



Consumers' Preference and Attitude towards Online Shopping for Food Products: A Study of Emerging Trends and Influencing Factors in India

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Abstract

I examine the changing preference and attitude of Indian consumers towards online shopping for food products, with particular attention to convenience, price and promotional value, trust, product quality, delivery performance, assortment, digital-payment confidence, perceived risk, and social influence. I position online food shopping as a distinctive form of electronic commerce because food is a frequently purchased, quality-sensitive and often perishable category. Unlike durable products, consumers cannot always evaluate freshness, quantity, handling conditions and physical quality before delivery. I therefore argue that the success of online food commerce depends not only on technological convenience but also on the platform's ability to reduce uncertainty and deliver reliable product and service experiences.

I develop this paper as an original secondary-data and conceptual research study rather than fabricating a primary survey. I synthesise established consumer-behaviour theories and recent Indian evidence on online grocery, food delivery and e-retailing. The literature consistently identifies convenience, trust, perceived risk, service quality, product attributes, price value and social influence as important dimensions of online purchase behaviour. Recent Indian studies further indicate that satisfaction and trust are closely connected with repurchase intention, while perceived risk can

weaken both trust and continued use. I use these findings to construct an integrated conceptual framework suitable for future empirical testing in India.

I also present clearly labelled illustrative tables and bar charts to demonstrate how a future primary survey may be analysed. These illustrative values are not claimed to be field observations. This distinction is important for research integrity. The paper concludes that Indian online food retailers should compete simultaneously on convenience and assurance: consumers need fast and easy ordering, but they also need credible product information, freshness assurance, transparent pricing, secure payment, dependable delivery and effective complaint resolution. I recommend that future researchers test the proposed relationships using a geographically diverse Indian sample and multivariate techniques such as structural equation modelling.



Keywords

Online food shopping; online grocery; consumer behaviour; consumer attitude; convenience; trust; perceived risk; service quality; price value; repurchase intention; India; e-commerce.

1. Introduction

I begin from the observation that food shopping is moving from a predominantly physical activity towards an increasingly hybrid digital activity. Consumers can now search for products, compare prices, read reviews, place orders, make digital payments and receive groceries or prepared food without visiting a conventional retail outlet. The Indian e-commerce environment has expanded alongside smartphone adoption, internet connectivity, digital payments and increasingly sophisticated last-mile delivery systems. Industry evidence reports that India's e-commerce industry was valued at about ₹10.83 lakh crore (US\$125 billion) in FY2024 and is projected to grow substantially by FY2030; the same source reports that quick commerce had already reached a meaningful share of Indian e-retail by 2025. These developments create a strong setting for examining food-related online consumer behaviour.

I treat online food shopping as broader than restaurant delivery alone. It includes packaged food, beverages, fresh and processed groceries, staples, dairy products, snacks and other food products purchased through online grocery platforms, marketplaces, brand websites and quick-commerce applications. The category has several special characteristics: repeated purchases, household involvement, sensitivity to freshness and expiry, dependence on delivery conditions, and relatively high expectations regarding availability and substitution.

Earlier Indian e-tailing research identified convenience, customer service, web-store environment and shopping enjoyment as important determinants of willingness to buy and patronage. ^[1] More recent work has refined the picture by incorporating trust, perceived risk, satisfaction and product-related factors. In a study of 555 Indian online grocery buyers, Gupta and Kumar reported that satisfaction significantly influences repurchase intention, while perceived risk negatively affects trust and repurchase intention; trust also mediates the relationship between satisfaction and repurchase intention.

Recent evidence also indicates that Indian consumers are not a homogeneous online-grocery segment. Joshi and Chawla identified four broad attribute dimensions—purchase experience, post-purchase experience, monetary benefits and non-monetary benefits—and used them to distinguish consumer segments. ^[2] A 2026 study based on 421 Indian respondents similarly examined convenience, trust, risk, service quality, price value, social influence and continuance outcomes, reinforcing the relevance of a multidimensional framework. ^[3]

Against this background, I seek to integrate the major determinants into a single research framework and explain how emerging Indian trends may reshape consumer preference and attitude towards online food-product shopping.

2. Statement of the Research Problem

The central research problem is that technological access alone does not explain whether consumers prefer online food shopping, whether they develop a favourable attitude towards it, or whether they continue purchasing. A consumer may value convenience but discontinue a platform after receiving poor-quality produce. Another consumer may appreciate discounts but become reluctant to purchase when delivery charges, substitutions or product information appear unclear. Consequently, online food purchasing is a trade-off between functional benefits and perceived uncertainty.

