

Decoding customer choice on food delivery services or technology: insights from COVID-19

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Abstract

Consumers' preference for ordering food has changed during the current pandemic. They are aware and careful of the situation; does it change consumers' preferences? The current study investigates the impact of COVID-19 among consumers and provides direction to food delivery service providers on factors which help build a business strategy. Data was collected using an online mode, and 665 usable samples were processed further for analysis. The result of the study indicates that performance expectancy, promotion, efficiency, responsiveness, and compatibility emerged as statistically significant antecedents of use behaviour. It indicates that consumer choice has shifted towards technological aspects.

Keywords: OGS, UTAUT, UTAUT2, Behaviour, COVID-19

1. Introduction

The ongoing pandemic of COVID-19 has changed our lives fundamentally. Social distancing, self-protection and touchless life are the new normal of our daily life. COVID-19 has created new challenges for all businesses and industries. Many industries are impacted negatively due to COVID-19, and the restaurant and food industry is one of the worst-hit industries. The sharp decline in demand for outside home food has resulted into the closure of restaurants and food outlets. The online food delivery services played a vital role by providing a virtual platform which matches consumers' food requirements with restaurants and food outlets. According to Ken Research (2019), the online food delivery business was enjoying 6 to 8 million orders per month before the pandemic.

According to the McKinsey report (2019), globally, the online food delivery market stands at \$83 Billion or 1% of the total food market. India is one of the biggest markets in the world. India's food delivery service has a very long history of more than 100 years. The famous "Mumbai Dabba Walla" is the first food delivery service (Ray, Dheer, Bala, & Kaur, 2019). Over time, has business model of food delivery has changed from brick and mortar to technology-driven.

The online food service provider allows users to place an order by using the application, which resides on a smart mobile phone. Users can place an order by selecting the menu items or the restaurant. Ordering the food using online food delivery apps has reduced long-standing queues and long waiting times for customers, which helps food outlets and restaurants to increase the revenue and turnover of business for the restaurants.

Convenient and efficient processing and fulfilment are major advantages to consumers; these benefits have increased the popularity of services and push consumers to move to online food delivery services (Zhao and Bacao, 2020). Literature on online food delivery services suggests that transparency in the process, like food preparation, delivery, and payment are influencing factor (Pigatto et al., 2017).

Drivers such as reduction in waiting time, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, trust, low cost of food, discount and product promotion, and wide choice of food items and restaurants for the customers are driving factors for online food delivery services (Gani, Faroque, Muzareba, Amin & Rahman, 2021).

This study focuses on examining the factors affecting consumers' use behaviour towards food delivery apps. during COVID-19 pandemic. The second objective is to create a theoretical model which captures technology adoption, service and marketing aspects of consumers' use behaviour. The third objective is to find statistically significant factors which impact consumers' use behaviour. The paper is divided into four major sections, starting from the theoretical framework, research methodology, findings and implications.

2. Theoretical framework and hypothesis development

The objective of the study is to identify the factors which influence the use of online food delivery services. To empirically validate the factors, the researcher has adopted factors from UTAUT 2 (Venkatesh et al., 2012) and e-SRVQUAL (Parasuraman, 2005). After considering all the theories and factors, a theoretical model was developed (Figure 1). The identified factors are performance expectancy, social influence, efficiency, compatibility, trust, fulfilment, promotion and satisfaction.

Performance expectancy is defined as an individual's ability to enhance their performance using technology. The construct is derived from the perceived usefulness of TAM (Davis, 1989). Performance expectancy helps users to accomplish tasks and improve their performance. Performance expectancy is defined as the strongest predictor of behavioural intention and use behaviour of individuals (Rosli, Yeow & Siew, 2012). The construct will capture the utilitarian benefit of systems that an individual can get from them productively. Palau-Saumell et. al. (2019) mentioned that performance expectancy has a significant impact on intentions to use. Lee, Sung and Jeon (2019) demonstrated that performance expectancy was a determinant that positively influenced the continuous use intention of consumers. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H₁ performance expectancy influences the use behaviour of consumers of online food ordering applications.

