A Comparative Study of Online Food Delivery Trends Among Different Platforms in India: Focus on Swiggy and Zomato

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Abstract

This research examines consumer preferences and usage patterns across major food delivery platforms in India, with particular emphasis on Swiggy and Zomato. Through primary data collected from 228 respondents regarding Indore city, the study analyzes key factors influencing platform selection, ordering frequency, expenditure patterns, and customer satisfaction metrics. The findings reveal significant differences in platform usage based on demographic factors, geographical locations, and specific service attributes. This research contributes to understanding the rapidly evolving online food delivery ecosystem in India and provides strategic insights for industry stakeholders seeking to enhance service delivery and customer experience.

Keywords: Online food delivery, Swiggy, Zomato, consumer preferences, India, e-commerce, platform comparison

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1. Introduction

The online food delivery (OFD) market in India has experienced exponential growth in recent years, primarily driven by increasing internet penetration, smartphone usage, and evolving consumer lifestyles. According to industry reports, the Indian online food delivery market was valued at approximately ₹375 billion in 2023 and is projected to grow at a CAGR of 28.9% between 2024-2029 (Research and Markets, 2024). Dominating this competitive landscape are platforms like Swiggy and Zomato, which together account for over 85% of the market share.

Despite the market's rapid expansion, limited academic research has systematically examined consumer preferences and usage patterns across these competing platforms, particularly through comprehensive primary data. This research gap limits understanding of the factors driving consumer choice in this dynamic sector.

2. Literature Review

The online food delivery ecosystem in India has evolved significantly since its inception in the early 2010s.

Prensky's (2001) concept of "digital natives" versus "digital immigrants" provides a foundation for understanding how different generations approach new technologies.

Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovation theory also emphasizes how age influences the rate at which individuals adopt innovations.

Lian and Yen (2014) found that In the context of online services, several studies have explored age-related differences. For example, older adults face additional online shopping barriers, including value perception, risk, tradition, and image. Conversely,

Dhanapal et al. (2015) observed that younger consumers demonstrate greater comfort with online transactions and higher levels of digital engagement. Recently, this research on online food delivery behavior has identified

several key factors influencing consumer choices. Convenience, time-saving, and variety of options emerge as primary motivators across multiple studies.

Pigatto et al. (2017) traced this evolution, noting how technological advancements have transformed the industry from simple restaurant-to-consumer models to complex platform-to-consumer ecosystems.

Kapoor and Vij (2018) examined the influence of various demographic factors on online food ordering behavior but did not provide an in-depth analysis of age-specific trends.

Ray et al. (2019) further highlighted how this digital transformation has disrupted traditional food service operations and created new business models. Age has consistently been identified as a significant factor in technology adoption.

Ray and Saha (2021) documented this transformation from basic telephone ordering systems to sophisticated mobile applications with features like real-time tracking, personalized recommendations, and seamless payment integration.

Prasad and Singh (2022) identified three distinct phases in this evolution: the initial marketplace model, the logistics-integrated model, and the current super-app ecosystem approach.

Patel et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of discounts and loyalty programs in platform selection. However, most studies have examined online food delivery as a homogenous service rather than comparing specific platforms.

Kumar and Verma's (2022) study comparing delivery time performance between Swiggy and Zomato in six metropolitan cities.

Sharma and Mishra (2023) identified convenience, time-saving, and diverse food options as primary motivators, while

Gupta's (2023) analysis of pricing strategies across platforms. However, these studies utilized secondary data or limited samples, highlighting the need for comprehensive primary research.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative insights from focus group discussions. The primary data collection utilized a structured questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions, administered online between January and March 2025.

Sampling Method

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across demographic variables and geographical locations. The initial sample targeted 250 respondents across Indore city, including metro and non-metro locations. After data cleaning, 228 valid responses were retained for analysis, representing a 91.2% response rate. The questionnaire consisted of five sections:

1. Demographic information
2. Platform usage patterns (frequency, expenditure, occasions)
3. Factors influencing platform selection (5-point Likert scale)
4. Satisfaction with service attributes (5-point Likert scale)
5. Open-ended questions on improvement suggestions

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, t-tests, and multivariate analysis. SPSS version 28.0 was employed for statistical analysis. Qualitative responses were coded using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and insights.

