

An Investigation Into Individual Factors That Result In Customer Intention To Order Food Online

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Abstract

The rapid growth of the internet and mobile technology has significantly transformed the food industry in India, with the emergence of online food ordering services playing a pivotal role in reshaping the way consumer's access and enjoy their meals. These innovative platforms have not only enhanced the convenience and accessibility of food delivery but have also brought about a shift in consumer preferences and behavior. One of the key driving forces behind the success of online food ordering services in India is the increasing popularity of smart devices and the growing digital literacy among the population. The availability of affordable smart phones and cheap internet data has led to a surge in internet usage. This research aimed to investigate individual or personal factors that affect customer intention to order food online in Lucknow. Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) was used to underpin this research. UTAUT has been quite popular among researchers investigating facets related to online food delivery. The study collected data through surveys from 326 users of online food delivery service. Through analysis of the collected data, it was found that individual factors of performance expectancy, effort expectancy and facilitating conditions had an impact on people's intentions to order food online. Social influence, which is another individual factor, was not found to have any impact. The research contributes by reporting the critical nature of individual factors in the field of online food delivery services.

Keywords: Online food delivery, UTAUT, Customer intention, Individual factors, Performance expectancy, Effort expectancy, Facilitating conditions.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, the rise of online food ordering platforms has revolutionized the way consumers access and consume meals. These platforms have not only enhanced the convenience and accessibility of food delivery but have also introduced a new realm of factors that influence consumer behavior (Alghamdi et al., 2023). One crucial aspect that warrants investigation is the impact of personal factors on an individual's decision to utilize online food ordering services (Jang et al., 2022). Existing studies have provided valuable insights into the motivations and factors that drive customers to adopt online food delivery systems. (Jun et al., 2021) These platforms have become increasingly popular due to their ability to meet or exceed customer expectations in various aspects of the food service industry, such as order accuracy, increased sales, and a growing customer base for restaurants (Poon & Tung, 2022).

Furthermore, the growth in the use of smart phones has been a significant catalyst for the expansion of digital food delivery applications, driven by changes in social status, the increasing prevalence of nuclear families, and the evolving role of women in the workforce (Reddy & Aradhya, 2020). One of the key personal factors that influence the decision to use online food ordering services is the level of convenience and time-saving benefits it offers. Customers are often drawn to the ease of browsing menus, selecting their desired items, and having the food delivered directly to their doorsteps, which saves them the time and effort of physically visiting a restaurant

(Chowdhury, 2023). Additionally, the availability of a wide range of food options and the ability to compare prices and reviews can also play a significant role in shaping an individual's preference for online food ordering. (Idris et al., 2021)

The quality of information provided by the service providers is another crucial factor that can impact customer decisions. Customers often seek detailed information about the menu, prices, portion sizes, and the overall quality of the food, which can influence their perception of the service and their willingness to use the platform again in the future (Jun-bin et al., 2021). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the adoption of online food ordering, as consumers have become more reliant on these services to maintain social distancing and minimize their exposure to the virus. The convenience and safety offered by online food ordering have become increasingly important during this period, as customers seek to balance their dining needs with their health and safety concerns (Chowdhury, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW:

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the convenience and accessibility of online food ordering have become increasingly appealing to consumers. Researchers have explored various personal factors that influence an individual's adoption and usage of online food delivery services (Chowdhury, 2023). One key factor identified is the role of technology readiness. Consumers' levels of optimism, innovativeness, insecurity, and discomfort towards technology can significantly impact their intention to use online food delivery services (Taylor, 2020). Optimistic and innovative individuals tend to be more willing to embrace new technological advancements, while those with higher levels of insecurity and discomfort may be more hesitant to adopt such services (Chowdhury, 2023).

The perceived usefulness and ease of use of online food ordering platforms have also been found to shape consumer behavior. Consumers are more likely to engage with these services if they find them to be user-friendly and beneficial in meeting their dining needs (Jun et al., 2021). Additionally, the enjoyment and satisfaction derived from the online food ordering experience can further motivate consumers to continue using such services (Rahman et al., 2022). Consumers have also become more responsive to promotions, discounts, and loyalty programs offered by online food delivery platforms, as these incentives can enhance the perceived value and affordability of the service (Saad, 2020).

Additionally, the growing reliance on social media and peer recommendations has influenced consumer decision-making when choosing online food ordering options (Elango et al., 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the demand for online food delivery, as customers seek convenient and contactless options for accessing their desired meals. (Ali et al., 2021). Factors such as convenience, perceived safety, and the availability of a wide range of food options have been identified as key drivers of online food ordering during this period.