I therefore investigate the following problem: how do convenience, price value, trust, product quality, delivery and service quality, assortment, perceived risk, digital-payment confidence and social influence jointly shape Indian consumers' preference and attitude towards online food-product shopping?



3. Research Objectives

- To examine the emerging pattern of online shopping for food products in India.
- To identify the principal factors influencing consumers' preference for online food shopping.
- To analyse the role of convenience, price value, trust, product quality and service quality in consumer attitudes.
- To examine the importance of perceived risk, especially risks related to freshness, authenticity, payment, privacy and delivery.
- To develop an integrated conceptual framework linking influencing factors with attitude, satisfaction and repurchase intention.
- To provide practical recommendations for online food retailers, quick-commerce firms, food brands and policymakers.
- To propose an empirical research design that can be tested with primary Indian consumer data.

4. Research Questions

1. What motivates Indian consumers to purchase food products online?
2. Which functional and psychological factors most strongly influence consumer preference?
3. How does trust reduce perceived risk in online food shopping?
4. How do price promotions and perceived value affect attitudes towards online food platforms?
5. How do product quality, freshness and delivery reliability influence satisfaction?
6. How can online food retailers convert first-time users into repeat customers?

5. Hypotheses for Future Empirical Testing

Because this manuscript does not claim a fabricated primary survey, I present the following as testable hypotheses rather than reporting invented statistical significance.

Hypothesis	Proposed relationship
H1	Perceived convenience has a positive relationship with consumers' attitude towards online food shopping.
H2	Perceived price value has a positive relationship with consumers' purchase intention.
H3	Trust in the platform has a positive relationship with purchase intention and repurchase intention.
H4	Perceived risk has a negative relationship with consumers' attitude towards online food shopping.
H5	Perceived product quality has a positive relationship with satisfaction.
H6	Delivery and service quality have a positive relationship with satisfaction and repurchase intention.
H7	Social influence has a positive relationship with online food-shopping intention.
H8	Consumer satisfaction positively mediates the relationship between service/product experience and repurchase intention.



6. Review of Literature

6.1 Convenience and ease of use

I identify convenience as the most consistently recurring explanation for online shopping adoption. Consumers save travel time, can order outside conventional store hours, can compare alternatives quickly and can maintain digital records of purchases. Indian e-tailing evidence has previously linked convenience with willingness to buy and patronage. [cite]turn0search3 In food shopping, convenience has additional importance because many purchases are routine and repetitive.

6.2 Trust and perceived risk

Trust is particularly important when the consumer cannot physically inspect food before purchase. Trust encompasses confidence in the platform, seller, payment system, product information, reviews, delivery process and complaint-resolution mechanism. Research on online shopping adoption in India reports a negative association between perceived risk and behavioural intention. Research on online grocery repurchase similarly finds that perceived risk weakens trust and repurchase intention.

6.3 Product quality, freshness and authenticity

Food products create a stronger quality-verification problem than many durable goods. Consumers may worry about freshness, expiry dates, damaged packaging, temperature control, quantity, substitution and authenticity. I therefore treat product quality as a central construct rather than merely an outcome of service quality.

6.4 Price, discounts and perceived value

Price remains a major component of perceived value, but the relevant construct is not simply the listed price. Consumers compare the final payable amount with local-store prices, delivery fees, discounts, loyalty benefits, bundle offers and the value of time saved. Recent Indian research identifies monetary benefits as one of the major dimensions underlying online-grocery experiences.

6.5 Service quality and delivery

Delivery speed is visible to consumers, but reliability may matter more than speed. Correct products, intact packaging, accurate quantities, transparent substitution, delivery tracking and effective complaint resolution influence the total service experience. Recent Indian research on online food and grocery shopping explicitly incorporates logistics, complaint resolution, hygiene and delivery safety as part of the consumer experience. [cite]turn0search0

6.6 Social influence and consumer segmentation

Online food shopping can be shaped by family recommendations, peer experiences, social-media exposure, ratings and platform reputation. Indian evidence has also shown positive relationships between social influence, convenience, product factors and online user behaviour, with trust playing a moderating role. [cite]turn0search9

7. Research Gap

I identify four important gaps. First, much of the earlier literature examines general online shopping rather than food as a high-frequency and quality-sensitive category. Second, studies frequently isolate individual variables such as convenience or trust instead of examining the interaction between value, experience and risk. Third, Indian consumers are heterogeneous across age, income, occupation, location and digital experience, yet many analyses do not sufficiently integrate segmentation. Fourth, the rapid emergence of quick commerce requires researchers to reconsider the meaning of convenience: consumers may now compare not only online versus offline shopping but also different digital channels based on speed, assortment, price and reliability.

