RESEARCH ARTICLE

Food Delivery Apps and Decision Making: Navigating Information Overload among College Students in Delhi

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ABSTRACT

The advent of food delivery applications like Zomato and Swiggy has revolutionized the way individuals access and consume food. College students, especially those living in urban cities, like Delhi, have easy access to internet connectivity and these food delivery platforms. Such applications provide users access to an extensive variety of available options; from restaurants to cuisines and, even reviews and ratings. However, this abundance of choice can sometimes overwhelm users, leading to information overload, a state wherein users often encounter a surplus of information, leading to decision-making challenges and cognitive strain. The main objective of the paper is to find out whether food delivery applications like Zomato and Swiggy contribute to information overload among college students in Delhi. An online survey was conducted to capture various dimensions of information overload, including the sheer volume of options available on food delivery apps, the complexity of decision-making etc. The study's framework is based on Individual Differences Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory as they provide the conceptual base of the study.

The study has revealed that there is a prevalence of information overload among the youth while using food delivery applications like Zomato and Swiggy. The study also reveals that this abundance of information complicates the decision-making process when ordering food.The findings of this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics between technology, information abundance, and consumer behaviour in the context of food delivery applications.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the advent of digital technologies has transformed various aspects of daily life, including how individuals access and consume food (Chaudhary, 2023). Among the numerous innovations in this domain, food

delivery applications like Zomato and Swiggy have gained significant popularity, especially among college students in urban areas such as Delhi. These platforms offer users a convenient and efficient way to order food from a wide range of restaurants and cuisines, providing a plethora of options at their fingertips. However, alongside the convenience and variety, there comes a potential downside that has caught the attention of researchers and users alike–information overload.

Information overload refers to the overwhelming amount of information that individuals encounter, often leading to difficulties in processing and making decisions (Pijpers, 2010). In the context of food delivery applications, this overload manifests in the form of an extensive list of restaurants, menus, reviews, offers, and recommendations, among others. College students, being a tech-savvy demographic with high smartphone usage, are particularly susceptible to this phenomenon. Being active users of the apps, these students often find themselves grappling with decision-making challenges when faced with numerous choices and information cues. Understanding the relationship between information overload and decision-making is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it sheds light on the cognitive processes involved in navigating complex digital environments and the strategies individuals employ to manage information effectively. Secondly, it has implications for user satisfaction, as excessive information can lead to frustration, anxiety, and dissatisfaction with the platform (Gao *et al.*, 2020). The constant exposure to digital interfaces and the need to choose among numerous alternatives make the food delivery applications a compelling context for studying the cognitive processes involved in managing information overload and its effects on decision-making behaviours. Understanding these dynamics can provide valuable insights into designing user-friendly interfaces, enhancing user experiences, and promoting informed decision-making among college students in the digital era.

Review Of Literature

There is a scarcity of research on the association of Information Overload and Food Delivery Applications. However, a few studies are used in this research which highlights the complexities and impact of excessive information on decision-making processes through social media.

Pijpers (2010) in his research states Information Overload means being burdened with a large supply of unwanted information, only some of which can be pertinent and might even be associated with a loss of control over things, and situations, sometimes combined with feelings of being overwhelmed. The research states that Information Overload can also contribute to a loss of control over various aspects of one's life. This loss of control may manifest in difficulties in decision-making, task completion, or simply in navigating daily routines amidst the deluge of information. The feeling of being inundated can create a sense of chaos or disarray, impacting not only individual productivity but also overall well-being and mental clarity. Giving this research a new perspective, Alyouzbaky *et al.* (2022) in their study aim to explore how information overload, information anxiety, and techno stress influence the purchasing decisions of online consumers. The findings indicate that an abundance of product information can hinder online shoppers' decision-making capabilities and contribute to information anxiety. Moreover, the study also emphasizes the mediating influence of techno stress in this context. In a similar study by Chavda and Pandya (2017) the various processes by which Social Networking Sites (SNS) influence the purchasing behaviours of Indian college students, is investigated. The research focuses on platforms like Facebook and Twitter. The study investigates media consumption patterns and discusses the significant impact of SNS on consumer behaviours, especially among young consumers in India. It highlights how businesses effectively use SNS to engage their target audience and adapt marketing strategies to meet the preferences of this demographic in the digital era. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for businesses aiming to connect with young consumers in India through social media platforms. Addressing the problems and concerns of technology and information abundance, Renjith (2017) explores how the post-modern society, marked by rapid technological advancements and innovations, has led to a situation where accessing relevant information quickly has become challenging. The proliferation of digital media content has created an abundance of information, making it difficult to obtain useful

