

# FACTORS AFFECTING SELECTION OF FOOD DELIVERY PLATFORMS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SWIGGY AND ZOMATO

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## ABSTRACT

With Swiggy and Zomato together enjoying more than 90% of the online food delivery space, the restaurant and quick-service industry has been revolutionized in India by the explosion of the digital food delivery platform. Even with this dominance, the factors that influence consumer platform choice are not fully known. The study explores twelve important factors such as pricing, discounts, processing time, variety of restaurants, food quality, user-friendliness of the app, payment modes, online reviews, restaurant support, brand trust, and cleanliness standards, supported by primary data gathered from 165 participants from urban, semi-urban and rural areas of India. The study utilizes a survey instrument with high reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.881$ ), which indicates that the three most important factors are important in determining platform selection: Brand Trust/Reputation is important ( $M = 4.242$ ), Delivery Time is important ( $M = 4.206$ ), and Ratings & Reviews are important ( $M = 4.164$ ). 49.7% of the respondents prefer Zomato and 42.4% prefer Swiggy with both having high satisfaction scores with  $M \approx 4.09$ . The results indicate that the determinants are universal as platform preference is independent of gender ( $\chi^2 = 0.265$ ,  $p = 0.607$ ) and age ( $\chi^2 = 2.313$ ,  $p = 0.510$ ) as confirmed by chi-square tests performed for both gender and age groups. The research applies theoretical and managerial implications for the platform developers, restaurant counterparts, and digital marketing experts aiming to gain competitive edge in India's food-tech market of ₹1.25 trillion. The Food Delivery Platforms in India, such as Swiggy and Zomato, are the primary focus of this study. In this study, the major platforms covered are food delivery services like Swiggy and Zomato.

**Keywords:** Food delivery platforms, Swiggy, Zomato, consumer behavior, platform selection, digital commerce, brand trust, service quality, India, app usability, Likert scale

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Context

The food industry has entered the digital era, establishing a whole new economy of convenience. The online food delivery industry in India has seen a compound annual growth rate greater than 25% in the last five years, driven by the young working population, the urbanization of India, growing disposable income, and the widespread use of smartphones and a growing 4G/5G network. Companies like Swiggy and Zomato have become technological middlemen that combine restaurants, handle the last-mile delivery, and provide a smooth experience for their consumers with advanced mobile apps.

The food delivery market in India is currently valued at around ₹1.25 trillion and is expected to grow to ₹3

trillion by 2030 [1]. Swiggy – established in 2014 and Zomato – which was founded in 2008, are each serving more than 100 million active users in 600+ cities. The high level of competition has resulted in investment in technology, the supply chain, and consumer incentive offerings, making it a perfect subject for behavioral research.

Though the market is large, in the context of India, there is little academic literature exploring the particular multi-dimensionality that influences consumers' choice of one platform over the other. Past research has tended to look at the markets of individual Western countries, the impact of only two or three factors, or at relatively small convenience samples. This research aims to fill that void by developing a detailed twelve factor model based on well known consumer behavior theory and testing it with a wide range of 165 respondents.

### 1.2 Research Problem

The primary research question is: What are the most important factors affecting Indian consumers' decision to opt for one food delivery platform over the other? And do these factors vary significantly across consumer groups based on their demographic and/or platform preference? Knowing this isn't just an academic exercise, it means there are direct implications for competitive strategy, product design and customer retention, in a market where switching costs are virtually non-existent and brand loyalty is always under challenge.

### 1.3 Research Objectives

This study aims at answering five specific research questions: (1) what are the factors that consumers consider while choosing a food delivery platform; (2) which platform – Swiggy or Zomato is the most popular among the sampled population, and what is the market share of each platform; (3) what is the overall satisfaction level of consumers with food delivery platforms, and do they intend to recommend the platforms to their friends; (4) whether the demographic variables affect the platform preferences; and (5) what are the common issues users face with the platforms and what do they expect to improve.

### 1.4 Significance of the Study

The results are relevant to various stakeholders. Platform companies can use the consumer importance ranking to prioritize product features. The restaurant partners can tailor their menu to their customer base on the platform. The insights on hygiene and food safety may be relevant to the regulatory framework. Lastly, the scientific community has a tool based on empirical data that can measure food delivery platform selection in emerging-economy settings

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Foundations

There are multiple theoretical constructs that are the basis of the study on platform selection behavior. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) [2] suggests that the perceived usefulness and user-friendliness or ease of use are the main factors affecting the acceptance of technology. The constructs are proxied by app usability and interface design in the food delivery context. Later models of TAM, such as TAM2 [3] and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2), added factors of social influence and hedonic motivation, which are both pertinent to the platform choice derived from peer reviews and promotional offers.

The Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (TPB) [4] states that behavioral intentions are formed by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. Consumers' positive perceptions of ratings on a food delivery platform influence their positive attitudes, which in turn strengthen their behavioral intention to order. The Expectation-Confirmation Model [5,6], is another example of such a model, which focuses on whether the service performance is satisfactory to the pre-adoption expectations.

