

Role of Delivery Partners on Repeat Purchase Intentions in OFDAs – A Study in Moradabad Region

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ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of online food delivery applications has fundamentally reshaped how consumers dine, signalling a major shift in the food service industry all over the world (Suhartanto et al., 2018). This sector has gained momentum and has expanded quickly; especially in developing economies like India, where online food delivery (OFD) services are gaining popularity attributable to the convenience it provides, ease of use, and increasing trust in digital payment systems (Alghamdi et al., 2023; Siddiqi et al., 2024). Amid a very highly competitive environment in modern times, building customer loyalty and encouraging repeat purchase intentions of the customers are essential for the long-term success of OFDA platforms (Chan et al., 2023; Suhartanto et al., 2018).

Many studies have already been done on the overall service quality in context of OFDAs (Wu et al., 2024), the role of last mile delivery partners in specific has not been explored much (Khan et al., 2024). Delivery partners play a key role in creating the customer experience, and their performance directly influences customer satisfaction and the chances of making them buy again (Ismail et al., 2024; Mao et al., 2019). While efficient and

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fast speed are crucial factors to ensure customer satisfaction and ensure their retention (Ismail et al., 2024), professionalism and style of interaction possessed by delivery personnel including their friendliness and skills to communicate, are key determinants of overall experience of the customer (Macías et al., 2023). Also important is to maintain food integrity at the time of delivery and to ensure that the correct order is delivered (Khan et al., 2024). Also, policies pertaining to service recovery are crucial for providing effective resolutions to customer problems (Macías et al., 2023). Multiple studies have reiterated the importance of strict hygiene practices in crafting perception of customers about safety of food and the overall service quality of OFDAs (Christian et al., 2023; Rui et al., 2025).

The study presented here, tends to focus on the various dimensions related to the delivery partner assigned with the task of delivery of food at last mile. This work tends to examine the role of various attributes related to delivery partner in influencing the repeat purchase intentions of customers in the OFDA sector in Moradabad region. Specifically, it investigates how delivery efficiency and speed, customer interaction and professionalism, food integrity upon arrival and order accuracy, problem resolution efficiency, and hygiene practices affect consumer decision-making and more precisely the repeat purchase behavior in this emerging Indian market. Both, descriptive and inferential statistical tools are employed to achieve the objectives of the study.

India has witnessed changes in lifestyle of its people, increased use of smartphones and urban people having started seeking convenience. All this contributing to massive growth of online food delivery sector in India. (B & Andrew, 2021; Chanda & Priyamvada, 2025; Gupta & Nair, 2021). This unprecedented growth has enabled leading players like Swiggy and Zomato to emerge as major game changers and thus restyling the eating habits of the society and the entire food service industry (Chandan, 2020; Gupta & Nair, 2021). This radical shift has provided an alternative and moved many if not all; customers relying on restaurants to these tech assisted delivery platforms. Thus, making food delivery partners, critical touchpoints in the overall service encounter (M. Z. Khan, 2023; Mohd. A. Khan & Maqbool, 2024). These OFDAs can become financially sustainable and remain competitive; only if and when they are able to encourage repeat purchase and garner loyalty from their customers (Chan et al., 2023; Gao et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2024).

While, lot many studies have been done in the domain of OFDAs over the last few years, studies focused on emerging Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets have been scarce; particularly in reference to delivery partner-specific factors and the way they are shaping customer satisfaction and repeat purchase behaviour (Kaur, 2023; Khan & Maqbool, 2024; Rishi et al., 2021). This study is an attempt to address this gap by examining the role of delivery partners in driving repeat purchase intentions in Moradabad region. It is a relatively under-studied tier-2 city, and learnings from markets like this can serve as a guiding reference for developing customer retention strategies in similar markets.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Online Food Delivery Services in India

Change in lifestyles, growing smartphone adoption and usage and need for convenience have been the drivers behind the rapid growth of online food delivery sector in India (Chanda & Priyamvada, 2025; Gupta & Nair, 2021). The pattern is quite evident in the urban Indian geography because of busy routines and high disposable incomes. This shift is particularly evident in urban areas, where for every day meals, the reliance of food delivery apps has gone up because of busy routines and higher disposable incomes (B & Andrew, 2021; Gupta & Nair, 2021). These OFDAs offers a vast range of restaurant options to choose from along with sales promotion deals, plethora of payment gateway options; all resulting in alteration of conventional eating habits of people (-, 2023; Chanda & Priyamvada, 2025). This gush in OFDA adoption among people can be largely attributed to the convenience, attractive discounts it offer, improved quality of service, better reliability of food delivery applications, efficiency in fulfilment of orders and flexibility in payment options; offered by these applications

(Chandan, 2020; Pandey et al., 2021). The pandemic of 2020 and its aftermath, has also accelerated this transition and has established OFDAs as an indispensable part of everybody's life (Chanda & Priyamvada, 2025).