information when required. This information overload is also evident in news media, raising concerns about the credibility of digital media platforms. Renjith proposes that technology offers solutions to address this issue of information overload. By utilizing technological inventions and tools effectively, individuals can better manage the overwhelming influx of information and news. Though, researchers have studied the ill effects of technology, Lovink (2013), however, in his study states that the internet and smartphones are here to stay as blend smoothly into our lives. The question in the 21st century is not the potential or the impact of "new media," but how an individual can cope with them. He argues that there's no such thing as information overload, it's all a matter of conscious consumption. He suggests that self-improvement must come from inside, in the gym. If we want to survive while maintaining a relationship with gadgets and online platforms, we must get into fitness mode.

Research Gap

Upon examining the literature during the research study, the researcher found various gaps in the current understanding that require additional investigation.

- Limited availability of research on information overload in India, especially focused studies that consider the unique dynamics of food delivery apps and their impact on decision-making processes among this demographic.
- There is a need to analyze the impact of information overload among college students in Delhi through food delivery applications.
- There is a need to identify the specific factors contributing to information overload about food delivery applications.

Objectives Of The Study

The broad objective is to explore whether food delivery applications like Zomato and Swiggy cause information overload among college students in Delhi.

Based on the literature review and theoretical framework, the following specific objectives have been drawn for the study:

1. To examine the usage patterns of food delivery applications among college students in Delhi.
2. To analyze the impact of information overload on decision-making processes related to food consumption.

Theoretical Framework

The study uses the framework provided by the Individual Differences Theory and Uses and Gratification Theory.

Individual Differences Theory: Finding its roots in the theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Festinger, 1957), the individual differences theory provides a significant psychological approach to understanding mass media effects. According to this theory, an individual's psychological composition significantly influences their media consumption patterns. People respond variably to mass media based on their psychological needs, using media platforms to fulfil these requirements. This theory emphasizes how individuals engage with media based on their needs, motivations, biases, and prior beliefs. The most important aspects of selectivity are the theories of selective exposure, selective perception and selective retention.

Uses and Gratification Theory: The Uses and Gratification theory views audiences as active and homogeneous, emphasizing how people use media to satisfy their specific needs and seek gratification (Katz, 1959). Regardless of whether an audience member seeks media as a means of distraction from daily life, to connect with others, or to gather information about the world, they often unconsciously absorb the messages they select. The uses and gratifications approach underscores the relationship between the sender and the message, highlighting how motives and gratifications influence individuals' media-related behaviours.

Research Design

The entire study was exploratory. The research study has been conducted by a survey method based on mentioned objectives and theoretical approaches. A survey was conducted with the population comprisedof 500 undergraduate and

post-graduate students of Delhi. The population was selected through the purposive sampling technique. The sample has been calculated as per the response rate.

Research Tools

The survey method employed a questionnaire as a tool for data collection in the study. Respondents were asked to answer questions regarding their usage patterns of food delivery applications such as Zomato and Swiggy as well as their perception of information overload. Google forms were used to execute the survey.