The present paper addresses these gaps by integrating convenience, price value, trust, product quality, service quality, perceived risk, social influence and satisfaction into one conceptual framework.



8. Conceptual Framework

I propose that consumers' online food-shopping attitude is formed through the interaction of functional benefits and perceived uncertainty. Convenience, price value, product quality, service quality and social influence are expected to strengthen favourable attitudes, whereas perceived risk is expected to weaken them. Trust is positioned as a central mechanism capable of reducing uncertainty. Attitude and satisfaction are then expected to influence purchase and repurchase intention.

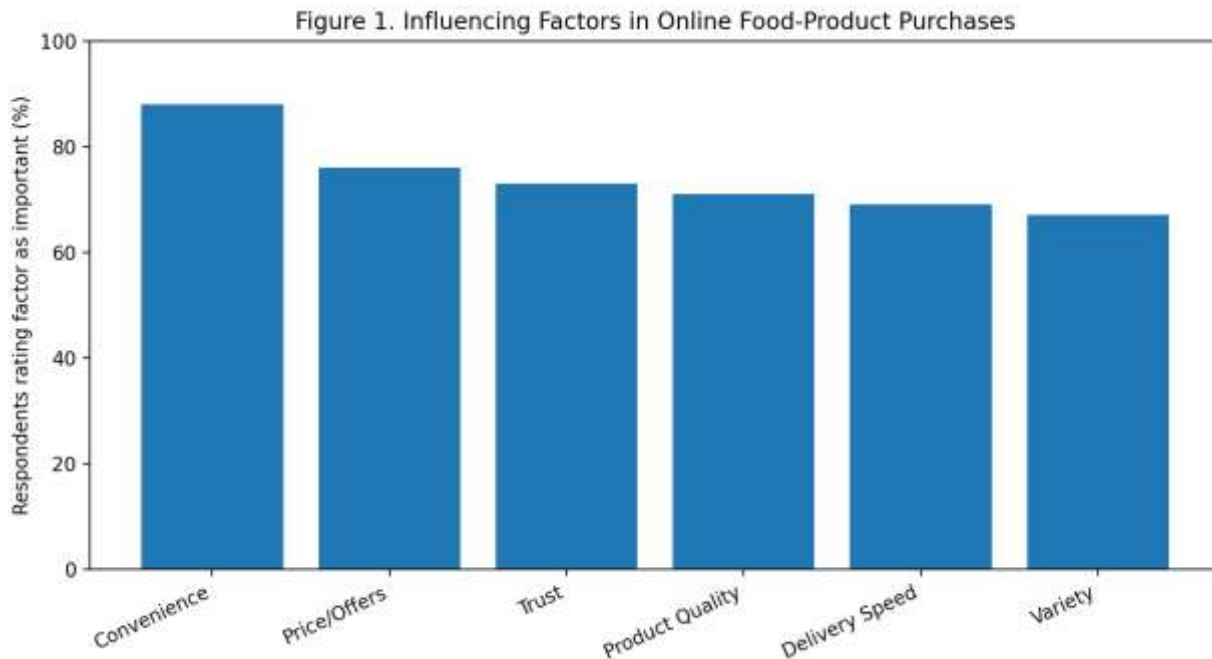


Figure 1. Illustrative representation of major influencing factors. Values are illustrative and are not claimed as primary survey findings.