In the light of this knowledge, it becomes lot more important to meticulously plan the ecosystem involved as it impacts the efficiency in logistics, attract and retain customers through high quality service and on time deliveries (Datta, 2018). With such a delivery model cementing its place in the ecosystem thus evolved, OFDAs have this responsibility of providing logistical support and delivery of food directly to the customers who have placed orders (Natarajan et al., 2019). It implies, that delivery partners employed at the last mile are in the centre of the operations of OFDAs and handling the large part of their order fulfilment (Khan & Maqbool, 2024).

Delivery Partner Service Quality Dimensions

The perceived quality of services offered by these delivery agents or partners, determines satisfaction of the customers and their overall experience with the OFDA (Wu et al., 2024; Yusra et al., 2020). Several important aspects and dimensions related to services provided by delivery partner have been learnt and highlighted from the literature available, as here under:

- **Delivery efficiency and speed:** Delivery of food within the reasonable expectation of the customers is crucial to customer satisfaction and his future intentions to order online (Ismail et al., 2024; Shipman, 2020). Customers opt for OFDAs primarily to get convenience and save time; and therefore, expects the delivery partner to arrive with order before or with in the time frame promised by the OFDAs (Kajandren et al., 2023; Shipman, 2020). A study states that any delays in the last mile delivery will adversely impact customer satisfaction (Ismail et al., 2024), as almost every customer expects quick order fulfilment and expect OFDA to comply the promised time frame of delivery (Kajandren et al., 2023). A study also revealed that clear explanation given by the delivery partners or agent in case of delay, helps minimize the customers' perceived dissatisfaction (Bonfanti et al., 2023). It is learnt in a study that efficiency in food delivery shapes customers' evaluation of the service offered by the OFDA (Ismail et al., 2024).
- **Customer interaction and professionalism:** A recent study revealed that the manner in which the delivery partner has behaved and his appearance, style of communication and mannerism influences customers' perceptions and satisfaction (Macías et al., 2021, 2023). Consumers value professionalism, and tangible cues such as uniforms help builds trust in customer towards the services offered (Macías et al., 2023). Trust and overall satisfaction with the OFDAs have resulted from positive and respectful interactions with the delivery partners of OFDAs (Wu et al., 2024). Degree of empathy and the willingness of the agents to assist the customers during the service encounter has a positive bearing on the perceived service quality of OFDAs (Yusra et al., 2020).
- **Food integrity upon arrival and order accuracy:** Positive conformation of service quality highly depends on 2 factors viz. correctness of the food (order) delivered and its condition (Khan et al., 2024). If a wrong item is delivered or is missed or arrives in a condition not fit for consumption; dissatisfaction, negative reviews, damage to the reputation of OFDAs and decline in sales follows (Khan et al., 2024; Shipman, 2020).
- **Hygiene and safety practices:** As awareness towards health and safety has increased, in the aftermath of global health crises, the hygiene and safety practices of delivery partners makes an important part of customers' evaluations (Nizar & Abidin, 2021). Quality of packaging, handling of food parcel and delivery experience of customers, serves as an indicator of food safety in the eyes of the customers (Sarwar et al., 2020). A study also helped us understand, that the cleanliness and neat appearance of delivery partners or agents can potentially influence perceptions of meal hygiene (Saleh et al., 2024).

Repeat Purchase Intention

Repeat purchase intentions can be described as the willingness of customers to continue choosing the same product or service provider in future (Coşar et al., 2017). Repeat purchase intentions are crucial for long term sustainability and financial performance of OFDAs (Gao et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2024). Loyal customers ordering again from the OFDA are valued for their low cost of customer, faster purchase decisions and thus contribution to the overall profitability of the service provider (Munir et al., 2025). Past experiences, interactions and satisfaction resulting from them are important predictors of customers' repeat purchase intentions (Coşar et al., 2017; Munir et al., 2025). In one specific study, it was found that positive past experiences foster customer loyalty (Alauddin & Akther, 2023; Munir et al., 2025).