Existing studies have provided valuable insights into the motivations and drivers behind the use of online food delivery. These studies have highlighted the benefits of online food ordering, such as customization, convenience, and the ability to cater to busy schedules" (Ramesh et al., 2023). The progress in information technology has enabled the rise of new business models in the food service industry, with major chains and restaurants embracing online ordering platforms to better meet customer demands.

Research has also explored the factors that affect the usage of online food delivery services, including variety and number of restaurants, menu selection, delivery tracking, and the attitude of the delivery person (Saad, 2020). These indirect factors play a significant role in shaping customer decisions and satisfaction with the service.

Despite the growing body of literature on this topic, there are still several research gaps that warrant further exploration. First, the majority of existing studies have focused on the general factors that influence consumer behavior and adoption of online food delivery services (Chowdhury, 2023). However, there is a need to investigate the specific individual factors, to better understand the heterogeneity in customer preferences and decision-making (Tarmazi et al., 2021).

Second, the existing research has primarily examined the factors affecting consumer behavior in the context of specific countries or regions (Zhang & Dong, 2020). To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the industry, there is a need for cross-cultural and cross-national studies that explore the similarities and differences in consumer attitudes and behaviors across different markets.

Third, the existing literature highlights the significant influence of personal factors, including technology readiness, perceived usefulness, and pandemic-related considerations, on consumers' adoption and continued use of online food delivery services. (Tan et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2021). However, there is still a need to delve deep into the personal factors and investigate if and how this affect consumer intention to order food online.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) is a popular theory or framework that researchers have used to understand the major reasons behind the acceptance of technology among masses. Proposed by Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis (2003), UTAUT is fundamentally based on the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1986), Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and Technology Acceptance Model 2 (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000). UTAUT proposes four main factors or determinants as impacting technology acceptance or intention and usage, given below:

- Performance Expectancy
- Effort Expectancy
- Social Influence
- Facilitating Conditions

Demographic variables of age, gender, voluntary use, and experience are considered as the moderator variables in this model (see Figure 1).

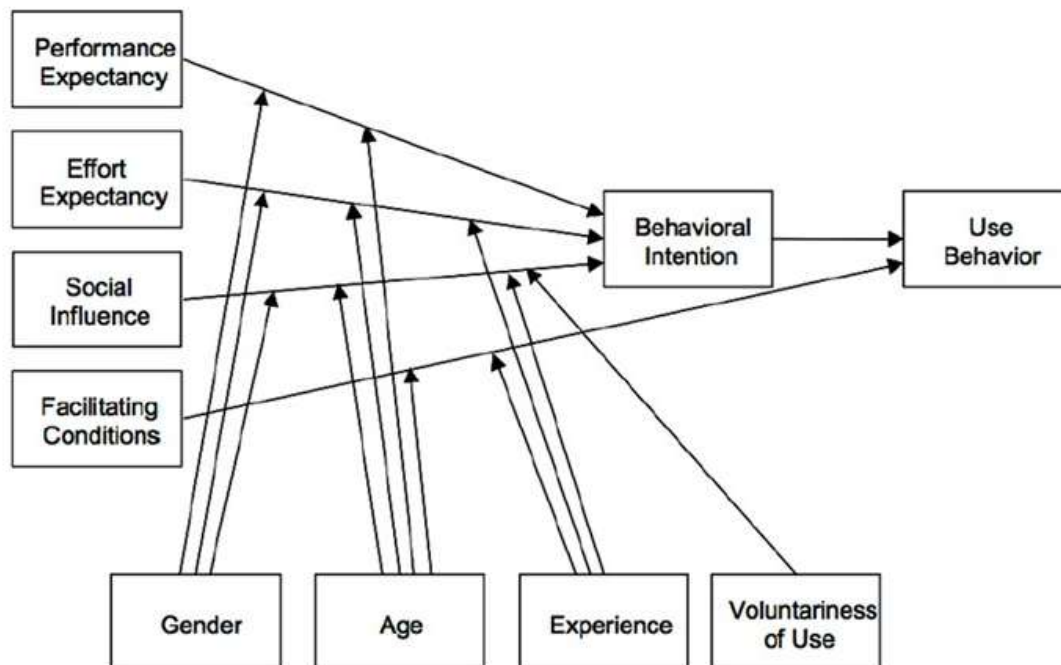


Figure 1: UTAUT Model (Source: Venkatesh et al., 2003: pp. 447)

1) Performance expectancy is defined as an individual's perception that the use of a particular technology will help improve their performance on the job and overall productivity.

2) Effort expectancy is measured by the degree of ease related to the use of the technology or system

3) Social influence refers to the role of many social factors that affect individual decision-making when deciding to adopt some new technology.