### 2.2 Prior Empirical Research

A study by Rathore and Khanna [7] revealed that factors like delivery speed and discount were the top two influencers on the choice of the app, with restaurant variety coming next, and the sample size consisted of 250 urban millennials from Delhi-NCR. But their study only focused on one city and failed to measure the satisfaction of platforms. Singh and Verma [8] used the structural equation modeling with 300 respondents from Bengaluru and found that components of service quality (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, and assurance) explained 67% of the variance in consumer satisfaction. Interestingly, the present study reveals that the most important mean score is for Brand Trust/Reputation, with a  $\beta$  value of 0.41 and a p value of  $< 0.001$ . Alalwan [9] in a Jordanian context found that performance expectancy and hedonic motivation significantly influenced food delivery app usage intention, whereas Yeo et al [10] identified time-saving convenience and food variety as the main motivations among the consumers in Malaysia. In a systematic review of 40 studies on online food delivery, Li, Miroso and Bremer [11] found that these factors – price sensitivity, order accuracy, delivery reliability and hygiene concerns – were among the most consistent concerns found in each geographic location, with all represented by the current study's twelve factors instrument.

### 2.3 The Swiggy–Zomato Duopoly in India

There is a lot of literature available that explains the competition between Swiggy and Zomato in the industry, but not much academic research. Jain [12] observed that the Zomato's deals with Uber Eats India and investments in Blinkit have helped it to be more popular due to better brand recall among working population of age 35 and above while for Swiggy, it has been stronger in Tier-2 cities with aggressive expansion. In the current study, the problems data partially corroborated with Kumar and Sharma [13] that Zomato users complained more over delivery fees, whereas Swiggy users were more concerned with the order accuracy.

### 2.4 Research Gap

Whilst there are several studies which addressed individual factors or specific factors for a particular demographic segment, no study has previously attempted to: (i) use a psychometrically validated instrument to assess all twelve factors; (ii) compare preference of platforms across four income brackets; (iii) test for demographic independence of platform preference using inferential tests; and (iv) combine qualitative (open-ended) with quantitative (Likert scale) data. The present study fills this gap.

## 3.METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

The research approach used in this study is positivist which assumes that social phenomena are objectively measurable and can be replicated. Uses a deductive research method that tests hypotheses that are derived from the theory against empirical evidence. The research design used in this study is descriptive and cross sectional, which is an attempt to describe consumers' attitude and preference at a certain moment. A primary quantitative data collection approach was used with some open-ended qualitative items to gain insight into consumer perspectives in a nuanced way.

### 3.2 Hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub> The brand trust/reputation is the top-ranked determinant for consumers' choice of food delivery platform.

H<sub>2</sub> The difference in platform preference (Swiggy vs Zomato) between male and female respondents is insignificant.

H<sub>3</sub> Platform preference does not differ significantly at which age.

H<sub>4</sub> Overall, the scores of Swiggy users and Zomato users are not significantly different.

H<sub>5</sub> Price-related factors (Price, delivery charge, discounts) are among the top 5 selection factors for the overall sample.

### 3.3 Sampling Design

Considering the exploratory nature of the study and logistical considerations, a non-probability convenience sampling technique was used. The target population included adult consumers (aged 18 years or older) that used at least one food delivery platform within the last six months before the data collection. The final usable sample size was N = 165 respondents which is greater than the minimum number of respondents as calculated by Cochran's [14] formula for finite populations at 95% confidence level, with a ±5% margin of error.

### 3.4 Survey Instrument

A structured questionnaire was created, which consisted of seven sections: (A) demographic profile, (B) usage behavior, (C) factor importance ratings (12 items, five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Not Important to 5 = Very Important), (D) platform preference and rationale, (E) satisfaction and intention to recommend, (F) problems encountered and suggestions, and (G) open-ended insights. The instrument was piloted with 15 respondents and reviewed by two academic experts prior to finalization and a few clarifications of wordings were made.

**Table 1: Survey Instrument Design**

Instrument Section	Variables	Scale	Items
<b>A – Demographics</b>	Age, Gender, Occupation, Income, Location	Nominal / Ordinal	5
<b>B – Usage Behavior</b>	Frequency, Platform used, Order location	Nominal	3
<b>C – Factor Importance</b>	12 selection factors	Likert (1–5)	12
<b>D – Platform Preference</b>	Preferred platform, Reason	Nominal	2
<b>E – Satisfaction</b>	Overall satisfaction, Recommendation	Likert (1–5) / Nominal	2
<b>F – Problems</b>	Issues faced, Suggestions	Multi-select / Open	2
<b>G – Open-Ended</b>	Most important factor, Comments	Open-ended	2

### 3.5 Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's alpha was used to determine internal consistency reliability of the 12 item factor scale. The result of  $\alpha = 0.881$  reflects good reliability [15] which is well beyond the conventional required level of 0.70. Specialists review was used to determine content validity. Construct validity was established by the logical relationships of the items to the factors based on existing theories.

