

A BEHAVIORAL STUDY OF CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS TOWARD DIGITAL FOOD DELIVERY SERVICES IN TIER-II CITIES OF NORTH INDIA

Manmeet Jaggi¹, Dr. Samta Jain²

Research Scholar, Department of Management, ISBM University¹

Associate Professor, Department of Management, ISBM University²

Abstract

The exponential growth of digital food delivery services in India has transformed consumer dining habits, particularly in Tier-II cities of North India. This study examines consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions toward online food delivery platforms in cities like Chandigarh, Jaipur, Lucknow, and Dehradun. Employing the Technology Acceptance Model and Theory of Planned Behavior, this research investigates factors influencing adoption patterns among 385 respondents aged 18-45 years. Data collection utilized structured questionnaires and convenience sampling during January-March 2025. Results indicate that perceived ease of use, service quality, promotional offers, and delivery time significantly influence consumer satisfaction and reuse intention. The study reveals that 68.3% of respondents order food online at least once weekly, with average order values ranging from ₹350-₹500. Platform preference shows Swiggy (42.1%) and Zomato (39.7%) dominating the market. Statistical analysis demonstrates significant correlations between convenience motivation, price consciousness, and platform loyalty. Findings suggest that Tier-II city consumers prioritize value-for-money propositions and reliable delivery over premium features. This research contributes to understanding digital consumption patterns in emerging urban markets and provides strategic insights for platform operators targeting non-metropolitan regions.

Keywords: *Online food delivery¹, Consumer behavior², Tier-II cities³, Technology acceptance⁴, Digital services⁵.*

1. Introduction

India's online food delivery market has witnessed unprecedented growth, valued at USD 31.77 billion in 2024 and projected to reach USD 140.85 billion by 2030, reflecting a compound annual growth rate of 28.17%. While metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru initially dominated this sector, Tier-II and Tier-III cities now account for over 48% of total food delivery orders by volume as of 2025. North India's Tier-II cities, including Chandigarh, Jaipur, Lucknow, Agra, and Dehradun, have emerged as significant growth markets, contributing approximately 32% to major platforms' total order volume in 2024. The rapid penetration of smartphones, with internet users exceeding 624 million in India, coupled with affordable data plans and improved logistics infrastructure, has democratized access to digital food delivery services. Tier-II cities present unique market characteristics distinct from metropolitan areas. With urban populations growing at 2.3%

annually and expected to generate 75% of national income by 2031, these cities represent substantial untapped potential. However, consumers in these markets exhibit different behavioral patterns, with 54% prioritizing deals and promotional offers compared to 50% of metropolitan consumers who value quick delivery. The average order value in Tier-II cities typically ranges between ₹300-₹600, lower than metropolitan markets, presenting distinct challenges for platform profitability. Additionally, consumer demographics in these cities show a predominance of young professionals aged 18-34 years, students, and nuclear families seeking convenient meal solutions. Despite the market's significance, comprehensive behavioral studies focusing specifically on Tier-II cities of North India remain limited. Most existing research concentrates on metropolitan markets or provides pan-India perspectives without regional differentiation. Understanding consumer attitudes, adoption drivers, and behavioral intentions in these emerging markets is crucial for platform operators, restaurant partners, and policymakers. This study addresses this research gap by examining the behavioral dynamics of digital food delivery adoption in North India's Tier-II cities, exploring factors that influence consumer attitudes, satisfaction levels, and continued usage intentions. The findings will contribute to academic literature on digital consumption patterns in emerging urban markets and provide actionable insights for industry stakeholders seeking to optimize their strategies for non-metropolitan regions.

2. Literature Review

Consumer behavior toward digital food delivery services has been extensively examined through various theoretical frameworks. The Technology Acceptance Model, developed by Davis, explains technology adoption through perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. An and colleagues applied the extended TAM to food delivery applications, demonstrating that personal innovativeness and trust significantly influence perceived ease of use and behavioral intentions. Similarly, Chiu's meta-analytic study identified convenience, service quality, and security as critical determinants of consumers' intention to use online food delivery services. The Theory of Planned Behavior, proposed by Ajzen, posits that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control shape behavioral intentions. Chowdhury demonstrated that perceived convenience and service quality, mediated by attitude, significantly influence consumers' behavioral intentions toward food delivery services. Research on Indian markets reveals specific patterns relevant to Tier-II cities. Jadhav and colleagues found that diverse restaurant options and user-friendly interfaces positively influence consumer satisfaction and app usage frequency, while food packaging quality showed minimal impact. Sinha investigated customer satisfaction and loyalty in Indian markets, establishing strong correlations between service quality dimensions and repurchase intentions. Studies focusing on emerging markets indicate that price consciousness plays a more prominent role in Tier-II and Tier-III cities compared to metropolitan areas. PwC India's research demonstrates that 54% of consumers in Tier-II to Tier-IV cities prioritize deals and offers, contrasting with metropolitan consumers who value speed over cost savings.

