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# Innovation in Online Food Delivery Services: A Review and Future Agenda

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***Abstract:*** *Today, the area of online food delivery is critical with respect to accessing and consuming one's meal, and it has transformed by technology and shifts in taste among consumers. The food delivery sector has changed from its core roots of traditional food delivery systems into a highly innovative marketplace facilitated by digital platforms. This paper investigates the innovations that have changed the terrain of online food delivery, from platform models to integrated technology to customer-centric applications. The study will, therefore, address the evolution, market dynamics, and socioeconomic impacts to help broaden the knowledge on how innovation continues redefining consumer habits and business practices within the food service industry.*

***Keywords:*** *Online food delivery (OFD), Electronic commerce (e.commerce)*

**1. INTRODUCTION:** An essential part of the contemporary service economy is the online food ordering and delivery (OFD) sector, which is a thriving and quickly changing industry. Technological developments and shifting consumer habits, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, have fuelled its expansion, posing both new opportunities and problems for service design (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020). This sector is a prime example of the demand for creative service design methodologies since it combines intricate logistics, client interactions and digital platforms.

Service design is a difficult and demanding activity that is typically difficult to measure due to the abstract and complicated nature of OFD services. The intricacy of creating services that meet the ever-changing demands of this sector is highlighted by recent research. For example, (Jun et al. 2021) stress the importance of technology in improving food delivery customer experiences and the demand for digital platforms that are easy to use. A study by ( Li et al. 2023) shows that meal delivery speed and accuracy have a major impact on customer satisfaction in terms of logistical efficiency and reliability. According to (Yasirandi et al. (2023), who stress the use of data analytics for comprehending and reacting to consumer preferences and behaviours, the incorporation of customer feedback into service development has also grown in popularity. (Noyes et al. 2019) concur that a more thorough strategy that combines qualitative insights with quantitative data analysis is necessary in order to fully comprehend consumer experiences in the food delivery industry.

### 1.1 Overview of the Market and Demand Situation

A rapid-paced speeding up with the online food delivery market has been experienced in the last few years due to improved technology, different lifestyles of people, and increased internet penetration. The overall market for online food delivery, worth billions of dollars, is shared by platforms like Uber Eats, DoorDash, Zomato, Swiggy, and many others across the globe. The demand is up due to the convenience of ordering meals from a diverse range of restaurants and cuisines, often at a cheaper price, made easier with user-friendly mobile app, discounts, and real-time tracking." Furthermore, consumers tend to purchase food from online platforms these days as a means of social distancing because of the outspread of COVID-19. Emerging markets, like India and Southeast Asia, have benefited from smart-phone affordability and a growing middle-class population, leading to increased adoption. Despite several challenges such as high delivery fees, regulatory pitfalls, and cut-throat competition, the market has been thriving, with demand just going strong manifolds, especially as companies lay innovation on subscription models; faster delivery options, and eco-friendly packaging.