### 3.6 Data Analysis Techniques

The data was analysed using Python (pandas, scipy.stats). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) were reported for all variables; weighted mean ranking of the selection factors; cross-tabulation and chi-square tests for independence were used to compare platform preference with

demographic variables; independent-samples t-tests were used to compare satisfaction between platforms; Pearson correlation analysis was used to compare overall satisfaction with factor importance scores.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### 4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 2 and Figures 1–4 show the demographic characteristics of the sample. The sample is mostly urban (69.7%), male (58.8%) and working professionals (66.7%). The 26–35 age bracket is most represented (30.9%), and the majority (41.8%) earn between ₹50,000 and ₹1,00,000 per month. The profile reflects the general characteristics of the Indian food delivery consumer segment outlined in IMARC Group [16] industry reports.

**Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 165)**

Demographic Variable	Category	n	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	97	58.8%
	Female	68	41.2%
<b>Age Group</b>	18–25	46	27.9%
	26–35	51	30.9%
	36–45	40	24.2%
	46–55	28	16.9%
<b>Location</b>	Urban	115	69.7%
	Semi-Urban	39	23.6%
	Rural	11	6.7%
<b>Occupation</b>	Working Professional	110	66.7%
	Student	32	19.4%
	Business / Self-Employed	23	13.9%
<b>Monthly Income</b>	Below ₹25,000	17	10.3%
	₹25,000–₹50,000	47	28.5%
	₹50,000–₹1,00,000	69	41.8%
	Above ₹1,00,000	32	19.4%

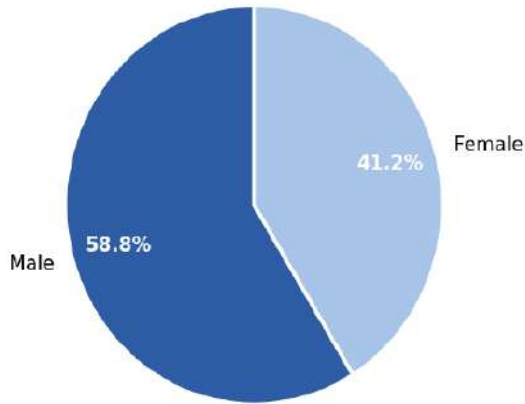


Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

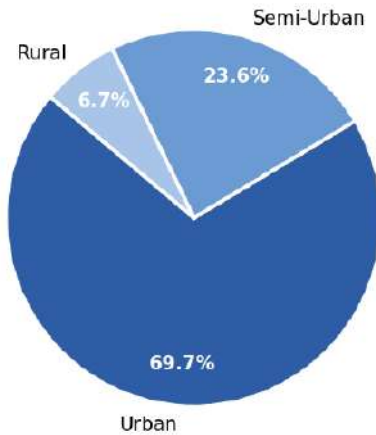


Figure 3: Geographic Distribution of Respondents

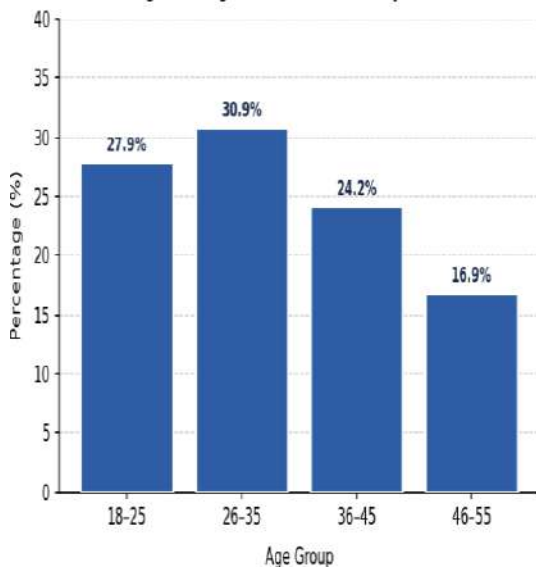


Figure 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

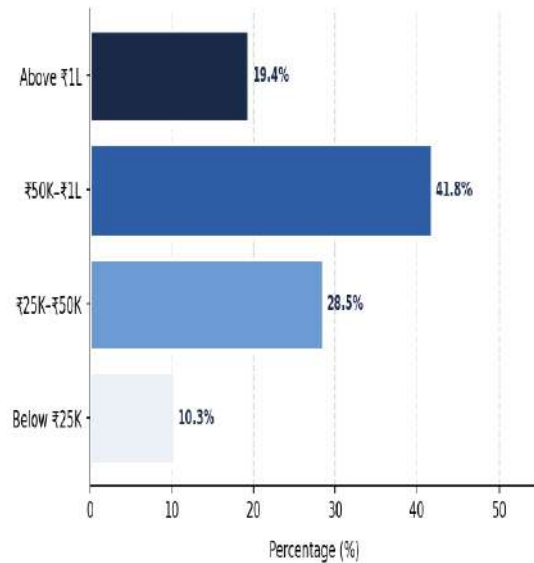
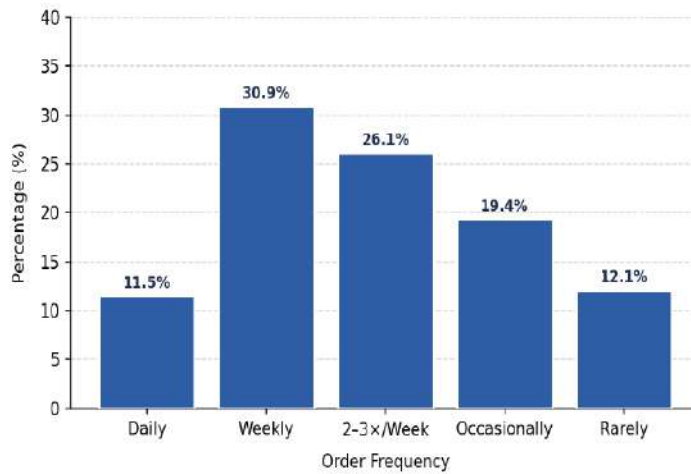