Compatibility is defined to capture the technical aspect of online food delivery services. It captures how the application is compatible with the customer's smartphone. It captures the fitment of the application with the mobile devices that users are using. It also captures the online food ordering style of consumers. Compatibility indirectly influences the intention to use services (Caballillas et al., 2015). Compatibility positively influences intention to use learning systems, and it also moderates the perceived ease of use and enjoyment (Cheng, 2015). According to Zendehdel, Paim and Osman (2015), compatibility is one of the strongest predictors of intention to predict online purchase. Compatibility can generate a substantial impact on the actual use of online learning (Aldholay et al., 2019). Considering the above discussion, below mention hypothesis is crafted.

H₂ Compatibility influences the use behaviour of online food ordering application consumers.

Social influence is defined to capture the social aspect of users, how social circumstances and environment make a difference in individuals' decisions to use online food delivery services. Social influence is one of the strongest predictors of consumer behaviour, intention to use technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012). It is conceptualised that "how individuals perceive other people in their social circle, believe that he/she should use the system". Since online food delivery service is a relatively new service, it is anticipated that individuals' decisions will be driven by their social circumstances. Customers required social approval for their decision to use the new system (Alalwan et al., 2020). Studies have empirically identified that social influence is one of the strongest predictors

of individual use behaviour (Liu et al., 2019; Palau-Saumell et al., 2019). Thus, it is important to check the effect of social influence on consumer use behaviour, and below hypothesis is proposed.

H3. Social influence influences consumer use behaviour in using online food ordering applications.

The efficiency construct is adopted from E-S-Qual (Parsuram, 2005). In the current study, it is defined as efficiency as information which is provided on the application is simple, easy to use, structured and loads quickly. Efficiency captures the information aspect of the online service. It captures how efficiently users can use the information to avail the service. Literature on efficiency has mixed findings, few studies empirically identified that efficiency has a positive influence over the use behaviour of services (Padilla and Al-dweeri, 2013; Ulkhaq, 2017). According to Al-dweeri et. al. (2017), found out that there was no impact of efficiency on consumer behaviour intention. Thus, below mention hypothesis is proposed.

H4 efficiency influences consumer use behaviour in using online food ordering applications.

Fulfilment is defined as a promise of service that is fulfilled within the stipulated time by the website or application. Fulfilment captures the delivery aspect of service. The service which is promised is available and fulfilled within the timeline. Service providers are responsive towards promises which are being made. How customers perceive and experience the services which are availed. The fulfilment aspect also captured how and service provider listens to customers' requirements and provides clear and understandable information. The fulfilment dimension is adopted in this study from the E-S-QUAL form of the study of (Parsuraman et al., 2005).

H5 Fulfilment influences the use behaviour of online food delivery application consumers.

Promotion construct is multidimensional, there are mainly two dimensions, tangible and non-tangible. Non-tangible promotion captures the "referral program, rebate on next purchase, consumer can get more product, points/rewards/discounts, free food/means and free drivers/merchandise/stuff/value add services". Tangible promotion refers to the discount, cash back offers, and rebates. In the current study, promotion captures the tangible dimension of the food delivery service application. The service provider gives such promotional offers to new and existing customers. Promotion is one of the significant constructs which influence the use of online food ordering applications argued (Taylor, 2020). Product promotion using price discount and free deliveries did not influence the customer's intention to use online food delivery services (Chai and Yat, 2019). Considering the contradicting findings in the literature, below mention hypothesis is proposed.

H6 Promotion influence the use behaviour of online food delivery application consumers.

Responsiveness is defined as how timely a service provider responds to a customer's requirement. Technology becomes an enabler to service providers, which helps to respond timely manner (Iberahim et al., 2015). Responsiveness is one of the key aspects which has tangible and intangible aspects of services which impact consumer satisfaction and use behaviour (Kalaji, Myskketa, and Scalera, 2016). Responsiveness significantly influences consumer use behaviour to use technology (Minh et al., 2017). Responsive is directly and indirectly influencing customer satisfaction (Paul, 2018). Responsiveness predicts use of online banking systems and influence over all customer satisfaction (Nguyen et. al., 2020). Service responses have a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction (Alam and Al-Amir, 2020). Thus, mentions hypothesis is proposed

H7 Responsiveness influence the use behaviour of online food delivery application consumers.