Service quality dimensions significantly influence consumer behavior in food delivery contexts. Lin and colleagues examined SERVQUAL dimensions, establishing that reliability, responsiveness, and platform efficiency impact consumer satisfaction, loyalty, and reuse intention. Hong investigated continuance purchase intentions, revealing that health aspects, food quality, service quality, and price value significantly influence customer decisions, with gender moderating these relationships. Platform-specific factors also shape consumer attitudes. Research indicates that delivery time, order accuracy, real-time tracking capabilities, and customer service responsiveness critically influence satisfaction levels. Studies demonstrate that seamless app functionality, including search efficiency, payment integration, and user interface design, affects adoption rates and continued usage. Market dynamics in Tier-II cities present unique characteristics. Industry data shows these markets contributed over 32% of Zomato and Swiggy's total order volume in 2024, with exponential growth between 2020 and 2025. Digital payment adoption, particularly UPI, has facilitated this growth, with 91.7% of transactions occurring through digital methods in 2024. However, lower average order values and price

sensitivity create distinct challenges for profitability in these markets. Consumer demographics in Tier-II cities skew younger, with individuals aged 18-34 years constituting the primary user base, driven by convenience needs, time constraints, and aspirational consumption patterns influenced by metropolitan lifestyle trends.

3. Objectives

1. To examine consumer attitudes, satisfaction levels, and behavioral intentions toward digital food delivery services in Tier-II cities of North India.
2. To identify key determinants influencing platform selection, usage frequency, and continued usage intentions among consumers in emerging urban markets.

4. Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research design employing a structured questionnaire survey to examine consumer behavior toward digital food delivery services. The research was conducted across five Tier-II cities in North India: Chandigarh, Jaipur, Lucknow, Agra, and Dehradun, selected based on their population size, digital infrastructure, and market penetration of food delivery platforms. The target population comprised consumers aged 18-45 years who had used online food delivery services at least once in the preceding six months. A convenience sampling technique was employed to recruit 385 respondents during January-March 2025. Sample size determination followed Cochran's formula with 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, ensuring statistical adequacy for the study. The structured questionnaire comprised four sections: demographic profile, usage patterns, attitude measurements using five-point Likert scales, and behavioral intentions. Scale items were adapted from validated instruments based on the Technology Acceptance Model and Theory of Planned Behavior, with modifications to suit the Indian Tier-II city context. Variables measured included perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, service quality, price consciousness, satisfaction levels, and reuse intentions.

Data collection occurred through both online platforms and in-person surveys at educational institutions, commercial areas, and residential complexes to ensure demographic diversity. Each questionnaire required approximately 10-12 minutes for completion. Prior to full-scale data collection, a pilot study with 40 respondents validated instrument reliability, yielding Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70 for all constructs, confirming internal consistency. Data analysis employed SPSS 26.0 and SmartPLS 4.0 software. Descriptive statistics characterized respondent profiles and usage patterns. Inferential statistics, including chi-square tests, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis, examined relationships between variables. Structural equation modeling assessed the proposed theoretical framework, testing direct and indirect effects of independent variables on behavioral intentions. Ethical considerations included informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity assurance, and data confidentiality protocols throughout the research process.

5. Results

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=385)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age Group	18-25 years	167	43.4%
	26-35 years	152	39.5%
	36-45 years	66	17.1%
Gender	Male	219	56.9%

	Female	166	43.1%
Education	Undergraduate	124	32.2%
	Graduate	186	48.3%
	Postgraduate	75	19.5%
Monthly Income	Below ₹25,000	89	23.1%
	₹25,000-₹50,000	178	46.2%
	Above ₹50,000	118	30.7%
Occupation	Student	98	25.5%
	Private Employee	187	48.6%
	Self-Employed	64	16.6%
	Government Employee	36	9.3%

The demographic analysis reveals that consumers aged 18-35 years constitute 82.9% of the sample, indicating younger demographics dominate food delivery adoption in Tier-II cities. Male respondents slightly outnumber females at 56.9%, suggesting gender-based digital divide considerations. Educational qualifications show 67.8% possess graduate or postgraduate degrees, reflecting educated consumer base characteristics. Income distribution indicates middle-income segments (₹25,000-₹50,000) form the largest user group at 46.2%. Occupational data demonstrates private sector employees represent 48.6% of users, followed by students at 25.5%, aligning with time-constrained lifestyle patterns driving food delivery adoption in emerging urban markets.

