Customer Choice and Preference on Food Deliver Apps Over Traditional Food Retailers in Kathmandu Valley

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Abstract

This study analyzed the customer choice and preference on food delivery apps over traditional food retailers in Kathmandu valley. The dependent variable is customer preference. Similarly, the selected independent variables are price, customer service, food quality, user friendly app, and delivery time. The primary source of data is used to assess the opinions of the respondents regarding the price, customer service, food quality, user friendly app, and delivery time in online food delivery apps. The study is based on primary data of 101 respondents. To achieve the purpose of the study, structured questionnaire is prepared. The correlation coefficients and regression models are estimated to test the significance and importance of customer choice and preference on food delivery apps over traditional food retailers in Kathmandu valley.

The study showed that price is negatively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that higher the price, lower will be the customer preference. Similarly, customer service is positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that better the customer service, better will be the customer preference. Likewise, food quality is positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that higher the food quality, better will be the customer preference. Further, user friendly app is positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that better the user friendly app, better will be the customer preference. Moreover, delivery time is positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that better the delivery time, better will be the customer preference.

Keywords: price, customer service, food quality, user friendly app, delivery time, customer preference

1. Introduction

Consumers are increasingly using online services as their disposable income increases, electronic payments become more trustworthy, and the range of suppliers and the size of their delivery networks expand (Li *et al.,* 2020). Online to offline (O2O) is a form of e-commerce in which consumers are attracted to a product or service online and induced to complete a transaction in an offline setting. An area of O2O commerce that is expanding rapidly is the use of online food delivery (online FD) platforms. Food delivery providers can be categorized as being either Restaurant-to-Consumer Delivery or Platform-to-Consumer Delivery operations. Restaurant-to-Consumer Delivery providers make the food and deliver it, as typified by providers, such as KFC, McDonald's, and Domino's. Dunford *et al.* (2014) stated that food switch has empowered Australian consumers seeking to make better food choices. In parallel, the huge volume of crowd sourced data has provided a novel means for low-cost, real-time tracking of the nutritional composition of Australian foods. There appears to be significant opportunity for this approach in many other countries. The growth of food delivery apps, facilitated by widespread internet and mobile device usage, has revolutionized the food industry. As of January 2021, 59.5% of the global population used the internet regularly, with 92.6% accessing it via mobile devices (Bagdi et al., 2023). Excellence in service quality is essential for achieving customer loyalty, as retaining customers offers numerous benefits (Ehigie, 2006).

Financial institutions and other service-oriented businesses recognize the importance

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of service quality in gaining a competitive edge and customer loyalty. In today's competitive environment, maintaining a top position requires continuously delivering premium quality services (Zeithaml *et al.,* 1996). Price also plays a critical role in consumer buying behavior. While price is seen as the cost to the customer, it represents income and profit for the seller. Studies have shown that price significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions, though its impact can vary, particularly for organic products (Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005).

Hassan *et al.* (2013) showed that perceptions of good customer service are valid and reliable for measuring customer satisfaction and loyalty, indicating a positive relationship between customer service and both customer satisfaction and loyalty. Dhasan and Agyapong (2019) illustrated that good customer service significantly influences customer loyalty but did not significantly affect customer engagement. Kaura *et al.* (2015) highlighted that effective customer service positively impacts both customer loyalty and satisfaction. Jin *et al.* (2016) stated that customer service has no significant relationship between loyalty and satisfaction. Limayem *et al.* (2000) stated the factors affecting customer satisfaction. Found that the behavioral control and intentions significantly influenced nestle product. The results also provided strong support for the positive effects of personal innovation on attitude and intentions to coffee product.