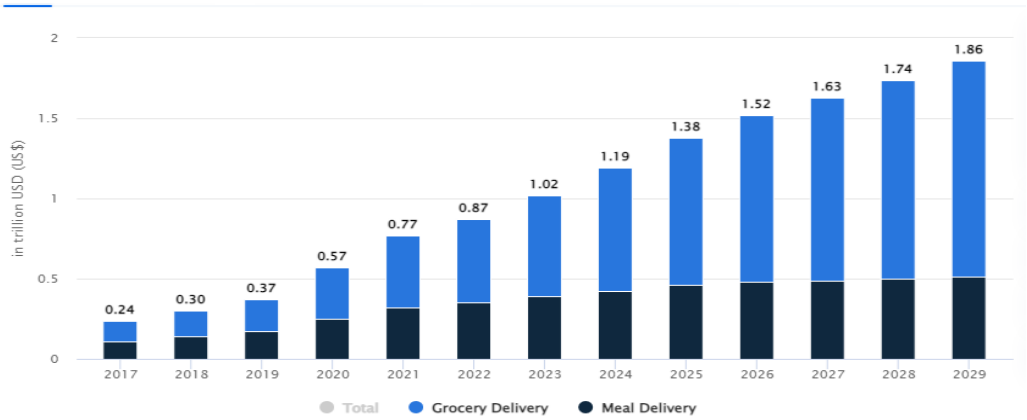


**Figure 1: Worldwide Revenue of Online Food Delivery** **Source: Statista.com**

Online Food Delivery will hit a whopping $1.20tn in 2024, with Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) pegged at 9.04%, which in turn must produce over $1.85tn worth of market volume by 2029. With Cottage Delivery expected to go up to 20.0% in projected volume amounting to US$0.77tn in total. China is expected to bring in the highest revenue-generating countries at US$450.50bn in 2024. The meal delivery market is expected to reach 2.5bn users worldwide in 2029 with 26.6% penetration. The countries topping the global online food delivery markets include the US and China. The two segments Online Food Delivery Market: Meal Delivery and Grocery Delivery. Meal Delivery comprises the services for prepared meals and food ordered online for consumption. Grocery Delivery is used to refer to all kinds of non-prepared food and beverage products, household, and personal care products. Restaurant Delivery brings meals directly from restaurants; Platform Delivery meals have been sourced from partner restaurants. Grocery Delivery comprises fresh, non-prepared products as well as those from supermarkets, quick commerce, and subscription based deliveries and home-delivered meal kits for cooking at home. Emerging trends in customer preferences, online meal ordering convenience, and the COVID-19 pandemic have expanded the online food delivery market considerably. In the U.S.A., a country where there are other famous third-party delivery services companies such as Uber Eats, DoorDash, and Grubhub, these companies have also become names in the mouths of younger consumers in particular. In India, platforms such as Swiggy and Zomato have made payment possible on delivery, thus gaining popularity by offering a wider variety of options concerning local knowledge. Most consumers do not have access to credit cards, so cash payment on delivery has driven the adoption of e-commerce in India quite a bit. Major macroeconomic factors include the burgeoning gig economy, increasing ownership of devices compatible with mobile applications, and changing consumer lifestyles. The pandemic has sharply increased online food delivery because people want much safer ways to order foods.

### 1.2 Technological Innovations in Online Food Delivery

Technological innovations in online food delivery (OFD) have played a significant role in transforming the industry. The online food delivery industry has been growing and innovating at a rapid pace over the last few years. Significant investments and consistent innovations in online marketplaces and in-house delivery projects by restaurants are a testament to the same. As we continue to face disruptions in the future, it is prudent to stay informed about the technological advancements that are reshaping this particular market. Voice automation, automatic rider dispatch, and advanced route optimization are some of the recent developments employed by delivery systems to stay ahead of the curve. Mobile applications now form the primary interfaces where customers place orders, track deliveries, and pay for services. They have moved from simple ordering food interfaces to sophisticated platforms with functions such as personalized recommendations, loyalty schemes, and real-time tracking of delivery (Kumar & Dangi 2021). Application of AI is made in OFD such as demand forecasting, route optimization for delivery, chatbots for customer service, and personalized recommendation based on behavior. Machine learning is traditionally used to predict the best routes for deliveries and optimize the supply chain operations (Bansal & Gupta 2023). The technology of geolocation allows tracing deliveries in real-time along with informing customers of an expected time of arrival (ETA) and enabling route optimization. It improves operational efficiency by reducing delays and enhancing customer experience basically (Singh & Rana 2022). In reality, cloud computing grants the scalability and flexibility required to large food delivery companies so that they can run big data or heavy traffic. Along with working on delivery patterns and analyzing market trends, data analytics determines customer preferences to make more concrete data-driven decisions (Sharma & Gupta, P. 2022). Technology continuously growing and enhance the functionality in food delivery sector. Blockchain's usage provides

transparency and safety of various payment systems as well as ensures safety during customer transactions. It tracks food sourcing and helps in validating their ingredients, assuring food safety (Joshi & Kumar, R. 2023). Testing is going on with robots and drones for food delivery while still in the initial stages of drone delivery, automation in food preparation and packaging has already made phenomenal strides (Mishra, A., & Tiwari 2023). With the integration of digital assistants such as Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant, voice recognition technology has enabled users to place orders via voice commands. This makes it a hands-free experience, winning over the tech-savvy customers (Mishra & Gupta 2023).

