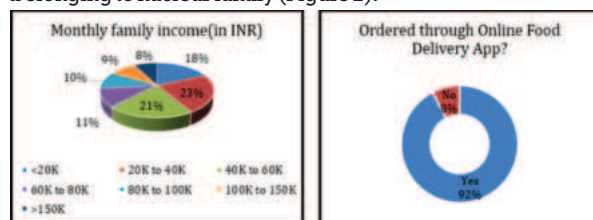
Understanding the views and opinions of the respondents is one of the most important aspects to be considered which helps in understanding consumer behavior in the context of using services of different online food aggregators. The researchers asked respondents to indicate the factors that they consider while ordering food from particular food delivery apps as extremely important, somewhat important and not important. According to them, the factors which the respondents cited as extremely important are following safety standards (66%), choice of food available (64%), previous experience (58%), choice of restaurants (57%), discounts and offers (53%), reviews of other customers (53%) and contactless delivery (46%).



**Figure 1:** Gender wise sample distribution

**Figure 2:** Family type wise sample distribution

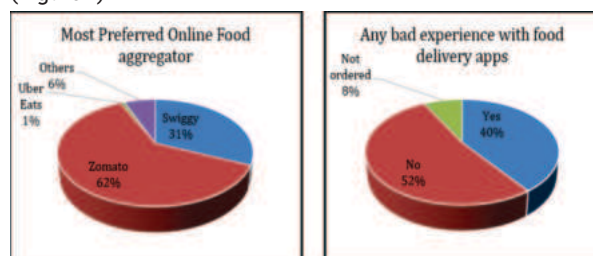
The sample distribution for the study is a mix of consumers with no specific quota intended. The study comprises of 65% females and the rest 35% males (Figure 1), most (73%) belonging to nuclear family (Figure 2).



**Figure 3:** Monthly family income wise sample distribution

**Figure 4:** Whether used Online Food Delivery Apps before

Income wise too the sample is random with consumers belonging to different income groups (Figure 3). Most of the consumers (92%) have used online food delivery apps (Figure 4).



**Figure 5:** Most preferred Online Food Aggregator

**Figure 6:** Ever had any bad experience with online food aggregator

When asked about the most preferred food delivery apps, most (62%) prefer Zomato which is twice as much as for Swiggy (Figure 5). Most customers have not faced any bad experience with the food delivery apps while 40% have not been that lucky (Figure 6).



**Figure 7:** Online Food Aggregators a safe option post COVID?

**Figure 8:** Any change in frequency of using online food aggregators post COVID?

The study also assessed the change in consumer behavior post COVID for eating outside food specifically by using the services of online food delivery platforms. The consumers were asked if their preference for the services of online food delivery platforms has been impacted by the pandemic in any way. The results confirmed that not much changed as 72% of the consumers felt that using the services of various online food aggregators is still safe (Figure 7). A portion of consumers (15%) do order food from outside as frequently as pre COVID but they do not rely on the services of online food aggregators. Around 27% claimed that there has been no change in their frequency of using these platforms and 33% opined that the frequency of having outside food has slightly declined. Only 17% felt that it is no more safe to eat outside whereas 8% claimed that their frequency of ordering outside food has in fact increased after the pandemic (Figure 8).

Hypothesis Description	Test Used	Test Value	Inference
Relationship between gender and perception of safety in using online food aggregator apps post COVID.	Fisher's Exact Test Phi Coefficient ( $\Phi$ )	0.54 (with $\alpha=0.05$ ) -0.056	No relationship No significant Correlation
Relationship between family type (nuclear/joint) and perception of safety in using online food aggregator apps post COVID.	Fisher's Exact Test Phi Coefficient ( $\Phi$ )	1 (with $\alpha=0.05$ ) 0.0547	No relationship No significant Correlation
Association between gender of the respondent and change in the frequency of ordering food through online delivery apps post COVID.	Chi Square Test ( $\chi^2$ )	P value =0.369 (with $\alpha = 0.05$ and $df=4$ )	No significant association
Association between family type of the respondent and change in the frequency of ordering food through online delivery apps post COVID.	Chi Square Test ( $\chi^2$ )	P Value =0.396 (with $\alpha = 0.05$ and $df=4$ )	No significant association
Correlation between Monthly Family Income and the change in frequency of using online food aggregators.	Lambda Coefficient $\lambda$ (with monthly family income as independent variable and change in	$\lambda=0.06$	No correlation