Figure 4: Monthly Income Distribution of Respondents

#### 4.2 Usage Behavior

Figure 5 reveals that 30.9% order weekly, 26.1% order 2-3 times per week, 19.4% occasionally, 12.1% rarely, and 11.5% daily. This implies that most respondents are regular to frequent users and thus their

factor importance ratings are credible. The majority of the respondents (51.5%) order from home and 33.9% order products from home and office. Zomato and Swiggy, the top two apps used (in many cases concurrently) together accounted for nearly the entire respondent base at 87.9% and 84.8% respectively.



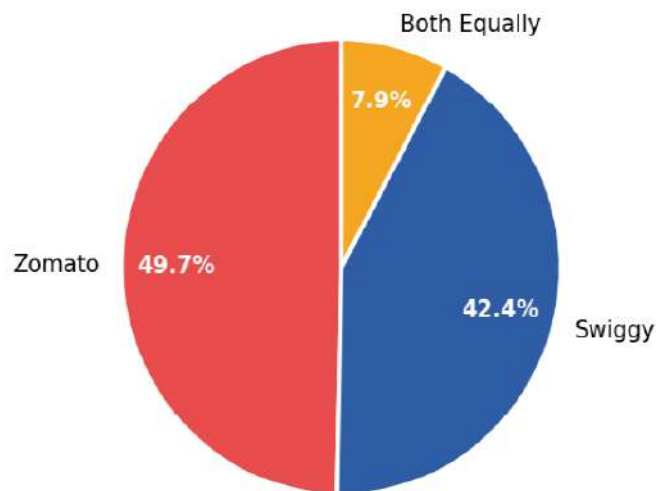
*Figure 5: Ordering Frequency of Respondents*

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### 3 Platform Preference

Among them, Zomato (49.7%) topped the list of most preferred platform, followed by Swiggy (42.4%) and both the platforms being equally liked by 7.9% of the respondents. The distribution is shown in Figure 6.

The main motivations for preference were Better Offers (32.1%), More Restaurant Choices (29.7%), Faster Delivery (20.6%) and Trust & Reliability (12.7%). Fig-7 Illustrates the reasons behind the customer's platform preferences.



*Figure 6: Platform Preference Distribution (N = 165)*

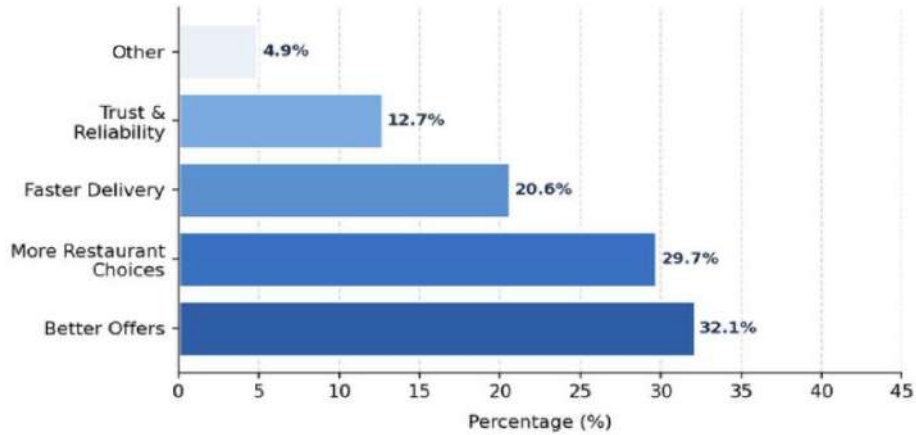


Figure 9: Reasons for Platform Preference

4.4 Platform Preference by Demographics

Cross tabulation helps to uncover subtle pattern(s). For 18–25 year olds, Swiggy is preferred (21% vs. 17%) and for all older age groups, Zomato is the option of choice, and the difference increases with age (Table 3). For the female respondents the division is almost even (33 Zomato vs 32 Swiggy) whereas for the male

respondents it is much more clear (49 Zomato vs 38 Swiggy). The differences between males and females and between age groups, however, are not statistically significant, as revealed in the results of the chi-square tests (gender:  $\chi^2 = 0.265$ ,  $p = 0.607$ ; age:  $\chi^2 = 2.313$ ,  $p = 0.510$ ). Fig-8 Illustrates the Platform Preferences by Age Group and Fig-9 Illustrates the Platform Preferences by Gender.