Thirumalai & Sinha (2005) analyzed the customer satisfaction with order fulfillment in retail supply chain implications of product type in electronic B2C transactions. The study found that dimensions of firms included in the study sample are such that their products can be classified into only one of three product types: convenience, shopping, or specialty goods. Lee *et al.* (2005) investigated that relationship among e-service quality dimensions and overall service quality, customer satisfaction and purchase intentions. The analytical results showed that the dimensions of physical design, price, responsiveness and brand affect overall quality and customer satisfaction. Moreover, the reliability and trust are significantly related to customer purchase intention. However, the personalization dimension is not significantly related to overall quality and customer satisfaction.

Ko & Chiu (2006) examined a new coffee shop location planning for customer satisfaction in Taiwan. The study concluded that the service is more important in this problem for the customer satisfaction. The result of the evaluation using AHP method results showed that the method is able to provide an accurate solution for decision-makers. Khalifa & Liu (2007) found that after sale service, transaction efficiency, security, convinces and cost savings as important online shopping usefulness drivers. Momtaz *et al.* (2011) concluded that advertisements, product quality, brand names, and prior shopping experiences do play a significant role in customer satisfaction among online shoppers in Malaysia.

Tsai &Yeh (2010) revealed that website characteristics positively influences perceived risk of information security and privacy and further, have an impact on purchase intention. The study showed that perceived risk of information security and privacy on a websites is strongly related to purchase intention. Guo *et al.* (2012) concluded that a conclusive study of eight determinants which have been studied by previous researches and reconfirmed that physical design, quality , responsiveness , brand , and price have positive influence on consumer satisfaction from the aspect of environmental in china . Al Karim (2013) investigated the major reasons that motivated customers' decision-making processes as well as inhibitions of online shopping. The study concluded that even though online shopping is convenient to all consumers, online payment system and privacy or security anxieties have

significant impact on online shopping. Pappas *et al.* (2014) investigated how different levels of experience affect customer satisfaction and behavior. The study empirically demonstrated that prior customer experience strengthens the relationship between performance expectancy and satisfaction, while it weakness the relationship of satisfaction with intention to repurchase.

Pappas *et al.* (2014) analyzed how different levels of experience affect customer satisfaction and behavior. The findings of the study showed that experience has moderating effects on the relationship between performance expectancy and satisfaction and intention to repurchase. The study empirically demonstrated that prior customer experience strengthens the relationship between performance expectancy and satisfaction, while it weakness the relationship of satisfaction with intention to repurchase. Kaur & Srivastava (2016) examined the impact of controversy on company sales and profit. The study found that Maggi is the most preferred noodles brand among noodle customers. The study also concluded from secondary sources that there's no denying that food safety regulations leave a lot to be desired.

Service quality directly correlates with customer satisfaction. Improved service quality enhances profitability and long-term competitiveness by attracting new customers and retaining existing ones (Spreng & Mackoy, 1996). Goutam & Gopalakrishna (2018) examined the determinants of cognitive loyalty in an online shopping environment. The study concluded the strong support for the theoretical model of relationships between E-S-QUAL, perceived value, e-satisfaction, e-trust, customer commitment and e-loyalty towards online shopping. Rajesh (2018) examined the factors influencing online shopping and its consumer satisfaction in Pune area. The study concluded that e-business organizations are at turning point moving from transactional marketing to one-to-one relationship marketing for customer satisfaction and retentions.

Al-Jahwari (2018) investigated the factors influencing customer satisfaction of online shopping in Oman. The results of the empirical study revealed that the perceptions of the youth confirming the product quality & service guarantee influenced comfort and satisfaction to the online customers. The study also revealed that the service tangibility concerning the guaranteed package and delivery process along with the lowest price motivated them to go for online shopping repeatedly. Sudari *et al.* (2019) concluded that the product, promotion, place and price have positive effects on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction of food and beverage products SMEs in Malaysia. Hudaya (2020) concluded that customer satisfaction has a significant effect on customer loyalty strong enough relationship that occurs with customer loyalty which gives a description of the existence of the customer satisfaction formed from several factors such as product quality.