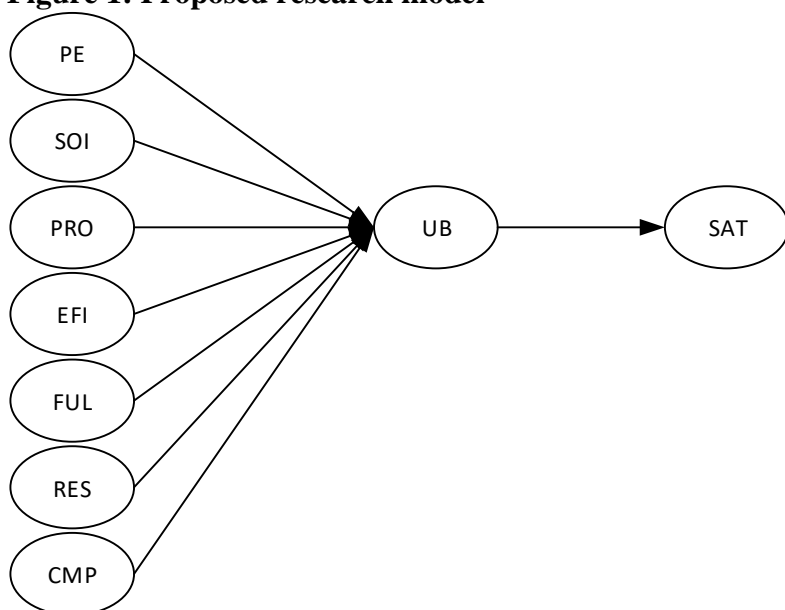
The use behaviour construct captures the actual use of online food delivery services by the consumer. Actual use of systems will lead to satisfaction among consumers. Increased use of the service will

increase satisfaction (Ayo et al., 2016). Use of the service will lead to customer satisfaction in the long run. Rita, Oliveira and Farisa (2019) have argued that e-service quality had a positive impact on customer satisfaction, and customer satisfaction has a positive impact on repurchase intention. Sharma and Sharma (2019) revealed that satisfaction and intention to use are two important precedents of actual usage, and satisfaction.

Wang et al. (2019), has identified that interaction quality, environment quality, inertia, and user satisfaction are key determinants of continuance intention. Hult et al. (2018) showed that perceived overall quality and customer expectations are stronger drivers of customer satisfaction in offline purchases. According to (Cheng, Fu & de Vreede, 2018), validated the relationships between service quality, satisfaction, and loyalty from the perspectives of both online service and offline service. Thus, below mention hypothesis is articulated.

H₈ Use behaviour influences customer satisfaction in using online food delivery applications by consumers.

Figure 1: Proposed research model



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Notes: CMP=compatibility; SI=social influence; PE=performance expectancy; EFI=Efficiency; Trust=trust; Full=fulfilment; Pro=promotion; UB=use behaviour; stat=satisfaction

3. Methodology

3.1 Instrument

The current study analysed the impact of COVID-19 on customer use behaviour and satisfaction with online food delivery applications. Before and during a pandemic, online and offline data were collected from the users. The ideal sample for the study was consumer who are using food delivery applications on their mobile phone. The scale items for construct promotion were adopted from Ayo et al. (2016). The scale items for construct performance expectancy, social influence, and use behaviour were adopted from (Venkatesh et al., 2012). The scale item compatibility, efficiency, fulfilment and satisfaction were adopted from (Parasuraman et al., 2000).

This study online and offline questionnaire of a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” was used. Demographic details like age, gender, education, income, and occupation of the respondent were captured.