4) Facilitating conditions correspond to the existence of resources, such as infrastructure and customer support, which are crucial for technology adoption and usage.

Ever since it was introduced in 2003, the UTAUT has been a popular model in diverse research areas that have

looked at the adoption of technology in some way or the other (Pappas, Mikalef, & Giannakos, 2016; Nistor, Baltes, & Schustek, 2012; Pai & Tu, 2011).

Based on the review of the existing scholarship and the UTAUT framework, following three areas was investigated: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions. Four hypotheses were formulated (see Table 1).

Table 1 <i>Identified Areas and Hypotheses</i>	
Research Area	Hypothesis
Performance expectancy	H₀₁: Performance expectancy does not impact customer intention to use online food delivery service. H₁₁: Performance expectancy impacts customer intention to use online food delivery service.
Effort expectancy	H₀₂: Effort expectancy does not impact customer intention to use online food delivery service. H₁₂: Effort expectancy impacts customer intention to use online food delivery service.
Social influence	H₀₃: Social influence does not impact customer intention to use online food delivery service. H₁₃: Social influence impacts customer intention to use online food delivery service.
Facilitating conditions	H₀₄: Facilitating conditions do not impact customer intention to use online food delivery service. H₁₄: Facilitating conditions impact customer intention to use online food delivery service.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the city of Kanpur, on a sample of 326 people. The sample units were those who were frequent users of online food delivery services. Data was collected through surveys, and Five-point Likert scale-based was used. In the scale, 5 stood for 'Strongly Agree' and 1 stood for 'Strongly Disagree'. The survey instrument comprised 20 questions spread over five constructs. Cronbach's alpha were applied to test the reliability of the constructs (see Table 2).

Table 2 <i>Cronbach's alpha for reliability</i>								
S. No.	Construct	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1	Performance expectancy	4.02	.41	(.80)				
2	Effort expectancy	4.18	.52	.47*	(.78)			
3	Social influence	2.58	.39	.56**	.42*	(.74)		
4	Facilitating conditions	4.26	.44	.38*	.30*	.36*	(.71)	
5	Intention to order	4.22	.65	.40*	.66*	.38*	.22*	(.79)
N = 326								
* Correlation is significant at p < .05 level (2-tailed)								
** Correlation is significant at p < .01 level (2-tailed)								
Cronbach's alpha in the matrix diagonal								

For each of the five constructs, Cronbach's alpha correlation values were above the threshold of .70, signifying that the constructs were reliable (de Vaus, 1996). This was a confirmation that the questions within each construct were measuring the same concept.

DATA ANALYSIS

The survey instrument collected data on demographical factors too: age, gender, marital status, and educational qualification. The sample was found to be a good representative of the overall population characteristics. It comprised were 55% males and 45% females. About 31% of the participants were graduates, 28% postgraduates, 25% twelfth, 9% doctorates, and just 7% with no qualification. For the age factor, again, the sample was found to be a good representative. About 27% belonged to 31-40 age group, 24% to the 21-30 group, followed by 18% to below 20 age-group, 12% to the 41-50 age-group, and 19% to the above 50 age group. About 59% of the participants were married, 41% were single. Majority of the participants were found to be using either Zomato (41%) or Swiggy (38%). Uber Eats was used by just 11%, Food Panda by 6% and Dunzo at 4%.

Hypothesis 1:

The aim of the first hypothesis was to investigate if performance expectancy had any impact on customer intention to order food online. There was a statistically significant difference in *the impact of performance expectancy*; $t(326) = 11.819$, $p = .00$, on customer intention. Since the p value is less than .05, it can be inferred that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups, and so, the null hypothesis, H_01 : *Performance expectancy does not impact customer intention to use online food delivery service*, is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis, H_11 : *Performance expectancy impacts customer intention to use online food delivery service*, is accepted. The mean value for the group ($M = 4.02$, $SD = .41$) demonstrates the high impact of performance expectancy on customer intention.

Hypothesis 2:

The aim of the next hypothesis was to investigate whether effort expectancy affected customer intention. There was a statistically significant difference in *the impact of effort expectancy*; $t(326) = 7.651$, $p = .01$, between effort expectancy and customer intention. Since the value of p is less than .05, it can be inferred that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups, and so, the null hypothesis, H_02 : *Effort expectancy does not impact customer intention to use online food delivery service*, is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis, H_12 : *Effort expectancy impacts customer intention to use online food delivery service*, is accepted. The mean value for the group ($M = 4.18$, $SD = .52$) demonstrates the high effect of effort expectancy on customer intention.