## 2. OBJECTIVES

RQ1: What are the current trends in online food delivery services regarding publications, citations, journals and authors?
RQ2: What are the unique attributes or keywords of online food delivery services?
RQ3: What are the opportunities and limitations of online food delivery services?

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research Methodology is a way of scientifically and systematically to solve the research problem. To collect and find the relevant research papers on the innovation of online food delivery services published in academic journals, a systematic review was conducted. Major databases Elsevier Scopus was used in the study. Scopus have broad and large amount of comprehensive electronic databases for obtaining literature, covering all major national and international publications. The study searched for combination of various related abstract, title and keywords such as “innovation*” and “online food delivery services*.This research examines the emerging field of innovation of online food delivery services in marketing from a systematic literature review. The study searched the keyword “innovation of online food delivery services”. The keyword search is exclusively focusing on the topic of the study related innovation of online food delivery services. Further, other keywords such as innovation of online food delivery and recent trends and innovation of online food delivery may provide distinct results. Initially, data of 61 articles from Scopus were retrieved on October 2024 and articles were filtered based on the title, abstract, and full-text screening. The documents after the full-text screening were excluded due to the following reasons: studies based on related words: online food delivery, innovation of online food delivery. Further, the articles were excluded with criteria of book series, articles in press and language limit to English. Finally, 52 articles were selected for review and analysis. This review study incorporates the research articles (both qualitative and quantitative) that discuss the innovation of online food delivery services trends and growth in recent scenario. Finally, bibliometric analysis and content analysis were performed on 52 articles for results and analysis.

## 4. ANALYSIS:

### 4.1 Publication Trend

Figure 2 displays publication trend and year wise published research articles. The figure shows the complete journey of research articles 2005 to 2025. The topic is novel, as the first traceable article was published in 2005. Figure 2 presents a picture of the number of publications done in this research field in the Scopus database. It shows an enormous upsurge in research publication year by year after 2018. In 2005, only one article was published in the research area, which turned into 13 in number in 2022. The technological and innovation growth in this field increase the number of publications each year confirms the growing curiosity in this research area.

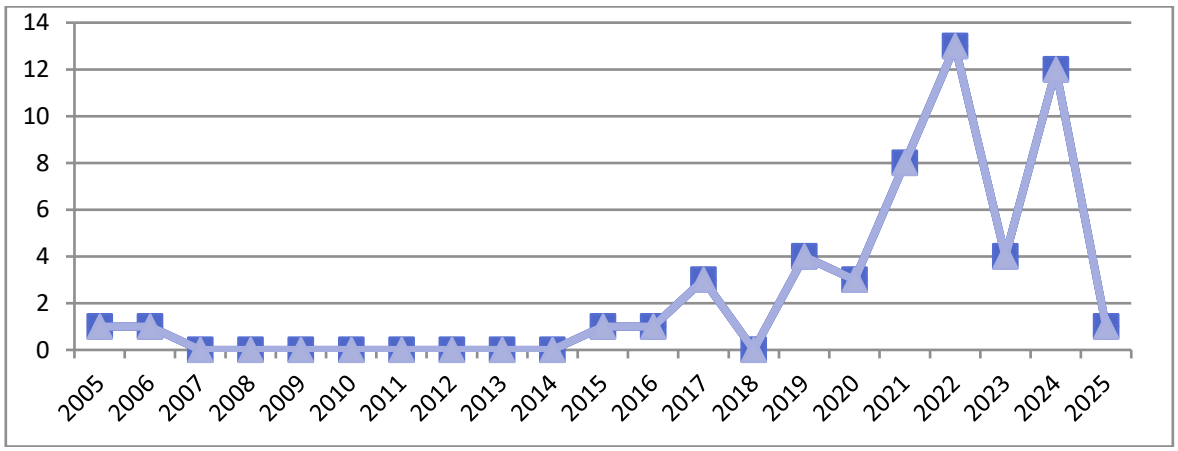


**Figure 2: Publication Trend.** **Source: Scopus**

### 4.2 Publishing Country Analysis

Figure 2 represents the top 10 countries whose contribution in terms of the number of publications is the most. The result shows that India is the leading contributing country with 9 articles. The most impactful country based on the number of publications in the domain of innovation of online food delivery services is India with 9 documents. All developed countries are evolving their online food delivery services. India is yet to find first place in this recent trend. The trend highlights that online food delivery services sector continuously growing in developing countries and in a peak development.