Operational Definition

1. *Information overload:* Information overload happens when there is too much information for people to process because it goes beyond what they can handle (Pijpers, 2010).
2. *Food delivery applications*: Mobile applications of third-party services offering food delivery facilities from ordering food from restaurants or retailers directly to a location like homes or offices.
3. *College students*: Individuals enrolled in undergraduate or post-graduate programs at academic institutions located within Delhi.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of the Respondents: The demographic information of the participants was collected and analyzed, including their age, gender, and education level. The data from Figures 1 and 2 represent the demographic profile of the respondents from Delhi**.** Among all respondents, female students showed greater interest in participating in the study. Out of the total 500 respondents, 53% were female and 47% were male, which is reflected in Figure 1.

Figure 2 indicates that 74% of all respondents were in the age group of 17–20 years, 22% were aged 21 to 25 years, and only 4% were 24 years old and above.
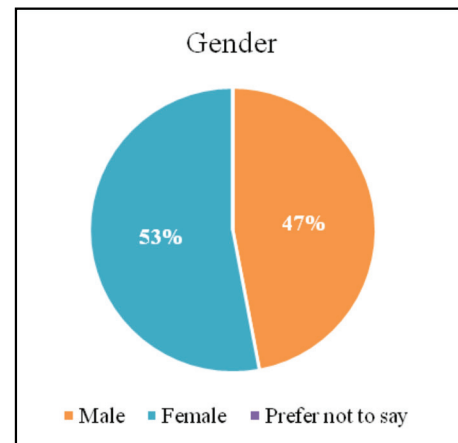

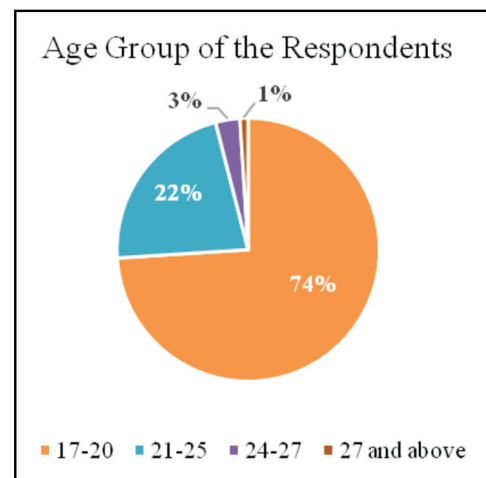**Figure 1: Demography of the Participants in gender**

Figure 2: Demography of the Respondents age

Education level of the Respondents: Figure 3 shows that out of the total 500 respondents, 83% were enrolled in an undergraduate course while 17% were undergoing post-graduation in Delhi.
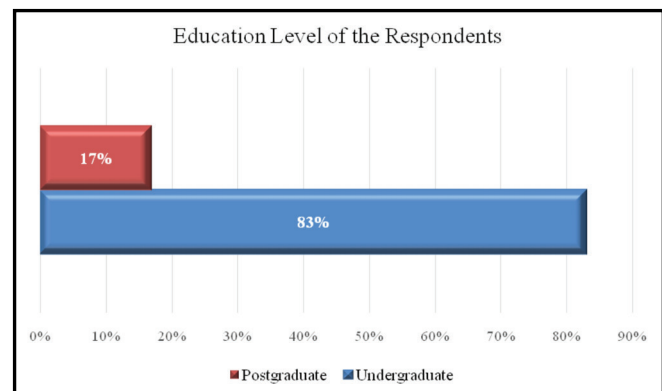

Figure 3: Education Level of the respondents in percentage

Frequency of using Food Delivery Applications: The data from Figure 4 illustrates how often college students from Delhi use food delivery applications. Among the 500 respondents, 23% reported using these applications Very Frequently, while 53% used them frequently. Moreover, 17% use the applications occasionally, and only 7% use them rarely.
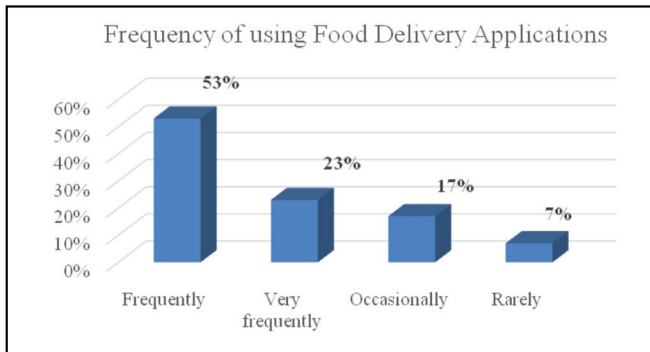