Table 3: Platform Preference by Age Group

Age Group	Zomato (n)	Swiggy (n)	Both (n)	Total	Zomato (%)	Swiggy (%)
18–25	17	21	8	46	37.0%	45.7%
26–35	21	17	13	51	41.2%	33.3%
36–45	20	14	6	40	50.0%	35.0%
46–55	24	9	5	28	57.1%	21.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>49.7%</b>	<b>42.4%</b>

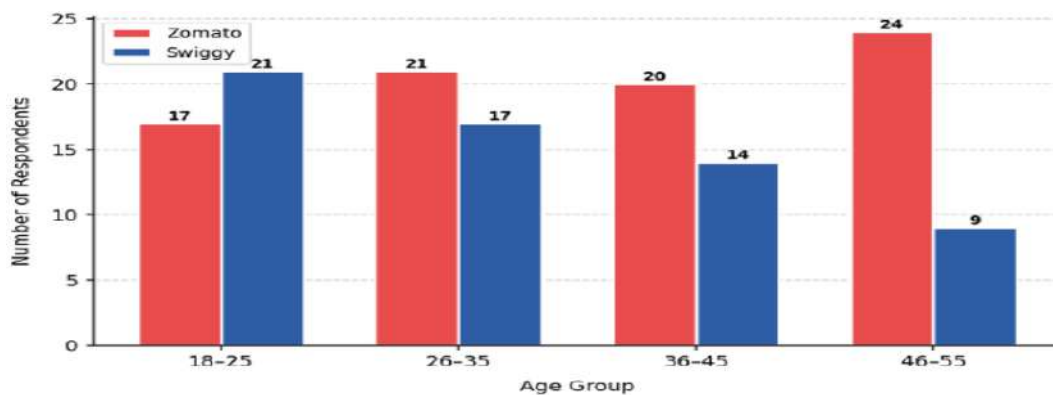


Figure 7: Platform Preference by Age Group ( $\chi^2 = 2.313$ ,  $p = 0.510$ )

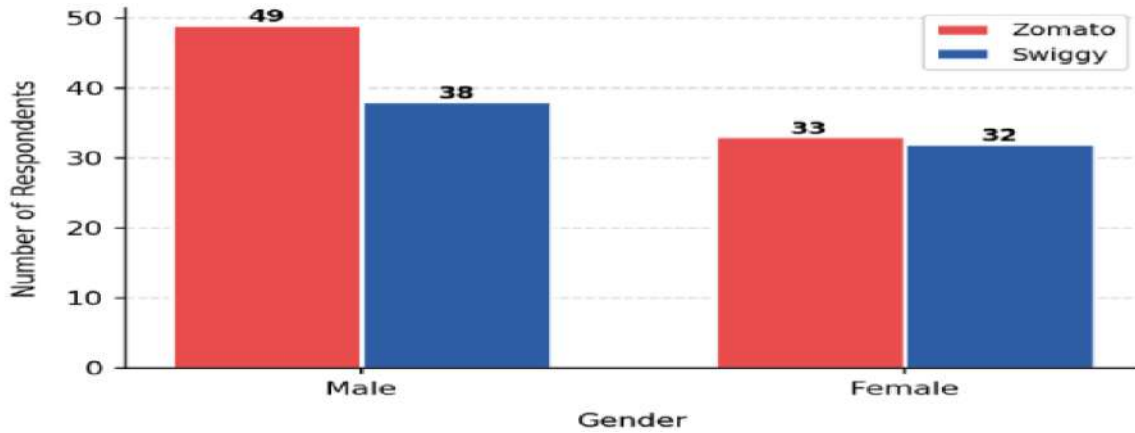


Figure 8: Platform Preference by Gender ( $\chi^2 = 0.265, p = 0.607$ )

5 Factor Importance Analysis

Table 4 shows descriptive statistics for all 12 selection factors according to their mean importance scores. The overall factor set is considered important by consumers with all the factors rated above 4.0 (out of 5.0). However, Brand Trust/Reputation (M = 4.242,

SD = 0.898) ranks highest, followed by Delivery Time (M = 4.206, SD = 0.859) and Variety of Restaurants and Ratings & Reviews (both M = 4.164). App Usability/Interface is at the bottom (M = 4.079) but still above the mean.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for 12 Selection Factors (N = 165)**