Table 1: demographic details of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	269	40.5
Female	297	44.7
Do not want to disclose	99	14.9
Age (Years)		
18 to 25	126	18.9
26 to 33	217	32.6
34 to 41	112	16.8
42 to 49	136	20.5
50 and above	74	11.1
Education		
Up to Schooling	67	10.1
Graduate	269	40.5
Under Graduate	216	32.5
Post Graduate	69	10.4
Other	44	6.6
Occupation		
Job - Private	242	36.4
Business	46	6.9
Government Job	157	23.6
House Wife	109	16.4
Self employed	111	16.7
Income (Monthly INR)		
10000 to 20000	255	38.3
21000 to 31000	115	17.3
32000 to 42000	83	12.5
43000 to 53000	66	9.9
54000 and above	146	22.0
Amount Spent (Weekly)		
Up to 500	265	39.8
501 to 1000	168	25.3
1001 to 1500	98	14.7
1501 to 2000	93	14.0
Above 2000	41	6.2

3.2 Samples

Samples were collected from Gujarat state of India. An online questionnaire was distributed to collect samples. After scrutinising and removing missing values, a total of 665 usable samples were analysed. Overall response rate is 73%, which is well within the acceptable range (Baxi and Patel, 2021). Table 1 shows the sample frequency distribution.

There are 40.5% male respondents and 44.7% female respondents, and 11.9% respondents have declined to reply on their gender. Age wise 18.9% respondents were within (18 to 25 years), 32.6% respondents were within age group of (26 to 33 years), 16.8% respondent were within age group of (34 to 41 years), 20.5%, respondents were within age group of (42 to 49 years), remaining 11.1% respondents age was above 50 years.

On the education front, 10% of respondents have completed their schooling, and 40.5 % of respondents have completed their graduation. 32.5% of respondents have completed their postgraduate studies. The remaining 17% of respondents have completed a professional course. Occupation of the respondent is largely distributed among two categories, working professional and entrepreneur, with 60 % and 30%. A 55.6% of respondents' monthly income is between Rs. 10,000 to 31,000. There are

79% of respondents who ordered food and spent between 0 to Rs. 1500.00 per week.

4. Data analysis

The structural equation modelling technique is used to check the causal relationship among constructs of the hypotheses model (Oliveria et al., 2016). Statistical tools SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 22 were used to check the reliability and validity of the measurement model. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out to check the strong reliability of the questionnaire's items. The maximum likelihood method was implemented as an estimation method (Byrne, 2001).

Table 2 indicates the result of reliability and convergent validity. Standardised loading of all variables was significant ($p < 0.05$) and above 0.5. The AVE and alpha values are above the acceptable level, which is 0.5 and 0.7, respectively (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), indicating that the discriminant and convergent validity were established.

Moreover, model fit indices are established by achieving the required statistical limit. According to (Zhao & Bacao, 2020), the ratio to chi-square to degree of freedom (X^2/df), comparative fit indices (CFI), the goodness of fit indices (GFI), adjusted fit indices (AGFI), normalized fit index (NFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Table 3 indicates the fit indices for are measurement model and structural model. All the fit indices of the measurement model achieved an acceptable statistical level ($X^2/df = 2.5$, CFI = 0.91; AGFI = 0.90; NFI = 0.92; TLI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.048).

Table 2: Scale Reliability

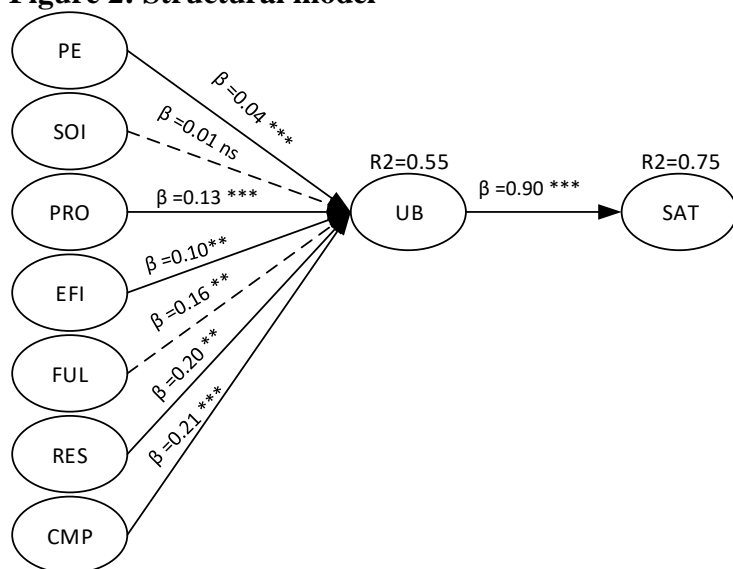
Variables	Items	Standardised Estimate	Cronbach α	CR	AVE
Performance expectancy	PE1	0.848	0.83	0.88	0.65
	PE2	0.865			
	PE3	0.776			
	PE5	0.741			
Social influence	SI3	0.703	0.76	0.77	0.52
	SI4	0.761			
	SI5	0.708			
Promotion	PRO1	0.992	0.73	0.76	0.60
	PRO2	0.977			
	PRO3	0.72			
	pro4	0.732			
Efficiency	EF1	0.727	0.8	0.79	0.56
	EF2	0.812			
	EF3	0.696			