Table 1: Country-wise publication

| S.No | Country Name | Articles per country |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | India | 9 |
| 2 | United States | 7 |
| 3 | Australia | 5 |
| 4 | Malaysia | 5 |
| 5 | Indonesia | 4 |
| 6 | Italy | 4 |
| 7 | Netherlands | 4 |
| 8 | Thailand | 4 |
| 9 | China | 3 |
| 10 | France | 3 |

### 4.3 Bibliometric Analysis

Bibliometric analysis is a technique for identifying significant authors, journals, and keywords on a specific subject.

### 4.4 Keywords and Co-occurrence of Keyword Analysis

The terms that highlight the main idea of the research project are known as keywords. The researcher was able to illustrate the evolution and structure of the research field with the aid of the keyword analysis.The results of the study found a total of 568 keywords used in this research domain. Figure 8 represents the top 15 most frequently appeared keywords in the research area. It illustrates sales, covid-19, innovation, and online food delivery are primarily used keywords. Analyzing the co-occurrence of keywords is a way to find a connection between two keywords. The VOSviewer software helps to investigate the co-occurrence of keywords and represent it visually. Figure 9 illustrate the four clusters of keywords in four different (blue, red, green, and yellow) colors with circles. The size of the circles represents the frequency of keywords, and each cluster represents a group of keywords. In the figure, keywords are used simultaneously in many publications, as seen in the figure of overall link strength.