Table 2: Usage Patterns and Platform Preferences (N=385)

Usage Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Usage Frequency	Once a week	127	33.0%
	2-3 times per week	136	35.3%
	4-6 times per week	88	22.9%
	Daily	34	8.8%
Primary Platform	Swiggy	162	42.1%
	Zomato	153	39.7%
	Other platforms	70	18.2%
Average Order Value	₹200-₹350	92	23.9%
	₹350-₹500	178	46.2%
	Above ₹500	115	29.9%
Preferred Payment	UPI/Digital Wallets	348	90.4%
	Cash on Delivery	27	7.0%
	Credit/Debit Cards	10	2.6%
Ordering Time	Lunch (12-3 PM)	97	25.2%
	Evening (5-8 PM)	186	48.3%
	Dinner (8-11 PM)	102	26.5%

Usage pattern analysis demonstrates that 68.3% of respondents order food at least twice weekly, indicating habitual adoption of delivery services in Tier-II cities. Platform preference shows near-equal market share between Swiggy (42.1%) and Zomato (39.7%), reflecting competitive market dynamics. Average order values cluster around ₹350-₹500 (46.2%), confirming industry observations of lower transaction values compared to metropolitan markets. Digital payment dominance at 90.4% substantiates India's digital payment infrastructure success, particularly UPI adoption. Evening hours (5-8 PM) emerge as peak ordering periods with 48.3%

preference, suggesting convenience-driven consumption patterns among working professionals returning home during these hours.

Table 3: Consumer Attitudes Toward Food Delivery Services (Mean Scores on 5-Point Likert Scale)

Attitude Dimension	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
Perceived Ease of Use	4.21	0.68
Perceived Usefulness	4.38	0.61
Service Quality	3.87	0.79
Price Consciousness	4.52	0.58
Delivery Time Satisfaction	3.94	0.83
Food Quality Perception	4.09	0.72
Platform Trust	3.76	0.88
Overall Satisfaction	4.02	0.69
Reuse Intention	4.31	0.64

Attitude measurement reveals price consciousness scores highest ($M=4.52$, $SD=0.58$), confirming Tier-II city consumers' value-seeking behavior compared to metropolitan markets. Perceived usefulness ($M=4.38$) and ease of use ($M=4.21$) demonstrate strong technological acceptance, validating TAM framework applicability. Reuse intention scores highly ($M=4.31$), indicating sustained platform engagement likelihood. Service quality ($M=3.87$) and platform trust ($M=3.76$) show moderate ratings, suggesting improvement opportunities for operators. Delivery time satisfaction ($M=3.94$) reflects infrastructure challenges in Tier-II cities. Food quality perception ($M=4.09$) indicates consumers generally satisfied with restaurant partnerships, though variability exists. Overall satisfaction ($M=4.02$) demonstrates positive consumer experiences, supporting continued market growth potential.

Table 4: Factors Influencing Platform Selection (N=385)

Selection Factor	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Not Important	Frequency Distribution
Discount Offers	246 (63.9%)	112 (29.1%)	21 (5.5%)	6 (1.5%)	385
Delivery Speed	189 (49.1%)	156 (40.5%)	31 (8.0%)	9 (2.4%)	385
Restaurant Variety	167 (43.4%)	178 (46.2%)	34 (8.8%)	6 (1.6%)	385
App Interface	134 (34.8%)	187 (48.6%)	52 (13.5%)	12 (3.1%)	385
Customer Reviews	198 (51.4%)	152 (39.5%)	28 (7.3%)	7 (1.8%)	385
Delivery Charges	221 (57.4%)	137 (35.6%)	22 (5.7%)	5 (1.3%)	385

Platform selection factors reveal that discount offers (63.9% very important) and delivery charges (57.4% very important) critically influence consumer decisions, reinforcing price sensitivity in Tier-II markets. Customer reviews emerge as significant trust-building mechanisms (51.4% very important), compensating for limited physical restaurant familiarity. Delivery speed importance (49.1% very important) suggests time-saving convenience remains primary adoption driver. Restaurant variety appeals to 89.6% of respondents (very important + important), indicating diverse culinary preferences. App interface usability scores 83.4% combined importance, validating technology acceptance model's perceived ease of use construct. Combined analysis demonstrates Tier-II consumers employ multi-dimensional evaluation criteria prioritizing economic value and convenience over premium features.

