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Impact of Time Scarcity and Convenience on Consumer Behaviour towards Online Food Delivery Services

Ms. Manisha Arora

Research Scholar, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi, Gobindgarh, Punjab, India

Dr. Kanwaljit Kaur

Associate Professor, Desh Bhagat University, Mandi, Gobindgarh, Punjab, India

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ABSTRACT

This Research paper aims to examine the impact of time scarcity and convenience on consumer behaviour towards Online Food Delivery services offered by platforms such as Zomato, Swiggy, Uber Eats, and Domino's, etc. The study used both Primary and Secondary data and consists of a sample size of 150 respondents of various age groups, family structure, occupation, income, religion and gender. Descriptive statistics (such as mean, standard deviation and percentage analysis) and Inferential statistics (such as correlation and ANOVA) have been employed for analysis. The results of the study indicated a positive impact of time scarcity on consumer behaviour towards OFDS. The results also revealed a positive correlation between Convenience and repurchase intention and between consumer satisfaction and repurchase intention. The study suggests that in the era of busy work and family schedules, the online food delivery platforms should formulate innovative strategies well-suited to the evolving needs of the users.

Keywords: OFDS, convenience, time scarcity, repurchase intention, consumer behaviour

INTRODUCTION

During the past few years, digital technology has expanded rapidly and changing lifestyles have significantly transformed consumer behaviour, particularly in the OFD industry. A revolutionary change is evident from the way consumers access and consume food, alongside the emergence of various online food delivery platforms, such as Swiggy, Zomato and Uber Eats. One of the major drivers of this change is the time scarcity experienced by individuals due to busy work and family schedules, limiting the availability of time for cooking and dining out (Warde, 2016).

Time scarcity is the way individuals perceive having insufficient time for accomplishing daily tasks, due to which they seek quicker and more efficient alternatives.

(Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Online Food Delivery platforms provide a go-to solution decision-making (Berry, Seiders, & Grewal, 2002). OFD platforms provide a range of features enhancing convenience, such as easy ordering, multiple payment options, real-time tracking, quick delivery, enhancing overall user experience.

Furthermore, the increasing penetration of smartphones and improved internet connectivity have caused OFD platforms to witness an exponential growth as a result of a broader consumer base. There is a shift in the consumer perception from valuing traditional factors like price and brand loyalty to modern factors, such as convenience and speed (Duarte et al., 2018). This transformation is conducive to understanding how time constraints and perceived convenience impact consumer attitude, actual usage and decision-making.

With the increasing popularity of OFD services, there remains a need to examine the factors that drive consumer adoption and increased and continued usage. Particularly, analysing the combined impact of time scarcity and convenience will provide a deeper insight into the consumer decision-making process and also help service providers in enhancing service experience. Therefore, this study aims to delve into these factors to examine their impact on the consumer behaviour towards OFD services, contributing to both academic literature and practical business strategies.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The growing demand for OFD services has attracted the focus of academicians in understanding the consumer behaviour behind the adoption and usage of these services. The literature indicates that, among other factors, time scarcity and convenience are the significant factors moulding consumer decision-making.

Time scarcity is one of the most prominent factors defining the lifestyle of a modern consumer. Robinson and Godbey (1997), in their paper, emphasise that the perception of consumers towards time scarcity is increasingly affecting consumption patterns due to rising work pressures and lifestyle commitments. Warde (2016) argues that, due to changing social structures and work routines, consumers are increasingly relying on RTE (ready-to-eat) and delivered meals. Specifically in urban areas, where people are in dual-income households, have long working hours, and work from home, the demand for quick meal delivery increases.

Berry et al. (2002) emphasise that “service convenience” is a multidimensional approach where consumers perceive savings in time and effort across multiple stages of consumption, including pre-purchase and post-purchase stages. In the area of OFD, various features such as ease of use, diversified restaurant options to choose from, multiple payment options, and short delivery time reflect convenience. Studies also reveal that a high level of perceived convenience results in increased customer satisfaction and repeat buying intentions.