In the context of Nepal, Sharma (2008) examined the practice of branding, packaging and labelling of new products in consumer product manufacturing units. The study found that branding, packaging and labelling influenced the buying decision. Thagunna & Khanal (2013) identified the various dimensions of buying behavior of Nepalese women while making purchasing decision. The results concluded that brand awareness, price, accurate information value identification, customer service and lifestyle are most influential for Nepalese women's purchasing decisions Difference in the demographic factors such as personal status, religious belief, occupation and income level however do not bring difference in the buying behavior of Nepalese women, in Nepal. Pradhananga (2014) found that related dimensional service quality and tangible dimensional service quality have a very low relationship with customer satisfaction.

Thapa (2015) revealed that brand image, price fairness, better design, comfort and the fuel efficiency has positive relationship with customer satisfaction towards the use of coffee product in Nepal. Thapa (2016) found that websites quality is positively related to customer's satisfaction. Baniya and Thapa (2017) investigated the influence of hotel attributes on satisfaction of 119 international tourists visiting Nepal. The study also found that customer satisfaction has a significant relationship with service quality, moreover the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty is also found to be highly significant.

The above discussion shows that empirical evidences vary greatly across the studies on the impact of customer choice and preference in online food delivery. Though there are above mentioned empirical evidences in the context of other countries and in Nepal, no such findings using more recent data exist in the context of Nepal. Therefore, in order to support one view or the other, this study has been conducted.

The major objective of the study is to determine the impact of customer choice and preference in online food delivery in Kathmandu valley. More specifically, it examines the relationship of price, customer service, food quality, user friendly app, and delivery time with customer preference in Kathmandu valley.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows. Section two describes the sample, data and methodology. Section three presents the empirical results and the final sections draws the conclusion.

2. Methodological aspects

The study is based on the primary data. The data were gathered from 101 respondents through questionnaire. The respondents' views were collected on price, customer service, food quality, user friendly app, and delivery time and customer preference. This study is based on descriptive as well as causal comparative research designs.

The model

The model used in this study assumes that customer preference depends upon online food delivery app. The dependent variable selected for the study is customer preference. Similarly, the independent variables are price, customer service, food quality, user friendly app, and delivery time. Therefore, the model to be estimated in this study is stated as follows:

$$CP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 P + \beta_2 CS + \beta_3 FQ + \beta_4 UFA + \beta_5 DT + e$$

Where,

P= price

CS= customer service

FQ= Food quality

UFA= User friendly app

DT= Delivery time

CP= Customer preference

Price was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where respondents were asked to

indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "The delivery does influence my decision when ordering food", "Promotional discounts or offers sway my choice of food delivery service", and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.683$).

Customer service was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items "The clarity of order status updates influences my satisfaction with a food delivery app's customer service.", "The accuracy of order fulfillment impacts my satisfaction with a food delivery app's customer service", and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.692$).

Food-quality were measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "Encountering poor quality food or service on a food delivery app significantly affects my overall satisfaction with the app's service.", "The reputation of a food delivery app for providing high-quality food influences my decision to use It.", and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.653$).

User-friendly app was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include"A food delivery app's ease of use impacts my satisfaction", "Intuitive design contributes to my preference for a food delivery app", and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.671$).

Delivery Time was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "Timely delivery is crucial for my satisfaction with a food delivery app.", "Waiting longer than expected affects my opinion of a food delivery app ", and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.650$).

Customer preference were measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include "The quality of customer service provided by a food delivery app affects my overall experience.", "The timely delivery of my order is crucial for my satisfaction with a food delivery app.", and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.65$).

The following section describes the independent variables used in this study along with hypothesis formulation.

Quality

Service quality is generally viewed as the output of the service delivery system, especially in the case of pure service systems. Parasuraman (1998) revealed that services quality has a significant relationship with customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Kun-Hsi Liao (2012) highlighted that service quality of business leisure has a direct relationship with customer loyalty but services quality has an indirect relationship between customer loyalties through

customer satisfaction. Alnaser *et al.* (2017) revealed that service quality has a positive and direct effect on customer loyalty. Likewise, Kheng *et al.* (2010) found service quality and customer loyalty have positive effects and services can enhance customer loyalty. Based on it, the study develops the following hypothesis:

H_1: There is a positive relationship between quality and customer preferences.