Rank	Selection Factor	Mean (M)	SD	Min	Max	N
1	Brand Trust / Reputation	4.242	0.898	1	5	165
2	Delivery Time	4.206	0.859	1	5	165
3	Variety of Restaurants	4.164	0.912	1	5	165
3	Ratings & Reviews	4.164	0.875	1	5	165
5	Food Quality	4.145	0.921	1	5	165
6	Customer Support / Service	4.133	0.904	1	5	165
7	Hygiene & Safety Standards	4.121	0.933	1	5	165
8	Delivery Charges	4.115	0.948	1	5	165
9	Payment Modes	4.109	0.887	1	5	165
10	Discounts & Offers	4.097	0.961	1	5	165
11	Price / Cost of Food	4.088	0.975	1	5	165
12	App Usability / Interface	4.079	0.916	1	5	165

4.6 Factor Importance by Platform (Swiggy vs. Zomato)

Figure 10 compares the mean factor scores of the preferred users of Swiggy and Zomato. Swiggy users rate Delivery Time (M = 4.27) and Discounts & Offers (M = 4.19) higher, which aligns with the brand

positioning of the company which has been made around the speed and promotional value. User ratings and reviews (M = 4.22), hygiene and safety (M = 4.20), and food quality (M = 4.17) are more important elements on Zomato, indicating that Zomato's focus is more on creating a restaurant quality experience and providing user-generated content.

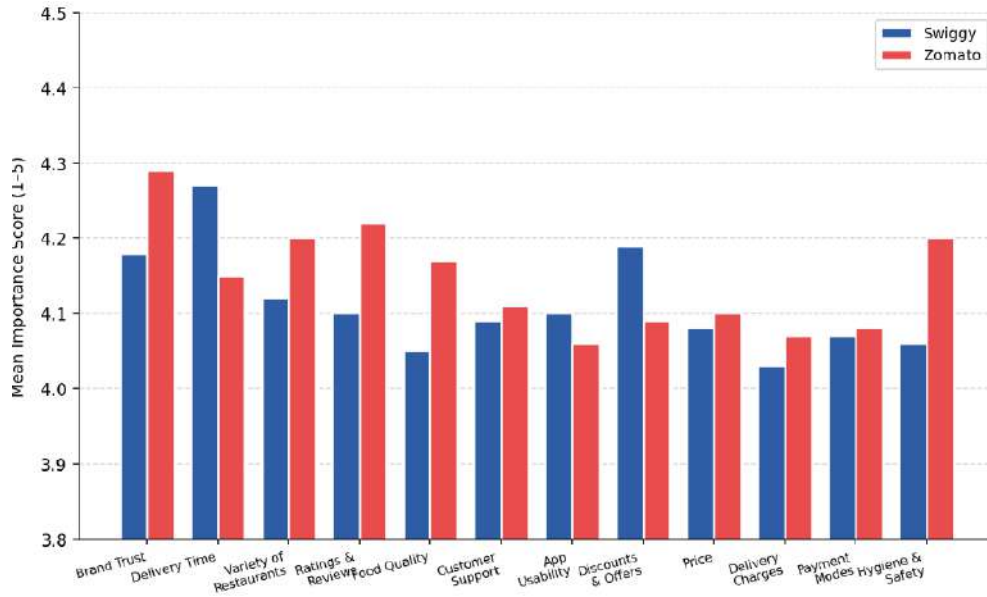


Figure 10: Mean Factor Importance Scores – Swiggy Users vs. Zomato Users

**4.7 Consumer Satisfaction Analysis**

The sample level of satisfaction is high overall: 55.8% have a satisfaction rating of 4 and 28.5% have a satisfaction rating of 5, resulting in a total satisfaction rating of 84.3% that is rated "Satisfied". Very few (4.8%) are unhappy (scored 2) and none scored the

lowest score of 1. This difference is not statistically significant ( $t = 0.215, p = 0.830$ ) which supports  $H_4$  and the mean satisfaction for Swiggy users ( $M = 4.10, SD = 0.75$ ) is marginally higher than for Zomato users ( $M = 4.07, SD = 0.78$ ). The distribution of satisfaction is depicted in Figure 11.

