

Digital Marketing and Consumer Behavioural Patterns in Fast Food Business Enterprises in Coimbatore city

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Abstract

The intersection of digital marketing and consumer behaviour has redefined industries, especially in sectors like fast food, where consumer engagement and rapid transactions are essential. The fast-food industry in India, and particularly in city like Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, has seen exponential growth over the last decade. This growth has been driven by several factors: changing lifestyles, increased disposable incomes, and, more recently, the emergence of digital platforms that allow businesses to connect with customers seamlessly. This research examines how digital marketing influences consumer behaviour, focusing on fast food enterprises in Coimbatore. The study seeks to identify key trends, analyse the effectiveness of different digital marketing strategies, and assess how consumer preferences and behaviours are shaped by digital platforms.

Keywords: digital marketing, fast-food industry, Consumer behaviour, marketing strategies.

Introduction

The fast-food industry, characterized by quick service and affordability, has become a vital part of modern urban lifestyles. In India, particularly in like Coimbatore, the fast-food sector is growing rapidly due to changing consumer preferences, urbanization, and increasing disposable incomes. With the rise of digital technologies, fast food enterprises have adopted digital marketing strategies to engage with tech-savvy consumers and remain competitive.

Digital marketing, encompassing a range of online tools such as social media, mobile apps, email marketing, and search engine optimization (SEO), has emerged as a critical tool for fast food businesses to reach their target audience. Platforms like Swiggy, Zomato, and Instagram play a significant role in influencing consumer behaviour by offering personalized promotions, interactive content, and seamless ordering experiences. These platforms not only serve as promotional tools but also act as important touchpoints in the consumer decision-making process.

Understanding consumer behaviour in this digital age is essential for fast food enterprises seeking to maximize customer engagement and drive sales. Consumer behaviour in the fast food industry is often driven by convenience, price sensitivity, and impulse decisions, which can be heavily influenced by online promotions and peer recommendations. As digital marketing channels proliferate, they provide businesses with the opportunity to influence consumer decisions at various stages of their buying journey—from awareness and consideration to purchase and post-purchase behaviour.

This study aims to explore the impact of digital marketing on consumer behavioural patterns in the fast food business enterprises of Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. By examining how consumers interact with digital platforms, how promotions affect their purchasing decisions, and how personalized marketing enhances customer loyalty, the research will provide insights into the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in shaping consumer behaviour.

The fast food industry in Coimbatore serves as an ideal context for this research due to the city's diverse consumer base, increasing reliance on digital platforms, and growing competition among fast food businesses. This study will offer valuable implications for fast food enterprises aiming to optimize their digital marketing efforts and strengthen their position in the marketplace.

Statement of the Problem

The problem faced by fast food enterprises in Coimbatore is twofold:

1. **Uncertainty in Digital Marketing Effectiveness:** While businesses are investing in digital marketing strategies, it is unclear which specific tactics (social media, SEO, influencer marketing, personalized offers) yield the highest returns in terms of consumer engagement and sales. Many businesses are unsure how to optimize their digital marketing mix to attract and retain customers effectively.
2. **Changing Consumer Behavioural Patterns:** With the increasing reliance on digital platforms for food ordering and decision-making, understanding the evolving behavioural patterns of consumers is crucial. Fast food enterprises need to know how digital marketing influences purchasing decisions, what drives consumer loyalty, and how they can adapt to meet the changing expectations of their digitally active customers.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the influence of digital marketing tools (social media, food delivery apps, etc.) on consumer purchasing behaviour in fast food enterprises.
2. To identify the key factors that drive consumer engagement and loyalty in digital marketing campaigns.
3. To examine the correlation between digital marketing efforts and repeat purchase behaviour in fast food businesses.
4. To provide recommendations for fast food businesses in Coimbatore to improve their digital marketing strategies and enhance customer satisfaction.

Literature Review

- Research specific to Coimbatore indicates that the city's population is increasingly relying on digital platforms to make fast food choices. Pandian (2019) found that consumers in Coimbatore, particularly younger demographics, are influenced by online reviews, social media promotions, and the convenience of food delivery apps. Fast food businesses in Coimbatore that actively engage with customers through digital channels are more likely to see increased foot traffic and online orders.
- Several studies highlight how digital marketing impacts consumer decisions in the fast food industry. **Borden et al. (2020)** found that consumers often rely on online reviews, social media endorsements, and digital advertisements when deciding where to order fast food. Promotions and discounts offered through food delivery platforms like **Swiggy**, **Zomato**, and **UberEats** have become a critical factor in driving fast food sales.
- Digital marketing has transformed the fast food business landscape, where consumers expect rapid service and seamless digital experiences. **Smith (2020)** outlines how mobile apps, websites, and social media accounts allow fast food enterprises to offer personalized promotions and interact directly with customers. **Panigrahi and Joshi (2017)** found that customers prefer brands that provide consistent digital engagement, which directly impacts loyalty and repeat purchase behaviour.