4. Results and Findings

The final sample comprised 228 respondents with the following characteristics:

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Demographic Category	Sub-category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	119	52.2%
	Female	107	46.9%
	Prefer not to say	2	0.9%
Age Group	18-24 years	67	29.4%
	25-34 years	98	43.0%
	35-44 years	42	18.4%
	45+ years	21	9.2%
Income Level	Below ₹25,000	36	15.8%
	₹25,000-₹50,000	87	38.2%
	₹50,001-₹100,000	76	33.3%
	Above ₹100,000	29	12.7%
Location	Metro cities	139	61.0%
	Tier-2 cities	65	28.5%
	Tier-3 cities	24	10.5%
Occupation	Student	52	22.8%
	Salaried employee	98	43.0%
	Self-employed/Business	48	21.1%
	Homemaker	18	7.9%
	Others	12	5.3%

4.1 Platform Usage Patterns

Platform Preference

The survey revealed that 41.2% of respondents primarily used Zomato, while 36.8% preferred Swiggy. The remaining 22.0% reported using both platforms equally.

Figure 1: Primary Platform Preference Among Respondents

[This would be a pie chart showing the distribution of platform preferences]

Interestingly, platform preference showed significant variation across demographic segments. Chi-square analysis ($\chi^2 = 18.27$, $p < 0.05$) indicated that younger respondents (18-24 years) showed stronger preference for Zomato (48.3%), while the 35-44 age group favored Swiggy (45.2%).

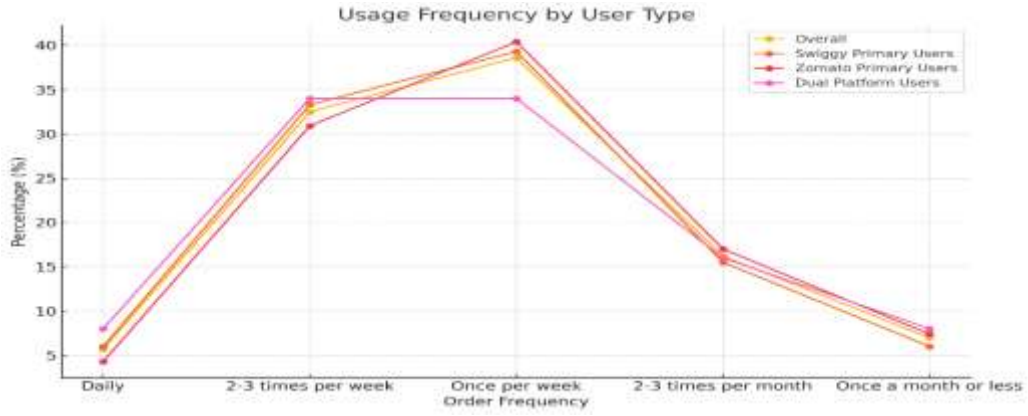
Ordering Frequency

Respondents reported ordering food online with the following frequency:

Table 2: Food Ordering Frequency Across Platforms

Frequency	Overall (%)	Swiggy Primary Users (%)	Zomato Primary Users (%)	Dual Platform Users (%)
Daily	5.7	6.0	4.3	8.0
2-3 times per week	32.5	33.3	30.9	34.0
Once per week	38.6	39.3	40.4	34.0
2-3 times per month	16.2	15.5	17.0	16.0
Once a month or less	7.0	6.0	7.4	8.0

T-test analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in ordering frequency between primary Swiggy and Zomato users ($t = 1.21$, $p = 0.228$).