Price

A price is the quantity of payment or compensation given by one party to another in return for one unit of goods or services. Al-Salamin and Al-Hassan (2016) found that there is a positive relationship between price and consumer buying behavior. According to Rai (2019), there is a significant and positive influence of price and social factors on consumer. Likewise, Auf *et al.* (2018) showed the direct relationship between price, motivation, perceived culture importance and consumer buying behavior. Similarly, Safitri (2018) revealed that fair price has a positive effect on purchasing decision. Likewise, Adhikari and Biswakarma (2017) indicated that price has a significant impact on purchase intention. Moreover, Shabbir and Safwam (2014) revealed that male and female consumers exhibited different shopping patterns in relation to brand, quality and, price. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H_2: There is a positive relationship between price and customer preferences.

Customer service

Customer service is defined as the assistance and support provided by a company to its customers before, during, and after purchasing products or services. Effective customer service significantly impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty. Wu (2011) suggested that good customer service increases customer satisfaction and loyalty. Martin-Consuegra et al. (2007) analyzed that effective customer service improves service satisfaction and significantly affects customer satisfaction. Nazari et al. (2014) found that customer service has a direct impact on satisfaction and loyalty. Based on this, the study develops the following hypothesis:

H_3: There is a positive relationship between customer service and customer r preferences

User friendly app

User-friendly app interfaces are defined as applications that are easy to navigate, understand, and use, providing a positive user experience. Pokhrel and Bista (2023) found that user-friendly interfaces positively relate to trust and loyalty, with user trust mediating the relationship between app usability and loyalty. Thapa (2020) suggested that user-friendly app interfaces increase user satisfaction and loyalty. Gurung *et al.* (2021) analyzed that user-friendly interfaces improve service satisfaction and significantly affect user satisfaction. Based on this, the study develops the following hypothesis:

H_4: There is a positive relationship between User-friendly app and customer preferences.

Delivery time

Delivery time is defined as the period between placing an order and receiving the goods or services. Sharma (2018) suggested that prompt delivery times increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. Bortolini *et al.* (2016) concluded that food quality dependence on the delivery

time. Agatz *et al.* (2011) stated that delivery time slots has to balance marketing and operational considerations, which results in a complex planning problem. The study revealed the problem of selecting the set of time slots to offer in each of the zip codes in a service region. The selection needs to facilitate cost-effective delivery routes, but also needs to ensure an acceptable level of service to the customer the study presented a fully automated approach that is capable of producing high-quality delivery time slot offerings in a short amount of time. Based on this, the study develops the following hypothesis:

H_5: There is a positive relationship between delivery time and customer preferences

3. Results and discussion

Correlation analysis

On analysis of data, correlation analysis has been undertaken first and for this purpose, Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients along with means and standard deviations have been computed, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients matrix

This table presents Kendall's Tau coefficients between dependent and independent variables. The correlation coefficients are based on 101 observations. The dependent variable are customer preference (CP). The independent variables are P (Price), CS (Customer Service), FQ (Food Quality), UFA (User Friendly App), and DT (Delivery Time).

Variables	Mean	S.D.	CP	P	CS	FQ	UFA	DT
CP	4.087	0.467	1					
P	4.311	0.459	-0.229**	1				
CS	4.337	0.476	0.023	0.553**	1			
FQ	4.246	0.463	0.155	0.342**	0.381**	1		
UFA	4.147	0.452	0.678**	0.398**	0.194*	0.216**	1	
DT	4.045	0.716	0.713**	0.299**	0.023	0.155	0.678**	1

Note: The asterisk signs (**) and (*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent levels respectively.