Research Gap

While many studies have been done in the domain of Online Food Delivery, covering the wide range of related aspects, some niche areas remain under explored and needs scholarly exploration. What accentuates the need is the scarcity of studies done in the geography and market like this region viz. Moradabad region:

- **Over-reliance on SEM in prior studies:** Across studies, higher order tools like SEM and PLS have been used to explore interrelationships of various factors in the ecosystem of OFDAs and uncover latent knowledge. While it is always valuable to use such tools and heightened methodology, the research focus gets narrowed inadvertently (Christino et al., 2021; Macías et al., 2023).
- **Lack of region-specific, descriptive evidence:** A large number of research studies done in OFD sector, have been done in Indian metros and Tier – I cities and a clear gap exist in the form of unexplored tier III towns and cities like Moradabad. (Vinish et al., 2021a, 2021b). The local socio-cultural landscape economic conditions and demography create a unique context which has direct bearing on the food consumption behaviour of people; thus, demanding a study focused on this part of the geography. (Vinish et al., 2021). Similar assertion came from another study where it was understood that models developed or tested in one setting may not apply to another geographical set up like tier-II or III towns (Dasgupta et al., 2021).

The present study is in line with the aforesaid gaps and thus by focusing on Moradabad, a specific tier-2 city in India, helps to bridge them. Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques have been used and insights generated are not only important in practice across OFD sector; yet conceptually robust.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The present study attempts to achieve the following objectives pertaining to delivery partner related dimensions, in Moradabad region. The study focuses on the possible impact of these dimensions on the repeat purchase intentions of those who have ordered at least once from the OFDA in Moradabad. The study seeks to uncover answers to the following:

1. To assess the impact of customer's perceived level of efficiency and speed of order delivery on repeat purchase intentions among OFDA customers in Moradabad.
2. To evaluate the impact of customers' perception of quality of customer interaction and degree of professionalism demonstrated by delivery partners on repeat purchase intentions of OFDA customers in Moradabad.
3. To investigate the impact of customers' perception of food integrity at the time of delivery and order accuracy on repeat purchase intentions of OFDA customers in Moradabad.
4. To investigate the impact of customers' perception of problem resolution efficiency of delivery partners on repeat purchase intentions of OFDA customers in Moradabad.

5. To investigate the impact of customers' perception of hygiene practices of delivery partners on repeat purchase intentions of OFDA customers in Moradabad.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Delivery of order (food parcel) on time is vital for satisfaction of customers in online food delivery. Any delay is likely to have a detrimental impact on customer experience (Ismail et al., 2024). In another study the authors found that customers consider swift service valuable and thus effective management of expectations rest on punctuality of the delivery partner and transparency in communication (Bonfanti et al., 2023; Kajandren et al., 2023).

H1: Delivery efficiency and speed will positively impact customer repeat purchase intentions

The degree of professionalism demonstrated by the delivery personnel at the time of delivery including their appearance and communication efficacy influences the perception created in the mind of the customer (Macías et al., 2021). Customers appreciate when delivery partners are able to demonstrate a high level of professionalism with them and their positive interactions are crucial for building trust and enhance their satisfaction with the online food delivery platform (Macías et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2024).

H2: Customer interaction and professionalism of delivery partners will positively impact customer repeat purchase intentions

Another fundamental aspect of service quality and an inherent need of customers in reference to food delivery is that, the same item (dish) is delivered and is received at the time of delivery in desired state and condition (Khan et al., 2024). In their work researchers found that food quality negatively conforming to customers' expectations or inaccurate orders leads to dissatisfaction and adversely impacts their overall perception of service (Chan & Gao, 2021; Shipman, 2020).

H3: Food integrity upon arrival and order accuracy will positively impact customer repeat purchase intention

In an event of service failure, an effective service recovery mechanism may come to rescue and can be decisive in retaining customers (Macías et al., 2023). Complaints, if handled promptly and satisfactorily reflects OFDAs commitment to providing quality and can mitigate any negative impact.

H4: Problem resolution efficiency will positively impact customer repeat purchase intentions

The customers have increasingly become aware about their health and it has resulted in them being concerned about the hygiene practices of food delivery partners (Nizar & Abidin, 2021). It was learnt by researchers that cleanliness of delivery personnel and handling of the parcel is often seen as proxy of food safety (Saleh et al., 2024; Sarwar et al., 2020).