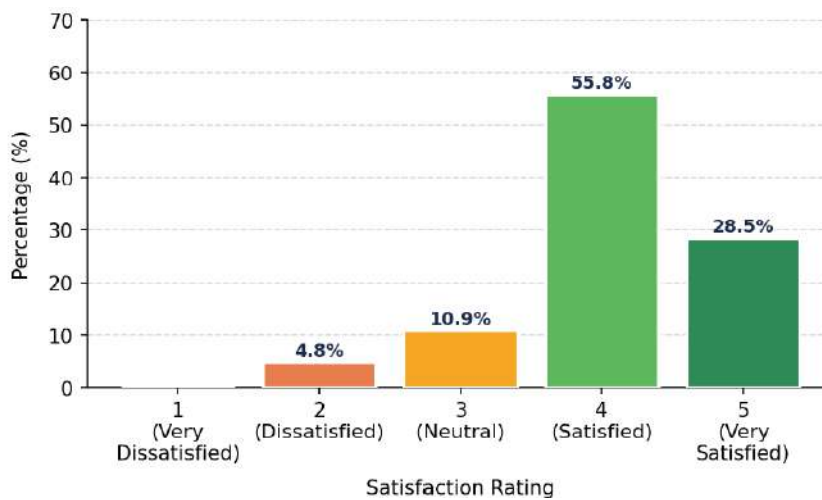


Figure 11: Overall Consumer Satisfaction Distribution

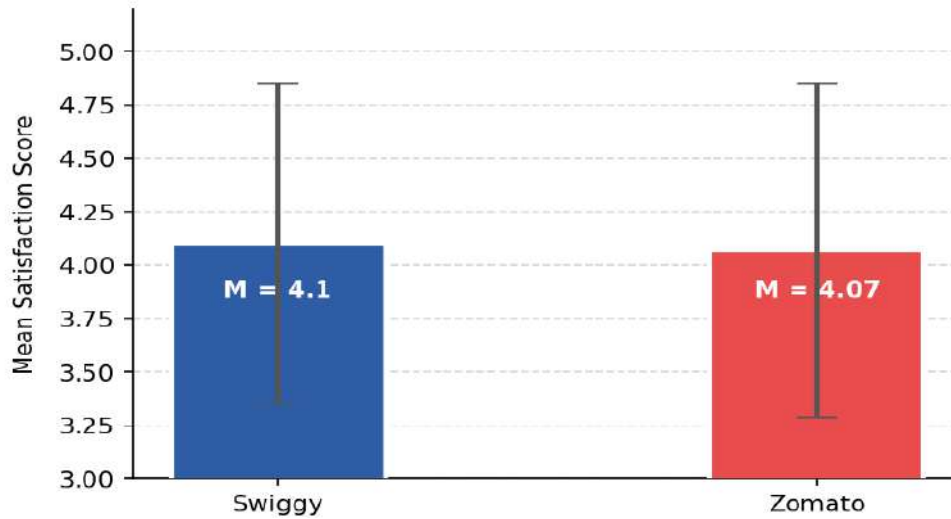


Figure 12: Mean Satisfaction Score by Platform ( $t = 0.215, p = 0.830$ )

**4.8 Consumer Issues Encountered**

Questions were asked asking them to check off any problems they had. The most frequent issues cited (35.8%) are related to late delivery, followed by wrong order (31.5%), app crash (29.1%), low food quality

(28.5%), payment problem (26.7%) and high delivery fee (26.1%). These frequencies are shown pictorially in Figure 13. Some of the qualitative responses were often related to poor resolution channels for customer support issues and lack of visibility on delivery progress.

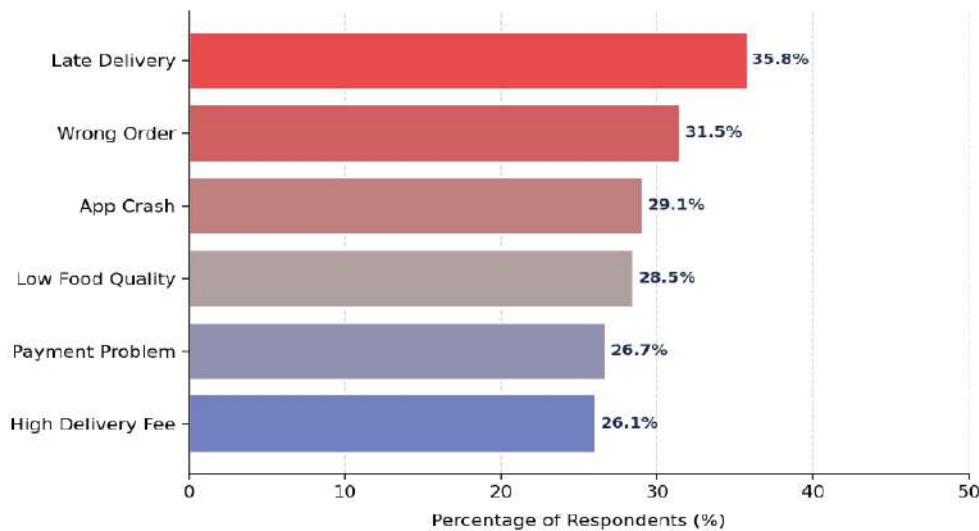


Figure 13: Common Issues Reported by Consumers (% of Respondents)

4.9 Inferential Statistics Summary

**Table 5: Summary of Inferential Statistical Tests**

Test	Variables	Statistic	p-value	Decision
Chi-square	Gender × Platform Preference	$\chi^2 = 0.265$	p = 0.607	Fail to reject H <sub>0</sub> (No sig. difference)
Chi-square	Age × Platform Preference	$\chi^2 = 2.313$	p = 0.510	Fail to reject H <sub>0</sub> (No sig. difference)
Independent t-test	Satisfaction: Swiggy vs. Zomato	t = 0.215	p = 0.830	Fail to reject H <sub>0</sub> (No sig. difference)
Reliability	12-item factor scale	$\alpha = 0.881$	—	Excellent reliability confirmed

**5.FINDINGS**

**Finding 01:** The single highest rated selection factor is the Brand Trust/Reputation (M = 4.242), which validates H<sub>1</sub>. This is because consumers value the value of their accumulated trust and brand associations more than the product's immediate utilitarian aspects, according to Oliver's (1980) commitment-trust theory.