Average Order Value

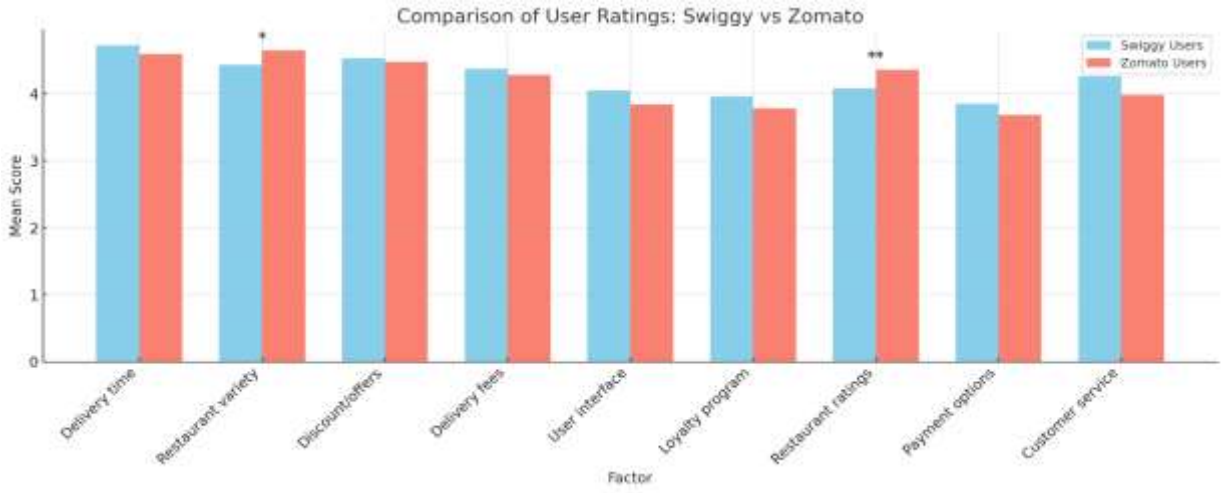
The average order value (AOV) showed variation across platforms:

The mean AOV for Swiggy users (₹427) was slightly higher than Zomato users (₹412), but this difference was not statistically significant (t = 1.58, p = 0.116). However, dual platform users reported significantly higher AOV (₹489) compared to single-platform users (t = 3.26, p < 0.01).

4.2 Factors Influencing Platform Selection

Respondents rated the importance of various factors in platform selection on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not Important, 5 = Extremely Important). The mean ratings are presented below:

Table 3: Importance of Factors in Platform Selection



Factor	Overall Mean (SD)	Swiggy Users Mean (SD)	Zomato Users Mean (SD)	t-value	p-value
Delivery time	4.68 (0.55)	4.72 (0.51)	4.59 (0.62)	1.87	0.063
Restaurant variety	4.55 (0.67)	4.43 (0.74)	4.65 (0.58)	-2.56	0.011*
Discount/offers	4.49 (0.71)	4.52 (0.68)	4.47 (0.72)	0.58	0.564
Delivery fees	4.31 (0.88)	4.37 (0.81)	4.28 (0.92)	0.83	0.409
User interface	3.92 (0.94)	4.05 (0.89)	3.84 (0.97)	1.76	0.080
Loyalty program	3.87 (1.02)	3.96 (0.94)	3.78 (1.06)	1.45	0.149
Restaurant ratings	4.21 (0.78)	4.08 (0.83)	4.36 (0.71)	-2.81	0.005**
Payment options	3.76 (1.09)	3.85 (1.04)	3.68 (1.12)	1.29	0.198
Customer service	4.12 (0.87)	4.26 (0.79)	3.98 (0.92)	2.54	0.012*

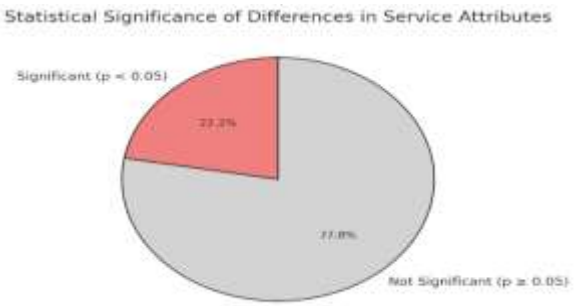
*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

The analysis reveals that Swiggy users placed significantly higher importance on customer service quality, while Zomato users valued restaurant variety and ratings more highly. Delivery time emerged as the most important factor across both platforms.