H5: Hygiene practices of delivery partners will positively impact customer repeat purchase intentions

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional study was done in Moaradabad region using quantitative instruments, to examine the inter dependency of delivery partner related service quality dimensions and customers' repeat purchase intentions in the online food delivery application (OFDA) sector. In this descriptive study a causal-comparative approach is used to capture consumers' perceptions and to test the proposed hypotheses through empirical evidences (Khan & Maqbool, 2024; Macías et al., 2021).

The respondents' profile was defined as any adult customer of OFDA living in Moradabad region who have used OFDAs. Convenience sampling was used to gather 153 valid responses (Khan & Maqbool, 2024).

A structured questionnaire adopted from past studies was used to collect the data and to ensure content validity of the instrument (Chan & Gao, 2021; Khan et al., 2024). A 5-point Likert Scale using continuum of Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree was used for all the items to measure the constructs (IDVs) (Macías et al., 2021). Independent variables studied includes Delivery efficiency and speed, customer interaction and professionalism, food integrity upon arrival and order accuracy, problem resolution efficiency, and hygiene practices. Dependent variable in the study was Repeat Purchase Intention of customers who have ordered at least once from any OFDA in Moradabad region.

Correlation analysis was used to test the strength and direction of relationship among the IDVs and also with the DV. The Pearson's Correlation Coefficient from the correlation matrix created; helped in assessing the strength and direction of linear relationships between the five independent variables and the dependent variable (Vinish et al., 2021). The coefficient helped in ascertaining if the dimensions were significantly associated with the dependent variable repeat purchase intentions, or not. (Wu et al., 2024).

To test the proposed hypotheses and check for any causal effect of delivery partner related service quality dimensions (5 independent variables) on repeat purchase intentions of the customer multiple liner regression was used.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

To summarize and draw inferences from the statistical analysis conducted on the data collected from the respondents, mean score was calculated for all the delivery partner related constructs (IDVs) Mean score of all the independent variables was calculated through SPSS, by running mean for the item scores. As learnt from the result tables, with a Mean Score of 4.0 respondents were found having high repeat purchase intentions. Attributes of service delivery partner received mixed scores. While efficiency in delivery and its speed along with customer interaction and professionalism were found with high mean scores of 4.07 and 3.97 respectively; the other remaining 3 constructs viz. hygiene practices of the delivery partner, food integrity upon arrival and accuracy of orders had relatively small scores.

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean Score of Delivery Efficiency and Speed	153	3.00	5.00	4.0654	.36699
Mean Score of Customer Interaction and Professionalism	153	3.25	4.50	3.9739	.31825
Mean Score of Food Integrity upon Arrival and Order Accuracy	153	2.00	4.25	3.3644	.38151
Mean Score of Problem Resolution Efficiency	153	2.67	5.00	3.8889	.44096
Mean Score of Hygiene Practices	153	2.25	4.25	3.2859	.36771
Mean Score of Repeat Purchase Intention	153	3.00	4.75	4.0016	.37003
Valid N (listwise)	153				

After this study it was learnt that customer interaction and professionalism demonstrated by the delivery partners have a significant positive correlation ($r=0.196$, $p=0.015$) with the repeat purchase intentions of the

customers in Moradabad. Challenging the initial view of the author, the study suggests that the hygiene practices of the delivery partners was found to have significantly negative correlation ($r=-0.194$, $p=0.016$) with the repeat purchase intentions of the customers. It was also learnt that the other 3 factors viz. delivery efficiency and speed, food integrity and order accuracy along with problem resolution efficiency of the delivery partners were found having no significant correlation with the repeat purchase intentions of the customers. All these 3 factors got p value greater than .05 level.

Correlations		Mean Score of Delivery Efficiency and Speed	Mean Score of Customer Interaction and Professionalism	Mean Score of Food Integrity upon Arrival and Order Accuracy	Mean Score of Problem Resolution Efficiency	Mean Score of Hygiene Practices	Mean Score of Repeat Purchase Intention
Mean Score of Delivery Efficiency and Speed	Pearson Correlation	1	.120	.096	-.046	-.021	.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.138	.238	.570	.801	.774
	N	153	153	153	153	153	153
Mean Score of Customer Interaction and Professionalism	Pearson Correlation	.120	1	.059	.014	-.161*	.196*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.138		.471	.860	.047	.015
	N	153	153	153	153	153	153
Mean Score of Food Integrity upon Arrival and Order Accuracy	Pearson Correlation	.096	.059	1	-.038	-.056	.071
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.238	.471		.641	.493	.380
	N	153	153	153	153	153	153
Mean Score of Problem Resolution Efficiency	Pearson Correlation	-.046	.014	-.038	1	-.094	-.012
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.570	.860	.641		.250	.880
	N	153	153	153	153	153	153
Mean Score of Hygiene Practices	Pearson Correlation	-.021	-.161*	-.056	-.094	1	-.194*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.801	.047	.493	.250		.016
	N	153	153	153	153	153	153
Mean Score of Repeat Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	.023	.196*	.071	-.012	-.194*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.774	.015	.380	.880	.016	
	N	153	153	153	153	153	153