Figure 4: Frequency of using Food delivery Applications

Feeling Overwhelmed by Information on Food Delivery Applications: The data from Figure 5 clearly depicts that 39 and 35% of the total respondents feel occasionally and frequently overwhelmed by the information available on food delivery applications, respectively. Additionally, 14% of the participants sometimes feel overwhelmed by this information, while 8% responded rarely and only 4% stated that they never feel overwhelmed by the information available.
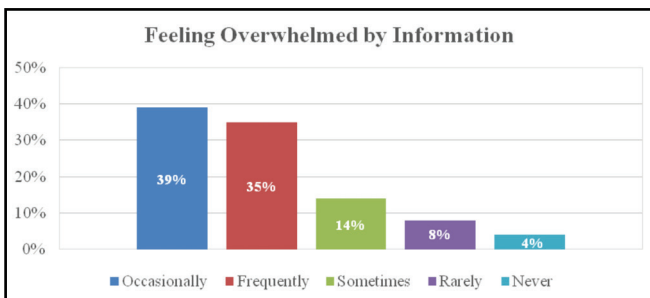

Figure 5: Feeling Overwhelmed by Information on Food Delivery Applications

Experience of Stress and Indecision when Using Zomato or Swiggy due to Overwhelming Choices: The statistics from Figure 6 show that a combined 78% of respondents either strongly agreed (46%) or agreed (32%) to experiencing stress and indecision when dealing with information available on food delivery applications. The graph reveals that 9%

of the respondents disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed with the experience of stress and indecision. On the other side, only 10% remained neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the experience of stress and indecision in this context.
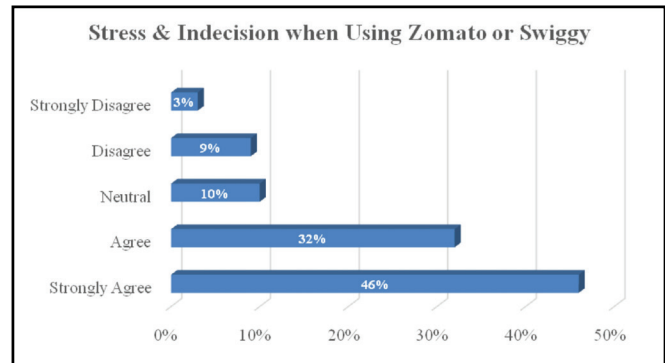

Figure 6: Stress and Indecision when Using Zomato or Swiggy

Effect of Information Overload on Decision Making: The data from Figure 7 reveals that a majority of respondents, comprising 63%, feel that the abundance of information complicates their decision-making. Interestingly, 23% of respondents express that the abundance of information has no significant impact on their decision-making when ordering food. While a minority of respondents, accounting for 14%, believe that the abundance of information on food delivery platforms like Zomato and Swiggy facilitates their decision-making when ordering food.
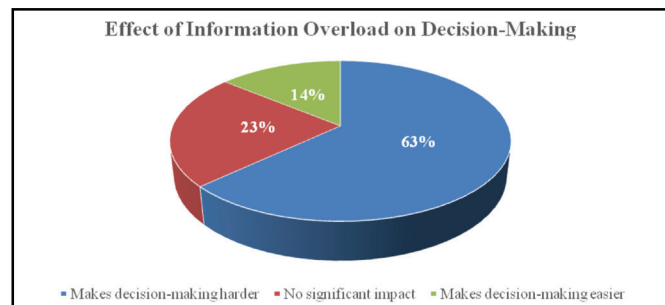