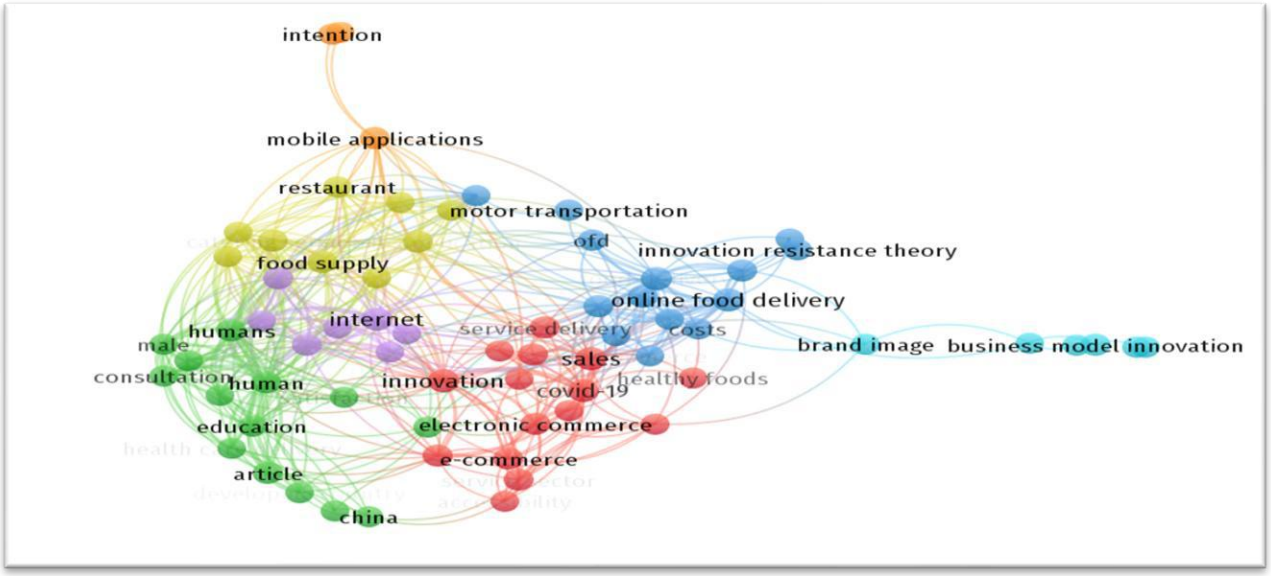


**Figure 3: Keyword occurence** **Source: Bibliometric analysis**

### 4.5 Content Analysis

Table 2: Content Analysis of highly cited papers

| S.No | Author | Citation | Research Methodology | Results |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Prasetyo, Y.T., Tanto, H., Mariyanto, M., Hanjaya, C., Young, M.N., .... (2021) | 153 | Quantitative & Qualitative approach | The research strives to capture the circumstance of customer satisfaction and loyalty to online food delivery services in the pandemic period. It indicates the significant aspects of service quality, delivery speed, user interface design, and food quality. There is also an emphasis on openness in innovation and adaptability. |
| 2 | Pigatto, G., Machado, J.G., Negreti, A.D., & Machado, L.M. (2017) | 144 | Qualitative | This research shows customer preference influence factors such as convenience, price sensitivity, and speed of service. User-friendly portals and mobile applications impact the customers' experiences, favoring offer-variety and timely delivery, on loyalty behavior. |
| 3 | Gavilan, D., Balderas-Cejudo, A., Fernández-Lores, S., & Martinez-N.G. (2021) | 110 | Qualitative | The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the online food delivery industry, necessitating innovation in safety, hygiene protocols, real-time tracking, and user-friendly interfaces to meet consumer needs and operational challenges. |
| 4 | Talwar, S., Dhir, A., Scuotto, V., & Kaur, P. (2021) | 83 | Qualitative & Quantitative | The study explores challenges in O2O services, including trust deficits, perceived risks, and service quality concerns, but highlights the importance of addressing both functional and emotional barriers for improved customer satisfaction and retention. |
| 5 | Furunes, T., & Mkono, M. (2019) | 54 | Qualitative (Thematic analysis) | The research finds that customer experiences, flexibility, and authenticity are the major determinants of success in the sharing economy. Conversely, inconsistent quality, unprofessionalism, and failure to meet customer expectations could lead to service failure. |
| 6 | Flahault, A., Geissbuhler, A., Guessous, I., Guérin, P.J., Bolon, I., Salathé, M., (2017) | 33 | Qualitative analysis | Results shows digital technologies like mobile health apps, data analytics, and machine learning can improve global health by reducing inequities and providing healthy resources, despite challenges like data privacy and ethical issues. |
| 7 | Sánchez-Díaz, I.D., Altuntas Vural, C., & Halldórsson, Á. (2021) | 30 | Qualitative & Quantitative (Thematic analysis) | The research reveals that vulnerable groups like low-income, elderly, and rural populations face increased barriers to online delivery services, particularly during pandemics, and this issue is exacerbated by their increasing reliance on online purchases. |
| 8 | Cohen, N., Tomaino Fraser, K., Arnow, C., Mulcahy, M.M., & Hille, C. (2020) | 26 | Qualitative & Quantitative. | Online grocery shopping offers convenience but faces challenges like limited internet access, delivery fees, platform complexity, and technology-related issues like website usability and SNAP payment details for residents. |
| 9 | Prosser, L., Lane, E.T., & Jones, R. (2021) | 24 | Qualitative approach | The pandemic has brought forward the immediacy for adaptive strategies in food supply chains with particular focus on collaboration between all stakeholders from farmers to processed food distributors and retailers. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Direct-to-consumer approaches such as OFD and local food networks have been seen to work best. |
| 10 | Fanzo, J., Marshall, Q., Dobermann, D.,Verjee, N., Davis, K.(2015) | 22 | Qualitative | The study suggests that integrating nutrition into agricultural services can improve dietary outcomes and food security. However, challenges like lack of trained personnel and limited awareness need to be addressed, emphasizing the need for context-specific approaches. |

**5. CONCLUSION:** This research study emphasizes technology, a customer-centric approach, and the marketing mix to promote customer satisfaction and consequently adoption. While these food delivery platforms will touch new heights, they still fall short on several promises of food quality, time and delivery, and customer trust. Adding values in this context signifies a positive contribution towards a better understanding of the consumer and the changing scenarios of the food delivery market. The findings shows that Online food delivery services in India still in a growing phase comparison to the other country and still need some technology innovation as live videos and audio recording features and drone services. The significant issue that arises from online food delivery services is hygiene. The consumers worry largely about the cleanliness and maintenance of the safety standards during food preparation, packaging, and delivery. The environmental safety and carbon emissions also a major concern for online food delivery services. The packaging wastes together with the carbon emissions from delivery operations act as stumbling blocks while customers decided to demand more eco-friendly practices.

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