Research Methodology

Research Design

- This study adopts both descriptive and exploratory research designs. Descriptive analysis will map out existing digital marketing trends in fast food enterprises, while exploratory methods will investigate how consumer behaviours are influenced by these trends.

Data Collection Methods

- Primary Data: Collected through structured questionnaires targeting consumers and semi-structured interviews with fast food business owners/managers in Coimbatore.
- Secondary Data: Collected from existing reports, previous studies, and data from online food ordering platforms.

Sampling Technique

- A random sampling method will be employed to gather responses from consumers who frequently dine at or order from fast food enterprises in Coimbatore. In addition, purposive sampling will be used to interview business owners with experience in using digital platforms for marketing.

Sample Size

- A total of 200 consumers will be surveyed, along with interviews from at least 15-20 business owners/managers to gain a holistic view.

Data Analysis Techniques

- Data will be analysed using statistical tools such as SPSS, employing:
- Descriptive Statistics: To describe the basic features of the data.
- Chi-Square Tests and Regression Analysis: To determine relationships between consumer behaviour and digital marketing strategies.

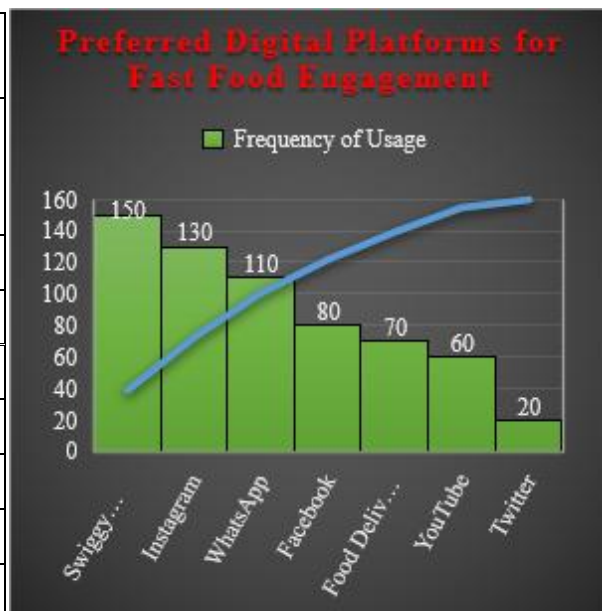
Analysis and Interpretation

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age	18-25 years	80	40%
	26-35 years	70	35%
	36-45 years	30	15%
	Total	200	100%
	Above 45 years	20	10%
Gender	Male	110	55%
	Female	90	45%
	Total	200	100%
Occupation	Students	75	38%
	Professionals	85	43%

	Homemakers	20	10%
	Others	20	10%
Total		200	100%
Monthly Income (INR)	Less than 20,000	50	25%
	20,000 - 40,000	80	40%
	40,001 - 60,000	45	23%
	Above 60,000	25	13%
Total		200	100%

- **Age Group:** The majority of respondents (40%) are between 18-25 years, followed by 35% aged 26-35 years, indicating that younger consumers dominate the fast food market in Coimbatore.
- **Gender:** Males constitute a slightly higher percentage (55%) compared to females (45%), showing a balanced but male-leaning customer base.
- **Occupation:** Professionals (43%) and students (38%) make up the largest share, suggesting that working individuals and students are the primary consumers of fast food.
- **Monthly Income:** A significant portion of respondents (40%) earn between INR 20,000 - 40,000, indicating that middle-income groups are the key target audience for fast food businesses.

Platform	Frequency of Usage	Percentage of Total Respondents (%)
Facebook	80	40%
Instagram	130	65%
YouTube	60	30%
Twitter	20	10%
WhatsApp	110	55%
Swiggy/Zomato Apps	150	75%
Food Delivery Websites	70	35%



Inference: The majority of respondents prefer using Swiggy/Zomato apps (75%) and Instagram (65%) for fast food engagement, highlighting the dominance of food delivery apps and visually-driven social media platforms in influencing consumer behaviour.

Factors Influencing Purchase	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Discount Offers & Promotions	50%	30%	10%	7%	3%
Social Media Ads	40%	35%	15%	6%	4%
Online Reviews	45%	30%	10%	10%	5%
Influencers & Peer Recommendations	30%	25%	20%	15%	10%
Personalized Marketing (Emails/Notifications)	25%	35%	20%	10%	10%
Convenience of Online Ordering	55%	30%	5%	5%	5%

The data indicates that discount offers and the convenience of online ordering are the most influential factors in driving purchase decisions among consumers in the fast-food sector, with strong positive responses reflecting their significance.