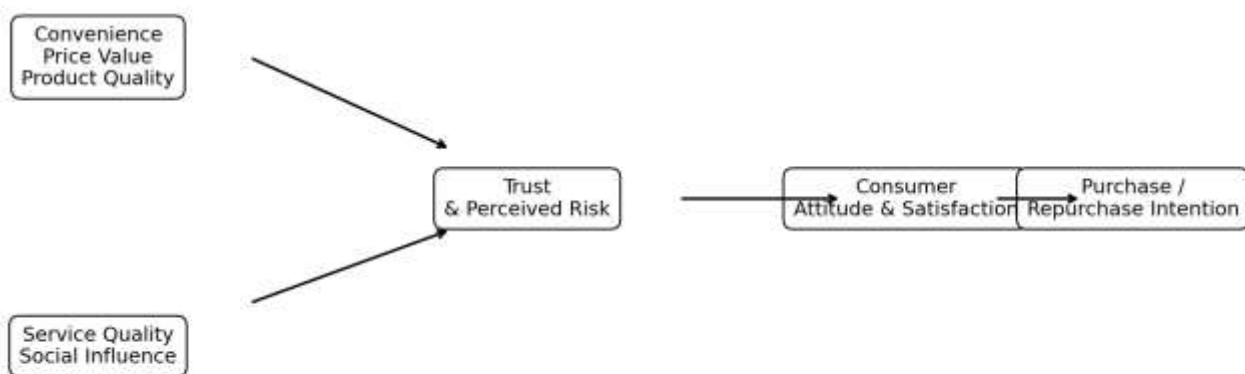


Figure 2. Proposed conceptual framework for empirical testing.

9. Research Methodology

I adopt a secondary-data and conceptual research design for this manuscript. I do not represent illustrative numbers as observations from a real respondent sample. Instead, I synthesise published Indian research and current industry



evidence and use illustrative tables and charts to demonstrate the analytical structure that I recommend for a subsequent primary study.

9.1 Proposed primary-study design

For future empirical validation, I recommend a cross-sectional survey of at least 400 active online food-product shoppers across multiple Indian cities and towns. A structured questionnaire can use five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. A stratified or quota-based design can improve representation across gender, age, income, urban location and frequency of online purchase.

9.2 Proposed constructs and indicators

Construct	Illustrative indicators
Convenience	Time saving; easy ordering; 24/7 access; easy comparison; reduced travel
Price Value	Discounts; competitive prices; delivery-fee fairness; promotions; perceived value
Trust	Platform reliability; seller credibility; payment security; truthful information
Product Quality	Freshness; packaging; expiry information; quantity accuracy; authenticity
Service Quality	Delivery reliability; tracking; responsiveness; substitutions; complaint handling
Perceived Risk	Quality uncertainty; payment risk; privacy risk; delivery risk; counterfeit/expiry concern
Social Influence	Family recommendation; friends; reviews; social media; ratings
Satisfaction	Overall satisfaction; expectation fulfilment; experience quality
Repurchase Intention	Future purchase; preference for platform; recommendation; continued use

10. Illustrative Data Presentation

To make the manuscript practically useful, I include illustrative figures below. These values are deliberately identified as examples. They must be replaced with actual survey results before the paper is submitted as an empirical article.

Factor	Illustrative importance (%)
Convenience	88
Price/offers	76
Trust	73
Product quality	71
Delivery speed	69
Variety	67