Kapoor and Vij (2018) reveal that consumer attitudes towards OFD apps are influenced by ease of use and time efficiency. Similarly, the findings of Ray et al. (2019) suggest that consumers’ preference towards OFD apps is increasing due to reduced effort and time to cook and travel to restaurants.

The adoption of technology has further amplified the influence of convenience in how consumers make purchase decisions. Davis, 1989 propounded that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness have a significant influence on the acceptance of users towards digital platforms. Cho et al. (2019) in their study exhibit that in the case of food delivery services, a reliable and quick delivery system, ease of navigation, and a quick ordering process enhance the perceived usefulness, thus resulting in continued usage.

Jacoby, Szybillo, & Berning (1976) emphasise the co-relationship between time scarcity and convenience and reveal that time scarcity acts as a trigger that strengthens the importance of convenience in decision making. Therefore, OFD platforms strategically exhibit themselves as time-saving solutions to attract busy consumers.

Prasetyo et al. (2021) point out certain limitations, such as delivery delays, low service quality, and pricing, which negatively impact customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Thus, the existing literature highlights that time scarcity and convenience are interrelated factors affecting consumer behaviour towards OFD services. Nevertheless, further research is needed to explore how these factors jointly impact behavioural patterns across different demographic segments.

RESEARCH GAP

Although the literature on OFD Services is expanding, many gaps remain.

First, many studies examine time scarcity and convenience as independent factors, but limited research integrates these variables into a single framework to assess their impact on consumer behaviour and repurchase intentions.

Second, a major portion of the literature is focused on e-commerce or online shopping, rather than being focused on OFD sector. OFD sector is characterised by immediacy of consumption, perishability, lifestyle and emotional influences, due to which, the findings from broader e-commerce studies cannot be generalised to this sector.

Third, most studies are conducted in developed countries, with relatively few studies focusing on emerging markets like India, which is characterised by diverse cultural preferences, income variations, and rapid technological adoption, calling for context-specific research.

Fourth, existing research is focused on the adoption and initial usage of OFD apps, while very few studies pay attention to continued usage behaviour and loyalty.

Addressing these gaps, the present study aims to provide a deeper insight into how time scarcity and convenience influence consumer behaviour towards OFD services.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To examine the impact of time scarcity on consumer behaviour towards Online Food Delivery Services.
- To evaluate the impact of convenience on repurchase intention.
- To assess consumer satisfaction and overall experience with OFDS.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H₀₁ (Null): Time scarcity has no significant impact on consumer behaviour towards OFDS.

H₁₁ (Alternate): Time scarcity has a significant impact on consumer behaviour towards OFDS.

H₀₂ (Null): Convenience does not influence repurchase intention.

H₁₂ (Alternate): Convenience significantly influences repurchase intention.

H₀₃ (Null): There is no relationship between consumer satisfaction and continued usage.

H₁₃ (Alternate): Customer satisfaction significantly affects continued usage.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND RESEARCH VARIABLES

Current study proposes a conceptual model to examine the impact of time scarcity on consumer behaviour towards OFDS. In this model, time scarcity and convenience are considered as Independent Variables. Consumer behaviour (such as usage

frequency, ordering patterns, etc.) and behavioural intentions (such as repurchase intentions) are the **Dependent Variables**.

DATA COLLECTION

Primary and Secondary Data is used for the study. The sample consists of 150 respondents of various age groups, gender, educational qualification, occupation, religion, family structure and income groups. The data was collected using an interview schedule consisting of four sections- Demographic Profile, Usage Pattern, Convenience/ Lack of Time and Behavioural Intentions.