**Finding 02:** Both the platforms don't have any strong lead over each other as 49.7% of people prefer Zomato over Swiggy. The split is close and indicates a healthy competition and continued delivery of value to the consumer from both platforms.

**Finding 03:** Platform preference is independent of gender ( $\chi^2 = 0.265$ , p = 0.607) and age ( $\chi^2 = 2.313$ , p = 0.510), confirming H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub>. There are factors that are common to every food delivery platform that influence choices rather than factors based on demographics.

**Finding 04:** H<sub>4</sub> is supported as Swiggy users and Zomato users have similar satisfaction levels (t = 0.215, p = 0.830). Although they have slightly different axes of their strategies, both platforms are able to serve the consumer at a similar level.

**Finding 05:** Price-related factors (Price, Delivery Charges, Discounts) follow in 6th, 8th, and 10th place respectively, thus stripping their prediction of the first 5 positions. Service dimensions that are not price-based are more important than price dimensions.

**Finding 06:** Late delivery (35.8%) is the most prevalent pain point – ironically, since Delivery Time is ranked 2nd in importance. The gap between "importance" and "performance" is an area of high risk that needs to be addressed in the way it is being run now.

**Finding 07:** The Swiggy app saw a slight preference from younger consumers (18–25) over the other age groups, although the difference is not significant. Zomato was preferred by older consumers, but in a much smaller proportion. This is a positive direction

as Swiggy has more of a social media marketing pitch for Gen Z customers.

**Finding 08:** 84.3% satisfaction (rate  $\geq 4/5$ ) and 71.5% definitive recommendation intent indicate that the Indian food delivery industry has developed into a service category with a high-contentment level, both top platforms have achieved a score above the consumer's expectation level.

**6.CONCLUYSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the existing body of literature on food delivery by introducing a comprehensive 12-factor model of platform selection in the context of India, which is validated and based on a psychometric framework. High internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.881$ ) of the factor scale indicates that it is a reliable measurement instrument for future research. The fact that brand trust is more important than the price-related factors diverges from some of the early e-commerce studies [11,17], which focused on the centrality of price, and is more in line with the more recent relational marketing theories that prioritize trust as the basis of digital consumer loyalty. This confirmation of the lack of moderation of demographic variables on platform preference must be added as a qualification to market segmentation strategies in the food-tech sector. The choice of food delivery platform seems to be based on universal quality dimensions of digital service, which are not age or gender specific, and this suggests implications for universal design and one size fits all communication strategies.

6.2 Managerial Implications

The importance of brand trust for platform companies means that a move that is detrimental to consumer trust, such as an unexplainable fee, an over-optimistic

promotion or an unaddressed complaint, has an even higher strategic risk. Responsiveness of customer service (Rank 6th) and communication about hygiene/safety, are therefore not secondary but main levers of trust building.

Though delivery was the 2nd ranked factor, the late delivery issue shows a huge performance gap that, if fixed, could greatly enhance consumer loyalty. Food quality, variety, and ratings are of great importance to restaurant partners, a need that is reflected in the need to ensure consistency of food quality across delivery formats. The poor quality of food delivery in the wrong context has a direct impact on platform trust via review mechanisms, resulting in a platform/restaurant interdependent systemic risk.

For digital marketers, the fact that better offers and more restaurant options are the two most common reasons for their preference for the platform indicates that investment in offers and acquisition of restaurants continue to be the two highest ROI activities on the platform. Also, brand trust signals are starting to show diminishing returns if the investments are purely promotional and not related to investments in the quality of the services.

### 6.3 Limitations and Future Research

There are a number of limitations to this study. First, the results obtained are not generalizable to the Indian consumer market as a whole because the sample was not random. Second, the cross-sectional design is unable to make inferences regarding causal links between the importance of factors and actual platform switching. Third, seasonal variation in ordering, and the effects of specific promotional campaigns in force at the time of the data collection period, are not recorded. Fourth, Tier-3 cities and rural consumers are underrepresented (6.7%) with a growing delivery market segment.

Future studies could take a longitudinal panel approach to examine switching by consumers over time, utilize probability sampling to ensure greater representativeness of the sample, leverage behavioral measures derived from platform analytics with self-reported attitudes, and test mediating and moderating processes of the platform selection process using structural equation modeling. Comparative cross country studies that compare the platform selection factors in India with other emerging economies in Southeast Asia or Africa would also contribute to the nascent literature on food delivery in emerging economies.

### 6.4 Concluding Remarks

In the food delivery space, India's duopoly of Swiggy and Zomato play on par with no one dominating consumer loyalty. The war will be decided by TRUST,

FAST, VARIETY and QUALITY, all of which are rated by the consumer as key dimensions. Platforms that invest systematically in these elements; not unsustainable discount wars, will be best positioned to create a competitive moat that lasts. This study has given a solid empirical evidence that backs up those strategic investments.

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