Figure 7: Effect of Information Overload on Decision Making

FINDINGS

Based on the defined objectives, the following are the findings:

➢ **To examine the usage patterns of food delivery applications among college students in Delhi.**

● More than half of the respondents,

comprising 53% reporting frequent usage and 23% reporting very frequent usage, indicate a high reliance on food delivery applications such as Zomato and Swiggy. This finding highlights the widespread adoption of these digital platforms in the food delivery sector in Delhi. This trend also demonstrates the growing reliance on technology to fulfill everyday needs, particularly in the domain of food consumption, among the surveyed population.

- ➤ **To analyze the impact of information overload on decision-making processes related to food consumption.**

  - A significant finding from the survey reveals that a combined 74% of the total respondents experience occasional or frequent feelings of being overwhelmed by the information available on food delivery applications. Specifically, 35% of the respondents reported the experience of being overwhelmed by the information available on food delivery applications frequently, while 39% experienced occasional feelings of being overwhelmed by this information. Also, 14% of the participants indicated that they sometimes experience feelings of being overwhelmed, with 8% responding that they rarely feel overwhelmed by the information. Surprisingly, only 4% of the respondents stated that they never feel overwhelmed by the information provided on these platforms. This finding sheds light on the varied experiences and perceptions of respondents when it comes to dealing with the abundance of information presented by food delivery applications like Zomato and Swiggy. It suggests that a significant proportion of users encounter feelings of being overwhelmed by the sheer volume of choices, menus, reviews, and other information available on these platforms, highlighting the challenges that users may face in navigating through the extensive options provided by food delivery apps.

  - Another finding from the survey indicates that a majority of respondents, comprising a combined 78%, either strongly agreed (46%) or agreed (32%) about experiencing stress and indecision when dealing with the information available on food delivery applications. This suggests that a large portion of users feel overwhelmed and uncertain when confronted with the abundance of choices, menus, reviews, and other information provided by these platforms. On the other hand, a smaller percentage of respondents, totaling 12%, either disagreed (9%) or strongly disagreed (3%) with the experience of stress and indecision. Additionally, only 10% of the respondents remained neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the experience of stress and indecision in this context. These findings highlight the significant impact that information overload can have on users' emotional states and decision-making processes when using food delivery applications like Zomato and Swiggy. It underscores the challenges that users face in navigating through the vast amount of information available on these platforms, leading to feelings of stress and indecision.

  - A significant majority of respondents, comprising 63%, feel that the abundance of information on food delivery platforms complicates their decision-making process when ordering food. Interestingly, a notable proportion of respondents, accounting for 23%, express that the abundance of information has no significant impact on their decision-making. On the other hand, a minority of respondents, totalling 14%, believe that the abundance of information on platforms like Zomato and Swiggy facilitates their decision-making when ordering food. These findings highlight the diverse perspectives among users regarding the impact of information abundance on their decision-making processes when using food delivery applications. While a majority perceive it as a complicating factor, a significant portion remains unaffected, and a smaller fraction finds it helpful.

Conclusion

With the various food delivery services available in the Delhi, national capital of India, the way individuals are accessing and ordering food has changed. Zomato and Swiggy, being famous among such services are providing food at the doorstep directly from the famous restaurants and kitchens. These applications provide a variety of information on their platforms from cuisines, and restaurants to reviews and ratings. College students being young and, in Delhi, are easily able to access these services as they are constantly connected through the internet.

It can be concluded from the findings that college students are frequently using these food delivery applications in Delhi. It was also observed that students are feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information available on such apps. The college students in Delhi are also experiencing stress through these food delivery applications which is leading to indecision when ordering food.

The findings also conclude that the college students of Delhi are experiencing the phenomenon of Information Overload on food delivery applications like Zomato and Swiggy due to the vast amount of information available to them. This information deluge is also affecting the way they make decisions.

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