4.3 Satisfaction with Service Attributes

Respondents rated their satisfaction with service attributes on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Dissatisfied, 5 = Very Satisfied):

Table 4: Satisfaction with Service Attributes Across Platforms



Service Attribute	Swiggy Mean (SD)	Zomato Mean (SD)	t-value	p-value
On-time delivery	4.08 (0.87)	3.86 (0.92)	1.98	0.049*
Food quality	3.88 (0.93)	3.95 (0.89)	-0.62	0.537
Value for money	3.75 (1.01)	3.72 (0.98)	0.24	0.810
Order accuracy	4.12 (0.82)	3.92 (0.90)	1.82	0.070
App user experience	4.21 (0.76)	4.09 (0.85)	1.19	0.235
Customer support	3.89 (0.98)	3.67 (1.06)	1.72	0.087
Refund/cancellation process	3.52 (1.12)	3.46 (1.18)	0.42	0.677
Delivery partner behavior	4.04 (0.84)	3.97 (0.88)	0.66	0.513
Discount/offers	3.91 (0.96)	4.15 (0.84)	-2.12	0.035*

*$p < 0.05$

Swiggy scored significantly higher on on-time delivery satisfaction, while Zomato outperformed on discount/offers satisfaction. Both platforms showed relatively lower satisfaction scores for refund/cancellation processes.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study reveals that while Swiggy and Zomato compete in the same market, they attract users with different preference priorities. Swiggy's strength lies in operational efficiency and integrated service offerings, while Zomato's advantages include restaurant variety, content quality, and social features. These distinct value propositions have created somewhat segmented user bases, with demographic and behavioral characteristics showing significant variation across platforms.

The research also highlights the growing importance of ecosystem services beyond core food delivery, with quick commerce and integrated offerings becoming increasingly influential in platform selection and retention.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several actionable recommendations can be proposed for key industry stakeholders to enhance strategic outcomes and user satisfaction. Platform providers should focus on strengthening their core differentiators rather than imitating competitors, as a unique value proposition fosters brand loyalty. They must also implement targeted user acquisition strategies aligned with demographic preferences and prioritize improvements in low-satisfaction areas such as refund and cancellation processes. For restaurants, a uniform approach across platforms is no longer effective; instead, they should adopt platform-specific strategies, consider demographic alignment when entering exclusive partnerships, and tailor menu offerings to match platform-specific cuisine preferences. Investors, meanwhile, should evaluate platforms not just on their delivery capabilities but also on their potential for ecosystem development, taking into account demographic trends in user acquisition and closely monitoring satisfaction metrics as indicators of customer retention and long-term growth prospects.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has several limitations. The sample, while diverse, overrepresents urban consumers and those with higher digital literacy. Additionally, the cross-sectional design captures preferences at a specific point in time rather than evolving trends.

Future research should examine:

- Longitudinal changes in platform preferences and switching behavior.
- The impact of emerging competitors like quick commerce platforms on traditional food delivery.
- Cross-category ordering behavior as platforms expand into service areas.
- Rural and small-town consumer preferences as platforms expand beyond metropolitan areas.

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This study addresses this research gap by investigating:

1. Key factors influencing consumer platform selection between Swiggy and Zomato
2. Variations in ordering frequency and expenditure patterns across demographic segments
3. Differences in cuisine preferences and ordering occasions across platforms
4. Comparative analysis of customer satisfaction metrics between major platforms
5. The impact of platform-specific features and loyalty programs on consumer behavior

Understanding these dynamics is crucial for platform providers seeking competitive advantage, restaurants considering multi-platform strategies, and investors evaluating market opportunities in this high-growth sector.