Table 5: Service Quality Dimensions and Satisfaction (Correlation Matrix)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Order Accuracy	1.00					
2. Delivery Timeliness	0.687**	1.00				
3. Food Packaging	0.542**	0.598**	1.00			
4. Customer Support	0.491**	0.523**	0.467**	1.00		
5. App Functionality	0.634**	0.671**	0.589**	0.612**	1.00	
6. Overall Satisfaction	0.742**	0.793**	0.651**	0.587**	0.728**	1.00

**Note: **p < 0.01 (two-tailed)

Correlation analysis demonstrates strong positive relationships between service quality dimensions and overall satisfaction. Delivery timeliness exhibits strongest correlation with satisfaction ($r=0.793$, $p<0.01$), emphasizing punctuality's critical role in consumer evaluations. Order accuracy correlates highly with satisfaction ($r=0.742$, $p<0.01$), indicating error-free service significantly impacts customer perceptions. App functionality shows substantial correlation ($r=0.728$, $p<0.01$), validating platform usability importance. Food packaging quality demonstrates moderate correlation ($r=0.651$, $p<0.01$), suggesting tangible service elements influence satisfaction. Customer support responsiveness correlates moderately ($r=0.587$, $p<0.01$), indicating problem resolution capabilities affect loyalty. Inter-dimensional correlations ($r=0.467-0.687$) suggest service quality constructs interconnect, requiring holistic improvement approaches rather than isolated interventions for optimal consumer satisfaction in Tier-II city markets.

Table 6: Regression Analysis - Predictors of Reuse Intention

Predictor Variables	Beta (β)	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	VIF
Perceived Ease of Use	0.187	0.042	4.452	<0.001	1.89
Perceived Usefulness	0.243	0.038	6.395	<0.001	1.76
Service Quality	0.198	0.045	4.400	<0.001	2.12
Price Consciousness	0.279	0.041	6.805	<0.001	1.54
Platform Trust	0.156	0.047	3.319	0.001	1.93
Overall Satisfaction	0.312	0.039	8.000	<0.001	2.34

Model Statistics: $R^2 = 0.742$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.738$, $F(6,378) = 181.42$, $p < 0.001$

Multiple regression analysis identifies significant predictors of reuse intention, explaining 74.2% variance ($R^2=0.742$). Overall satisfaction emerges as strongest predictor ($\beta=0.312$, $p<0.001$), confirming satisfaction's central role in loyalty formation. Price consciousness demonstrates substantial influence ($\beta=0.279$, $p<0.001$), distinctively characterizing Tier-II city consumers' value-seeking behavior. Perceived usefulness ($\beta=0.243$, $p<0.001$) and service quality ($\beta=0.198$, $p<0.001$) significantly impact intentions, validating TAM constructs. Perceived ease of use ($\beta=0.187$, $p<0.001$) contributes meaningfully, supporting usability importance. Platform trust ($\beta=0.156$, $p=0.001$) shows smaller but significant effect. All VIF values below 3.0 confirm multicollinearity absence. Model significance ($F=181.42$, $p<0.001$) validates regression equation reliability for predicting consumer behavioral intentions in food delivery contexts.

6. Discussion

The findings illuminate distinctive behavioral patterns characterizing digital food delivery adoption in North India's Tier-II cities, advancing understanding of consumer dynamics in emerging urban markets. Results substantiate that price consciousness ($\beta=0.279$) exerts stronger influence on behavioral intentions compared to metropolitan markets, where convenience typically dominates. This finding aligns with PwC India's observation that 54% of Tier-II city consumers prioritize deals and offers over speed. The average order value clustering around ₹350-₹500 reflects economic constraints and value-seeking behaviors distinct from metropolitan consumers, whose transaction values typically exceed ₹600. Platform operators must recalibrate promotional strategies, emphasizing cost savings, bundled offers, and loyalty programs rather than premium features to capture this price-sensitive segment effectively. The dominance of young demographics (82.9% aged 18-35 years) parallels industry trends identifying millennials and Gen Z as primary digital adopters. However, Tier-II city consumers exhibit unique characteristics combining technological proficiency with traditional value orientations. The high perceived ease of use scores ($M=4.21$) contradict assumptions about technological barriers in smaller cities, demonstrating that affordable smartphones and intuitive app designs have democratized digital access. Digital payment adoption at 90.4% substantiates India's UPI revolution success, eliminating cash-handling friction that previously hindered online transactions. This payment infrastructure maturity enables seamless ordering experiences, reducing adoption barriers significantly.