Fulfilment	FU1	0.756	0.73	0.71	0.55
	FU2	0.726			
Responsiveness	RES2	0.749	0.82	0.82	0.61
	RES3	0.801			
	RES4	0.788			
Compatibility	CMP2	0.733	0.71	0.69	0.52
	CMP3	0.716			
	UB3	0.737			
Use Behavior	UB4	0.747	0.80	0.80	0.58
	UB5	0.744			
Satisfaction	STS1	0.745	0.77	0.76	0.51
	STS2	0.746			
	STS3	0.651			

Table 3: Models fit statistics.

	X ² /df	CFI	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	RMSEA
Recommended Value	<3	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	>0.90	<0.05
Measurement Model	2.5	0.94	0.91	0.90	0.92	0.93	0.048
Structural Model	2.7	0.93	0.92	0.90	0.90	0.92	0.048

Structural equation modelling techniques were used to check the proposed hypothesis using AMOS. Model fit indices we check. Path coefficients were measured using model fit indices. Overall goodness of fit of structural model was able to achieve an acceptable statistical level ($\chi^2/df = 2.7$, CFI = 0.93; GFI=0.92; AGFI=0.90; NFI=0.90; TLI=0.92; RMSEA=0.048). All the hypothesised structured model has an acceptable fit (Baxi and Patel, 2021).

Figure 2: Structural model

—————> Hypothesis supported; - - - - -> Hypothesis not supported; *** $p < 0.001$;

** $p < 0.05$; ns= not supported

The model's explanatory power was 55% and 75% for use behaviour and satisfaction, respectively. Responsiveness, compatibility, promotion and efficiency are domain factors which influence use behaviour. Table 4 outlines the standardised coefficient estimates and concern probability values. Finding suggest that compatibility and use behaviour ($\square\square\square\square\square\square\square t=3.5$, $p < 0.01$), responsiveness

and use behaviour ($\beta=2.5$, $p<0.01$), and between promotion and use behaviour ($\beta=2.8$, $p<0.01$), efficiency and use behaviour ($\beta=2.1$, $p<0.01$), performance expectancy and use behaviour ($\beta=2.6$, $p<0.01$), and use behaviour and satisfaction ($\beta=11.22$, $p<0.01$) was found positive and significant. Social influence and fulfilment did not have any significant influence over use behaviour ($p>0.05$).

Table 4 Standardised coefficients and t values of the model

Path	Coefficients (β)	t-value	Hypothesis supported
PE \rightarrow UB	0.04	2.6	Supported
SOI \rightarrow UB	0.01	0.45	Not supported
PRO \rightarrow UB	0.13	2.8	Supported
EFI \rightarrow UB	0.10	2.1	Supported
FUL \rightarrow UB	0.05	1.39	Not supported
RES \rightarrow UB	0.20	2.5	Supported
CMP \rightarrow UB	0.21	3.5	Supported
UB \rightarrow SAT	0.90	11.22	Supported

5. Discussion

The objective of the study is to develop a theoretical model to understand consumers' use behaviour and how use behaviour impacts consumer satisfaction during the pandemic situation. According to Baxi and Patel (2021), theory building required a new direction by incorporating theories from another domain. Such efforts provide much-needed inclusiveness and a broader aspect to the body of knowledge.