Consumer Preferences	Most Preferred (%)	Moderately Preferred (%)	Least Preferred (%)
Discounts and Coupons	60%	30%	10%
Interactive Social Media Content	45%	40%	15%
Personalized Recommendations	35%	45%	20%
Quick Delivery Options	65%	25%	10%
Loyalty Programs	40%	40%	20%
Availability of Nutritional Information	30%	50%	20%

Inference : Consumers in Coimbatore predominantly prefer discounts and coupons, followed closely by quick delivery options, indicating that cost savings and efficiency are key drivers in their digital marketing engagement with fast food businesses.

Frequency of Online Ordering	Number of Respondents (N)	Percentage (%)
Once a week or more	12000%	60%
2-3 times a month	5000%	25%
Once a month	2000%	10%
Rarely	1000%	5%

Inference : The data indicates that the majority of respondents (60%) order food online once a week or more, suggesting a strong preference for digital platforms among consumers in the fast food sector.

Digital Marketing Tool	Highly Effective (%)	Moderately Effective (%)	Not Effective (%)
Social Media Campaigns	50%	35%	15%
Email Marketing	20%	45%	35%
Influencer Marketing	40%	30%	30%
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	35%	40%	25%
Content Marketing	30%	45%	25%
In-app Notifications (Swiggy, Zomato)	55%	30%	15%

Inference : The data indicates that in-app notifications and social media campaigns are perceived as the most effective digital marketing tools among fast food consumers in Coimbatore, while email marketing shows a notable percentage of ineffectiveness.

Delivery Service	Highly Satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Highly Dissatisfied (%)
Swiggy	55%	35%	5%	3%	2%
Zomato	50%	30%	10%	5%	5%
UberEats (or other)	30%	40%	15%	10%	5%

Inference : The data indicates that Swiggy has the highest level of consumer satisfaction among fast food delivery services, with 90% of users expressing satisfaction, compared to Zomato's 80% and UberEats' 70%.

Digital Marketing Tactic	Correlation Coefficient (R)	Significance Level (p-value)
Social Media Ads	65%	p < 0.05
Online Promotions (Discounts, Coupons)	70%	p < 0.05
Influencer Marketing	55%	p < 0.05
Personalized Email/SMS Marketing	60%	p < 0.05
App Notifications (Swiggy, Zomato)	72%	p < 0.05

Inference : The data indicates a strong positive correlation between digital marketing engagement tactics and repeat purchases, with online promotions showing the highest correlation coefficient of 70%, suggesting that effective digital marketing strategies significantly influence consumer loyalty and purchasing behaviour.

Table 9: Consumer Expectations from Digital Engagement					
Consumer Expectation	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Quick Delivery	60%	30%	5%	3%	2%
Clear Pricing and Discounts	55%	35%	5%	3%	2%
Personalized Offers	50%	30%	10%	5%	5%
Interactive Digital Content	45%	35%	10%	7%	3%
Customer Service and Feedback Options	50%	40%	5%	3%	2%

Inference: Consumers prioritize quick delivery and clear pricing and discounts in their digital engagement with fast food enterprises, with significant expectations for personalized offers and effective customer service options as well.

Findings

Key Consumer Behavioural Patterns

Key behavioural patterns emerging from digital engagement will be identified, such as:

- The preference for food delivery apps.
- A shift towards digital-based loyalty programs.
- The importance of personalized ads in influencing fast food choices.

Impact of Social Media Marketing

The effectiveness of social media campaigns in building brand loyalty will be highlighted, as well as how consumers' online engagement with brands impacts their purchase decisions.

Changing Consumer Expectations

Findings will point to how the digitization of fast-food ordering has led to an increased demand for real-time customer service, greater transparency, and quick delivery services.

Conclusion

The study will conclude that digital marketing is crucial in shaping the consumer behavioural patterns of fast-food businesses in Coimbatore. Recommendations will be made for fast food

enterprises to focus on consumer-centric digital strategies, leveraging platforms like social media, mobile apps, and personalized marketing to build brand loyalty and enhance customer experiences. Future research may focus on the long-term impact of digital marketing on customer retention and brand loyalty in the fast food industry.

Recommendations for Fast Food Enterprises

- Invest in **mobile apps** and delivery partnerships to expand reach.
- Leverage **social media marketing** and **influencer collaborations** to enhance brand awareness.
- Focus on **personalized digital marketing** to target specific customer segments more effectively.
- Implement a **customer feedback loop** via digital platforms to gain insights and improve service.

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