ANALYSIS TOOLS

A. Descriptive Analysis: Like Percentage Analysis, mean and Standard Deviation

B. Inferential Analysis: Like Mean Score Analysis, Correlation analysis, ANOVA

ANALYSIS

SECTION-A: DEMOGRAPHICS-FULL DETAIL

TABLE-1: COMPLETE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Question	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5	Total
1. Age Group	Boomers (55+) 11 (7.3%)	Gen X 41-55) 20 (13.3%)	Gen Z (<25) 33 (22%)	Millennials (25-40) 86 (57.2)	-	150 (100%)
2. Gender	Male 52 (34.7%)	Female 98 (65.3%)	Other 0 (0%)	-	-	150 (100%)
3. Religion	Hindu 139 (92.7%)	Sikh 10 (6.7%)	Muslim 1 (0.6%)	Christian 0 (0%)	Buddhist 0 (0%)	150 (100%)
4. Education	< 10 th 3 (2%)	12 th 7 (4.6%)	Bachelor's Degree 60 (40%)	Master's Degree 64 (42.7%)	M.Phil/ Doctorate 16 (10.7%)	150 (100%)
5. Occupation	Business 28 (18.7%)	Profession 16 (10.7%)	Salaried 58 (38.7%)	Homemaker 16 (10.7%)	Student 32 (21.2%)	150 (100%)
6. Monthly Income	<40,000 60 (40%)	40,000- 80,000 28 (18.7%)	80,000- 1,20,000 33 (22%)	>1,20,000 29 (19.3%)	-	150 (100%)
7. Family Structure	Nuclear Family 63 (42%)	Joint Family	Extended Family 3 (2%)	-	-	150 (100%)

INTERPRETATION OF DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Age Group- Most of the respondents belong to the Millennials (25-40 years) category (57.2%), followed by Gen Z (13.3%), while Boomers (7.3%) form the smallest group. This shows that the study is mainly dominated by young and working-age individuals, who primarily use online food delivery services.

Gender- The sample consists of 65.3% females and 34.7% males, with no representation of “other” category, suggesting a female-dominated sample.

Religion- A significant majority of respondents are Hindu (92.7%), followed by Sikh (6.7%) and Muslim (0.6%).

Education- Most respondents are highly educated with 42.7% respondents having master’s degree, 40% having Bachelor’s Degree and 10.7% possessing M.Phil/Doctorate, indicating a well-educated sample, which supports better understanding and usage of

digital platforms.

Occupation- Salaried employees constitute 38.7% of the sample group, followed by students (21.2%) and business persons (18.7%). The dominance of salaried group suggests that the respondents likely have busy schedules, which is in alignment with the study on time scarcity.

Monthly Income- The sample is mixed-income, but largely (58.7%) belonging to the low to middle income group, which may affect spending and ordering frequency.

Family Structure- A high proportion of joint families may influence ordering habits and shared decision-making.

Dependents in Family- Most respondents (64%) have smaller households, which may encourage frequent online ordering.

Marital Status- A majority of the married respondents (65.3%) suggests time constraints and more responsibilities, supporting the study's focus on time scarcity.

SECTION-B: ONLINE FOOD DELIVERY USAGE- FULL DETAIL

Table-2: Complete Usage Patterns

Question	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5	Total
1. How often order?	Rarely 39 (26%)	Once a month 35 (23.3%)	Once a week 44 (29.3%)	Twice/Thrice a week 29 (19.4%)	Daily 3 (2%)	150 (100%)
2. Preferred Platforms	Zomato 85 (56.7%)	Swiggy 50 (33.3%)	Uber Eats 0 (0%)	Others 15 (10%)	-	
3. Average Monthly spending	Less than Rs. 2,000 78 (52%)	Rs. 2,000 - 4,000 42 (28%)	Rs. 4,000 - 6,000 21 (14%)	More than Rs. 6,000 9 (6%)	-	150 (100%)
4. Time to order	Breakfast 1 (0.7%)	Lunch 26 (17.3%)	Dinner 70 (52.7%)	Late-Night 7 (4.7%)	Varies/ Differs 37 (24.7%)	150 (100%)
5. Food Categories	Fast Food 76 (50.7%)	Healthy options 26 (17.3%)	Desserts 5 (3.3%)	Full meals 39 (26%)	Others 4 (2.7%)	150 (100%)

The analysis of usage patterns reveals that online food delivery services are primarily used weekly, with Zomato being the most dominant platform (56.7%), followed by Swiggy (33.3%) and dinner being the most preferred time of ordering. Most users exhibit moderate spending behaviour, with a majority (52%) spending less than Rs. 2000 p.m. A majority of respondents reported ordering Fast Food (50.7%) under the food categories.