The results of the study indicate that performance expectancy, promotion, efficiency, responsiveness, and compatibility emerged as statistically significant antecedents of use behaviour during the pandemic situation. Use behaviour is one of the most significant predictors of satisfaction. These results are in line with (Cho et al., 2019; Ray et al., 2019). Furthermore, the study confirms high quality services are one of the essential aspects to increase the use of online food delivery. If the marketer provides promotion, then users of the online food delivery service feel motivated to use the online food delivery service. New normal norms of the pandemic, like “touchless” delivery of food. Strict monitoring of orders and other necessary precautions which need to be carried out by food delivery service providers has increased efficiency aspects. Online food delivery service providers need to adopt customer customer-centric approach. Even ongoing pandemic situation, customers become more watchful of the service quality aspect. The ongoing pandemic has provided an opportunity to rethink and redesign the business model. Food delivery services can provide customised service and keep the promotion on each order, which will increase the use of online food delivery and satisfaction in the pandemic situation.

The study has provided some surprising results where social influence did not have any impact on consumers to use online food delivery. The rationale behind such a finding is pandemic has completely changed the social norms. The result reflects that now users of online food delivery services have become more vigilant and are not influenced by any social pressure or norms. Online food delivery requires physical intervention in preparing food, delivering food, which increases the risk of getting infected with COVID-19. The second non-significant construct is fulfilment. This finding indicates food delivery services are not adhering to norms of the pandemic like wearing masks, gloves, body temperature checks of cooks, delivery persons and all people involved in the process of making food to delivering food, vaccination status of staff members.

6. Implication

6.1 Theoretical implications

As part of the theoretical model development process, we have predicted consumers' use behaviour and how use behaviour impacts customer satisfaction. Theoretical model is well supported by data. The result indicates that performance expectancy, promotion, efficiency, responsiveness, compatibility, and predict consumer's use behaviour.

In the domain of information systems, UTAUT and the consumer service quality SRVQUAL model are based model. Predominantly, these models are empirically tested by research scientists. These two models have reached their maximum limit, which demands a new direction of research. The current study provides a basis to move into a new direction of the theory-building process and expand the body of knowledge. The current study is in line with the results of (Annaraud and Berezina, 2020), who have established the relationship between customer service aspect and satisfaction and argued that the service aspect of online food delivery is one of the significant factors which predict customer satisfaction. Our study has checked the performance expectancy, promotion, and service aspect with consumer use behaviour.

One of the significant findings of the study is that consumer use behaviour significantly predicts users' satisfaction. A second significant finding of the study is that all factors which talk about service quality aspects are significantly predictive of consumers' use behaviour. These factors are efficiency, responsiveness and compatibility. A third significant finding is marketing domain construct positively influences users' behaviour. A general contribution of the study is to provide an inclusive model which provides new direction to theory development, which was called by (Venkatesh et al., 2016).

6.2 Managerial implications

Overall, all studies investigated the factors influencing consumer use behaviour and satisfaction with online food delivery. The factors which are considered are performance expectancy, promotion, social influence, fulfilment, compatibility, efficiency, and responsiveness. The result of the study is useful to restaurant managers, chefs and online food delivery application companies. The study provides a base platform for them to think about new challenges which has emerged as part of the pandemic effects. They need to start looking to change the business model by giving importance to, newly emerging aspects of customer service. An online food delivery service provider can provide customised and personalised services. Restaurant managers and chefs consistently focus towards to unique demands of customers and increase satisfaction with services. They should provide essential information like hygiene factors, body temperature and vaccine status of the chef, and the delivery executive over the food delivery application before delivering food. These are uncommon practices which have now become standard practices. Lack of such information makes it harder for users to order food online. This way, restaurant managers, chefs and food delivery application service providers can improve the quality of services. The customer must have access to a representative in case the customer faces any issues.

7. Limitations and future research direction

Every research has limitations, so as this one. The first limitation of the study is there we have not included a specific construct which checks the mediating and moderating effect. The second limitation is study is restricted towards Gujarat. The hypothesised research model, which is proposed in the current study is lacks its applicability to other states and countries. The current model can be used as the base model for the next research integrated model, in which theories from another domain can be included. The model might have omitted other aspects of technology adoption and use behaviour. The addition of demographic details as a moderator may improve the explanatory power of the model.

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