Hypothesis 3:

The next hypothesis aimed to investigate whether social influence affected customer intention. There was no statistically significant difference in *the impact of social influence*; $t(326) = 21.185$, $p = .15$, between social influence and customer intention. Since the value of p is more than .05, it can be inferred that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups, and so, the null hypothesis, H_03 : *Social influence does not impact customer intention to use online food delivery service*, is accepted, and the alternate hypothesis, H_13 : *Social influence impacts customer intention to use online food delivery service*, is accepted. The mean value for the group ($M = 2.58$, $SD = .39$) demonstrates a very low impact of social influence on customer intention.

Hypothesis 4:

The aim of the next hypothesis was to investigate whether facilitating conditions affected customer intention. There was a statistically significant difference in *the impact of facilitating conditions*; $t(326) = 2.360$, $p = .02$, between facilitating conditions and customer intention. Since the value of p is less than .05, it can be inferred that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups, and so, the null hypothesis, H_02 : *Facilitating conditions do not impact customer intention to use online food delivery service*, is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis, H_12 : *Facilitating conditions impact customer intention to use online food delivery service*, is accepted. The mean value for the group ($M = 4.26$, $SD = .44$) demonstrates the high effect of facilitating conditions on customer intention.

DISCUSSION:

Results from this research bring out the critical nature of individual or personal factors on customer intention to order online food. Performance expectancy, effort expectancy, facilitating conditions, and social influence are the four original factors proposed by UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003). While performance expectancy deals with fulfilling a user's expectations that technology will help accomplish tasks more efficiently, effort expectancy relates to the ease with which they can learn a technology (Ritha & Nedumaran, 2024).

Similarly, facilitating conditions refer to the presence of supportive conditions that are required to learn a technology, and social conditions refer to the peer/family encouragement or pressure to use technology (Shankar, Jebarajakirthy, Nayal, Maseeh, & Achchuthan, 2022). In the context of online food delivery services, these conditions translate to the ease, effort, support, and social functions that help an individual adopt online food delivery services. Individual factors about technology are user-specific in that people's capabilities in understanding technology depend on their skills and knowledge. On the contrary, organisational factors stay the same for all users and could vary between organisations. For instance, one organisation might offer better customer service and online payment security than others.

The findings confirm those by Ju-Xiang (2022) and Macias, Rodriguez, and Barriga (2023), who found a high impact of performance expectancy factor. However, this research investigates the relevance of performance expectancy to customer satisfaction, not customer intention to order online food. Effort expectancy factor measured the amount of effort required to understand and use the mobile apps being used for ordering food online., The findings confirm those by Pokhrel and Shah (2023), who also found evidence for a high effect of the effort expectancy factor. However, this research investigates the effects of the effort expectancy on customer satisfaction rather than customer intention to order online food.

Data demonstrates high impact of facilitating conditions on customer satisfaction. However, the mean value is higher compared to the effort expectancy and performance expectancy factors. This implies that online food delivery service customers are comparatively less satisfied with the facilitating conditions, such as the required resources and knowledge for online food ordering. The findings confirm those by Chowdhury (2023), who found evidence for a high impact of facilitating conditions. However, this research investigates the impact of facilitating conditions on customer satisfaction, and not customer intention to order online food. Data demonstrates no impact of social influence on customer satisfaction. The mean value is very low compared to effort expectancy and performance expectancy factors. This implies that people are not influenced by their social circle such as family and friends in their online food ordering behaviour. The findings are different from those by Jain and Patel (2024), who found evidence for a high impact of social influence.

CONCLUSION:

This study aimed to examine the impact of the four categories or individual factors as mentioned under UTAUT, on customer intention to order online food. It was a quantitative study employing surveys on 326 users in the city of Kanpur. On the basis of the findings, effort expectancy, performance expectancy, and facilitating conditions were found to have a positive impact on customer intention to order online food. However, social conditions were not found to have any impact.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that users find food ordering apps easy to understand and use. There is nothing overly technical about them and people of all backgrounds and educational qualification can handle them easily. Users also felt that online food ordering was really helpful in the sense that it made things easier for them and saved time. This is one of the most important reasons why people order online food. Users were also confident that they possessed the required set of facilities such as a good smart phone and Internet, which are required for ordering food online.

At the same time, users were found to be unaffected by the suggestions or pressure from their social circle. This factor was found not to have any impact on their intention to order food online. This could mean that either they have more confidence in their decision-making, or that they look elsewhere for advice such as online forums or social media. It is quite evident from the findings that individual factors play a critical role in deciding people's intentions to buy food online.

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