Table 1 shows that price is negatively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that higher the price, lower will be the customer preference. Similarly, customer service is positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that better the customer service, better will be the customer preference. Likewise, food quality is positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that higher the food quality, better will be the customer preference. Further, user friendly app is positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that better the user friendly app, better will be the customer preference. Moreover, delivery time is positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that better the delivery time, better will be the customer preference.

Regression analysis

Having analyzed the Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients matrix, the regression analysis has been carried out and the results are presented in Table 2. More specifically, it presents the regression results of price, customer service, food quality, user friendly app, and delivery time on customer preference in Kathmandu valley.

Table 2

Estimated regression results of price, customer service, food quality, user friendly app, and delivery time on customer preference in Kathmandu valley

The results are based on 101 observations using linear regression model. The model is CP $=\beta_0 + \beta_1 P + \beta_2 CS + \beta_3 FQ + \beta_4 UFA + \beta_5 DT + e$, where the dependent variable is CP (customer preference). The independent variables are p (Price), CS (Customer Service), FQ (Food Quality), UFA (User friendly app), and DT (Delivery time).

Model	Intercept	Regression coefficients of					Adj. R_bar²	SEE	F-value
		P	CS	FQ	UFA	DT			
1	1.056 (5.076)**	0.699 (14.355)**					0.507	0.520	206.052
2	0.664 (3.863)**		0.839 (19.864)**				0.660	0.432	387.454
3	0.819 (5.305)**			0.185 (2.928)**			0.688	0.414	439.137
4	0.776 (4.946)**				0.810 (20.867)**		0.686	0.415	435.452
5	0.222 (1.694)					0.932 (29.174)**	0.810	0.322	851.109
6	-0.070 (0.547)	0.090 (2.129)*	0.096 (1.385)	0.185 (2.928)**	0.018 (0.278)	0.617 (10.898)**	0.731	0.508	85.673

Notes:

    i.   Figures in parenthesis are t-values.
    ii.   The asterisk signs (**) and (*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent level respectively.
    iii.   Customer preference is dependent variable.

Table 2 shows that the beta coefficients for price are negative with customer preference. It indicates that price has a negative impact on customer preference. This finding is consistent with the findings Srivastava *et al.* (2015). Similarly, the beta coefficients for customer service are positive with customer preference. It indicates that customer service has a positive impact on customer preference. This finding is similar to the findings of Featherman and Pavlou (2003).Likewise, the beta coefficients for food quality are positive with customer preference. It indicates that the food quality has a positive impact on customer preference. This finding is similar to the findings of Amijaya(2010). Further, the beta coefficients for user friendly app are positive with customer preference. It indicates that user friendly app has a positive impact on customer preference. This finding is similar to the findings of Wang and Chou (2018). Moreover, the beta coefficients for delivery time are positive with customer preference. It indicates that delivery time has a positive impact on customer preference. This finding is similar to the findings of Ha and Jung (2016).

4. Summary and conclusion

With the rapid growth of the online food delivery industry, companies are finding that the balance of power has shifted towards customers, as the impact of customer attrition has not been managed well. Excessive customer attrition is often a symptom of fundamental problems within the business. It's critically important to retain customers; to do this, one must understand how a customer can remain loyal to a particular app. In today's competitive scenario, awareness and technology play a vital role in intensifying the competition. Customer retention becomes one of the biggest issues for online food delivery apps because customers are the ones who generate revenue and are considered the lifeblood of the business.

This study attempts to customer choice and preference on food delivery apps over traditional food retailers in Kathmandu valley. The study is based on primary data with 101 respondents.

The major conclusion of the study is that price, customer service, food quality, user friendly app, delivery time have positive impact on customer preference. It indicates that better the price, customer service, food quality, user friendly app, delivery time, better would be the customer preference. similarly, the study also concludes that delivery time followed by food quality are the most influencing factors that explains the impact of customer choice and preference on food deliver apps over traditional food retailers in Kathmandu Valley.

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