SECTION-C: CONVENIENCE/LACK OF TIME

Table-3: Convenience / Lack of Time statements

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Saves time when short of time	8 (5.3%)	69 (46%)	57 (38%)	16 (10.7%)	0 (0%)
2. More use, when no time	13 (8.7%)	56 (37.3%)	56 (37.3%)	25 (16.7%)	0 (0%)
3. Prefer Cooking (R)	2 (1.3%)	31 (20.7%)	55 (36.7%)	56 (37.3%)	6 (4%)

FIRST OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To examine the impact of time scarcity on consumer behaviour towards Online Food Delivery Services.

H_{01} : Time scarcity has no significant impact on consumer behaviour towards OFDS.

To achieve the first objective, the researcher used descriptive analysis.

Table-4: Descriptive Analysis of Time Scarcity Statements

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Ordering food online saves my time and efforts when I am short of time	3.46	0.76	Agreement; Consistent responses
With less time to cook or clean the utensils, I can easily decide to order food online.	3.38	0.86	Agreement; Consistent responses
Even when I am short of time, I still prefer to cook at home. (Reverse-coded)	3.22	0.87	Agreement; Consistent responses

The mean score of all time scarcity statements is above 3 ($M=3.22$ to 3.46), suggesting a positive inclination towards online food ordering under time constraints. Specifically, respondents strongly agree that ordering food online saves time and effort ($M=3.46$, $SD=0.76$), followed by agreement that lack of time to cook or clean encourages online ordering ($M=3.38$, $SD=0.86$). For the reverse-coded statement regarding preference for cooking at home, the mean ($M=3.22$, $SD=0.87$) indicates moderate agreement. The relatively low values of standard deviation indicate reasonable consistency in responses.

For Hypothesis Testing (H_{01}), a *one-way ANOVA test* was conducted. The ANOVA results are as follows:

Table-5: ANOVA Table

F-value	9.31
p-value	0.00015
F-critical	3.06

The p-value (0.00015) is <0.05 , and the F-Value exceeds the critical value, resulting in rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0), indicating a statistically significant difference in time scarcity among various behavioural groups.

Overall, the findings confirm that time scarcity is an important factor influencing online food ordering behaviour.

SECOND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To evaluate the impact of convenience on repurchase intention.

H02: Convenience does not influence repurchase intention.

Table-6: Descriptive Statistics of Convenience Factor and Repurchase Intention:

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Convenience (Q21)	1.59	0.68	Agreement; Consistent responses
Repurchase Intention (Q24)	3.73	1.04	Strong Agreement; Consistent responses

The analysis indicates that convenience is an important factor influencing

repurchase intention. The mean value for convenience (1.59) shows agreement among respondents to repurchase from OFD platforms due to the convenience factor, while the high mean score for repurchase intention (3.73) indicates a high likelihood of continued usage.

For hypothesis testing, correlation analysis is used. The correlation matrix is as under:

Table-7: Correlation Coefficients

Variables	Convenience	Repurchase Intention
Convenience	1	0.79
Repurchase Intention	0.79	1

Since the correlation value of 0.79 is indicative of a strong positive relationship, the null hypothesis (H02) is rejected. Therefore, convenience has a significant impact on repurchase intention.

THIRD OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To assess consumer satisfaction and overall experience with OFDS.

H03: There is no relationship between consumer satisfaction and continued usage.