Service quality dimensions demonstrate differential impacts on satisfaction. Delivery timeliness emerges as most critical ($r=0.793$), reflecting time-scarcity among working professionals constituting 48.6% of users. However, moderate satisfaction scores ($M=3.94$) indicate infrastructure challenges persist in Tier-II cities lacking metropolitan logistics networks. Last-mile delivery optimization, dark store deployments, and hyperlocal fulfillment centers represent strategic imperatives for platforms seeking market penetration. Order accuracy's strong correlation with satisfaction ($r=0.742$) emphasizes operational excellence importance, suggesting technology investments in AI-powered order management and real-time kitchen coordination yield competitive advantages. Platform preference analysis reveals near-equal Swiggy (42.1%) and Zomato (39.7%) market shares, contrasting with metropolitan markets where single-platform dominance often prevails. This competitive equilibrium benefits consumers through promotional warfare but challenges platform profitability in markets characterized by lower order values. Restaurant variety importance (89.6% combined ratings) suggests successful platforms must cultivate diverse merchant networks accommodating regional culinary preferences while maintaining quality standards. Cloud kitchen partnerships enabling cost-effective expansion represent viable strategies for achieving variety breadth without proportional infrastructure investments.

The robust predictive model ($R^2=0.742$) demonstrates that satisfaction, price consciousness, and service quality collectively drive reuse intentions. Platform trust's smaller coefficient ($\beta=0.156$) suggests trust-building remains developmental in Tier-II markets, contrasting with metropolitan consumers exhibiting higher baseline trust in digital platforms. This finding implies reputation management, transparent policies, and responsive customer service assume heightened importance for establishing credibility. User-generated reviews' significance (51.4% rating very important) highlights social proof mechanisms compensating for limited brand familiarity in markets with nascent digital ecosystems. Study findings validate Technology Acceptance Model's applicability in Indian Tier-II cities while revealing context-specific modifications. Price consciousness emerges as additional critical construct beyond traditional TAM variables, necessitating theoretical extensions for emerging market applications. The research contributes to understanding how economic constraints, cultural values, and infrastructure limitations shape technology adoption trajectories in non-metropolitan regions. Practical implications suggest platforms require differentiated strategies rather than replicating metropolitan approaches, emphasizing value propositions, localized marketing, vernacular interfaces, and community-building initiatives resonating with regional consumer psychographics.

7. Conclusion

This study comprehensively examined consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions toward digital food delivery services in Tier-II cities of North India, addressing a significant research gap in emerging market contexts. Findings reveal that consumers in these markets exhibit distinctive behavioral patterns characterized by high price consciousness, value-seeking orientations, and strong technological acceptance tempered by infrastructure constraints. The research validates Technology Acceptance Model's applicability while identifying price consciousness as a critical additional construct necessary for explaining adoption dynamics in emerging urban markets. Practical implications suggest platform operators must develop differentiated strategies emphasizing promotional offers, operational efficiency, diverse merchant networks, and trust-building mechanisms rather than replicating metropolitan market approaches. The study contributes theoretically by extending understanding of digital consumption patterns in non-metropolitan Indian cities, demonstrating that technological adoption trajectories vary significantly across urban hierarchies. Methodologically, the research provides validated instruments for measuring consumer attitudes in Tier-II city contexts, facilitating future comparative studies. Limitations include cross-sectional design preventing causal inference establishment, convenience sampling potentially limiting generalizability, and single-region focus requiring multi-regional validation. Future research should employ longitudinal designs tracking behavioral evolution, examine platform-switching behaviors, investigate sustainability concerns' emerging influence, and explore demographic subgroup variations within Tier-II markets. Despite limitations, this research provides foundational insights into food delivery adoption dynamics in India's emerging urban markets, informing strategic decision-making for industry stakeholders and policy formulation supporting inclusive digital ecosystem development.

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