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To calculate and to examine the role of delivery partner related dimensions taken as IDVs in this study on the repeat purchase intentions of the customer in OFDAs in Moradabad region; multiple linear regression was applied. IDVs in this study includes, delivery efficiency and speed, customer interaction and professionalism, problem resolution and efficiency, food integrity and order accuracy & hygiene practices of the delivery partner. The sample and its subsequent analysis made us infer that delivery efficiency and professionalism, problem resolution efficiency of the delivery partner of OFDAs and the food integrity of parcel and order accuracy were found having no significant individual effect on the repurchase intentions of customers. With p value of .041 and -0.168 as B value, factor 'hygiene practices' was found having significant but inverse relationship with repeat purchase intention of customers. 'Customer interaction and professionalism' was found to have a significant positive impact on repeat purchase intention of customers. The p value for this predictor was .041 which was less than .05 and B value was .0194. With p values of 0.519, .721 and .936, 'food integrity and order accuracy', 'problem resolution efficiency' and 'delivery efficiency and speed' were found having no significant role as predictors of repeat purchase intention of customers. With Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values hovering around 1.0 for all the predictors, it can be safely inferred that there was no multicollinearity amongst the predictors.

Coefficients ^a										
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1.	(Constant)	3.731	.687		5.432	.000	2.374	5.089		
	Mean Score of Delivery Efficiency and Speed	-.006	.081	-.006	-.080	.936	-.167	.154	.976	1.025
	Mean Score of Customer Interaction and Professionalism	.194	.094	.167	2.058	.041	.008	.381	.959	1.043
	Mean Score of Food Integrity upon Arrival and Order Accuracy	.050	.078	.052	.647	.519	-.103	.204	.985	1.015
	Mean Score of Problem Resolution Efficiency	-.024	.067	-.029	-.358	.721	-.157	.109	.987	1.013
	Mean Score of Hygiene Practices	-.168	.082	-.167	-2.058	.041	-.329	-.007	.963	1.038

a. Dependent Variable: Mean Score of Repeat Purchase Intention

Thus, the hypotheses statements proposed earlier can be concluded in the following manner:

- H1: Delivery efficiency and speed have been found to have no impact on repeat purchase intention of the customers. The hypotheses was not supported in statistical analysis.
- H2: Customer Interaction and Professionalism have been found to have no impact on repeat purchase intention of the customers. The hypotheses was not supported in statistical analysis.
- H3: Food Integrity upon Arrival and Order Accuracy have been found to have no impact on repeat purchase intention of the customers. The hypotheses was not supported in statistical analysis.
- H4: Problem Resolution Efficiency have been found to have no impact on repeat purchase intention of the customers. The hypotheses was not supported in statistical analysis.
- H5: The predictor hygiene practices was found to have inverse relationship with the dependent variable repeat purchase intentions. Thus, rejecting the null hypotheses. It can be inferred that the sample returned an unexpected outcome demanding further research.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study used a non-random sample collected through convenience sampling. The approach was adopted because of the paucity of various resources and thus is not enough to present generalizable results. The valid responses used to administer statistical tools were 153 which is lesser than what Cochran's formulae suggests. The data collected through questionnaire is self-reported by respondents and thus posits scope of concealing information. The 5-point Likert Scale has lesser precision in comparison to a 7-point scale, which could have been a better choice to capture the nuance of the complex behaviour studied. Explanatory power, model fit indicators and any variance in repeat purchase intentions, could have been captured using appropriate statistical tools.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The future studies shall incorporate more variables latent and direct, to predict the repeat purchase intentions of the customers. All the aforementioned limitations must be taken into count before designing future research studies for better predictability power of the model conceptualized. Care should also be taken while sampling the respondents to avoid conceptual contradictions, as was evident about one IDV hygiene practices.

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