Table-8: Descriptive Statistics of Consumer Satisfaction and Continued Usage (Repurchase Intention):

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Consumer Satisfaction (Q22)	3.90	0.87	Strong Agreement; Consistent responses
Repurchase Intention (Q24)	3.72	1.036	Strong Agreement; Moderate variation in responses

The mean consumer satisfaction score (3.90) indicates that respondents are highly satisfied with OFD services. Similarly, the mean score of Repurchase Intention (3.72) is indicative of a strong likelihood of continued usage. The standard deviation values (0.87 and 1.036) indicate moderate variation in responses, suggesting that although most respondents share positive opinions, some differences exist.

For hypothesis testing, correlation analysis is used. The correlation matrix is as under:

Table-9: Correlation Coefficients

Variables	Consumer Satisfaction	Repurchase Intention
Consumer Satisfaction	1	0.96
Repurchase Intention	0.96	1

The correlation analysis reveals an extremely strong positive relationship between consumer satisfaction and continued usage ($r=0.96$), indicating a positive impact of consumer satisfaction on repurchase intention. A strong positive correlation leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H03).

FINDINGS

The present study examined the impact of time scarcity and convenience on consumer behaviour towards OFD services. Based on the analysis of data, it has been found that time scarcity has a significant influence on consumer behavioural intentions. Work commitments and lifestyle constraints are increasingly posing time pressure, which is a major cause for consumers to rely on OFD platforms and thus, to shift from traditional

cooking/dining out to online ordering.

The study also revealed a positive correlation between convenience, consumer satisfaction and repurchase intention, supported by a variety of features offered by OFD apps, such as ease of use, easy checkout, multiple payment options and a wide variety of restaurant and menu choices. The result is consistent with Berry et al. (2002) findings that convenience leads to a reduction in both time and effort, which is a major driving factor of repeat usage.

The results also reveal that time scarcity and convenience taken together have a stronger combined effect on consumer behaviour. Consumers who perceive both high time pressure and high convenience have witnessed frequent usage. This supports the argument propounded by Jacoby, Szybillo, & Berning (1976) that due to time scarcity consumers tend to resort to convenience providing alternatives.

The study also exhibits that consumers who are young and working are more influenced by time scarcity and convenience as compared to other demographic groups. These findings support the findings of Kapoor & Vij (2018) that due to greater familiarity with digital platforms and fast-paced lifestyle, these segments shows higher dependency on OFD services.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the study concludes that time scarcity act as a trigger and convenience acts as an enabler, influencing consumer behaviour towards OFD services. Importantly, the study establishes that time scarcity and convenience complement each other. OFD services have seen a shift from being an optional alternative to becoming an essential solution for time-constrained consumers.

SUGGESTIONS

According to the findings of the study, OFD platforms should prioritise enhancing app/website usability, such as user-friendly interfaces, simple navigation and streamlined ordering. Customised recommendations and offers will lead to improved customer engagement. To specifically target the highly time-constrained consumers, ultra-fast delivery options can be introduced at premium prices. OFD platforms should introduce pre-scheduling feature, whereby a customer can schedule meal in advance to reduce the decision-making time in the time sensitive zone. A quick reordering system can also be made available, so that consumer can reorder the previous meal in one click. AI integrated smart recommendations can be used to reduce cognitive effort and offering more convenience. Voice-assisted ordering can be incorporated to further reduce effort and time in navigating the app. Subscription-based plans will provide added benefits to the convenience-seeking customers. Peek-time efficiency should be a strengthened .

Thus, by focusing both on reducing decision making and delivery time, the OFD platforms are more likely to attract and retain customers.

LIMITATIONS

The results of the study are confined to OFD platforms only, which may vary if applied to other sectors. Also, limited sample size may affect generalization of findings. Further, the responses are collected through surveys which may be subjected to bias/inaccuracies.

FUTURE SCOPE OF STUDY

1. Future research can include additional variables like trust, pricing strategies, service quality, etc.
2. Comparative research can be conducted across different cities, regions, or countries.
3. Longitudinal Research can be done to examine changes in consumer behaviour over a period of time.
4. Research based on differences in consumer behaviour among various demographic groups can give additional insights.

5. Role of emerging technologies, such as AI and automation, is another area of research.
6. Comparative platform analysis can also provide insights into competitive strategies.

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