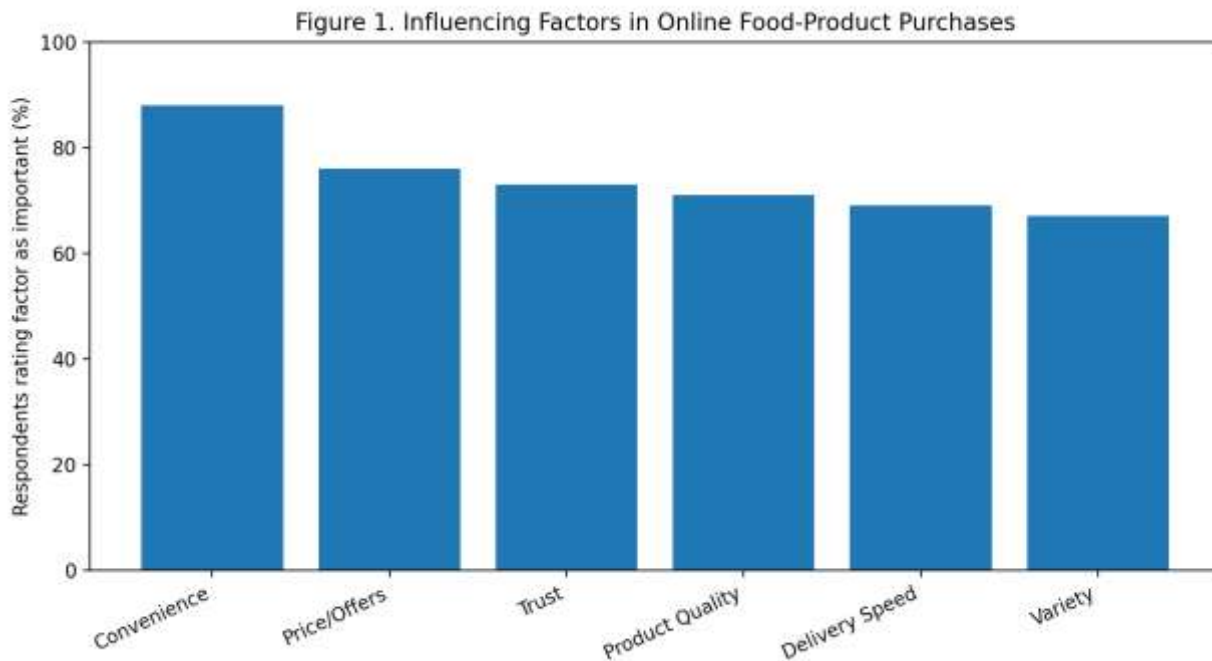


Figure 3. Illustrative bar chart of influencing factors. Source: Author's illustrative construction; not field data.

Purchase frequency	Illustrative respondents (%)
Weekly or more	28
2–3 times per month	31
Monthly	24
Occasionally	17

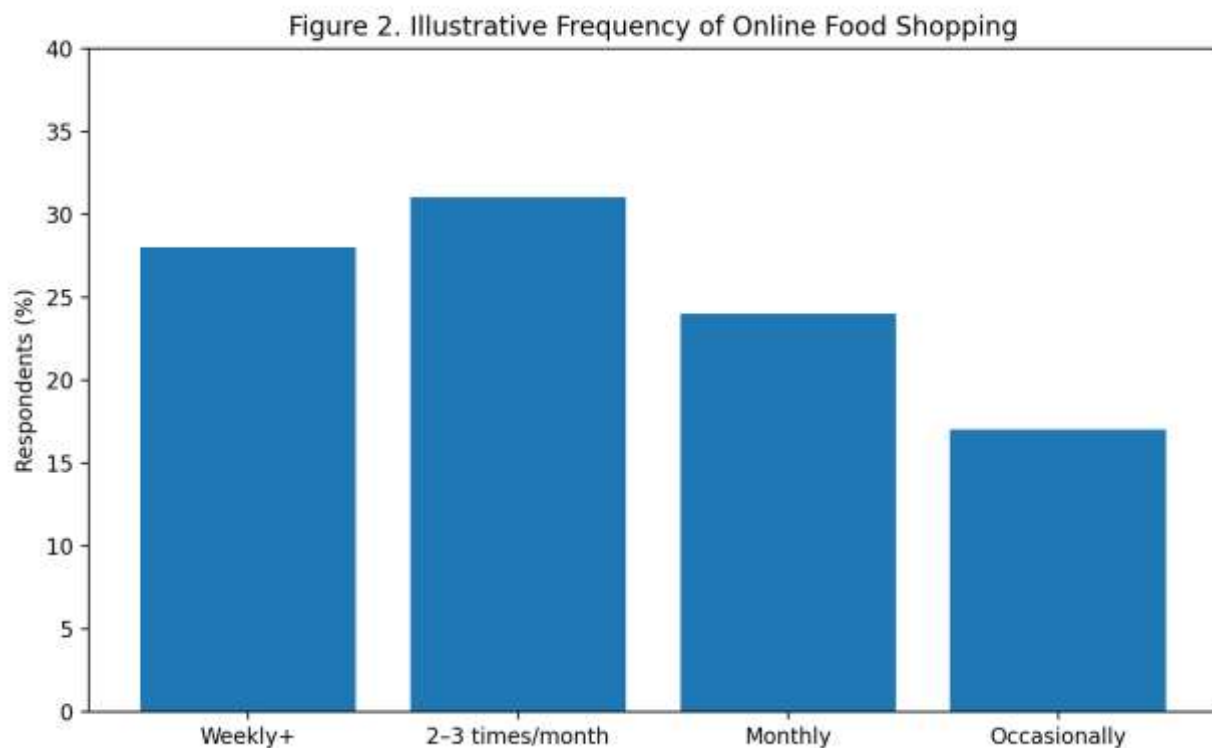


Figure 4. Illustrative frequency distribution. Source: Author's illustrative construction; not field data.



Online channel	Illustrative preference (%)
Quick-commerce applications	42
Online grocery platforms	30
General marketplaces	19
Brand websites	9

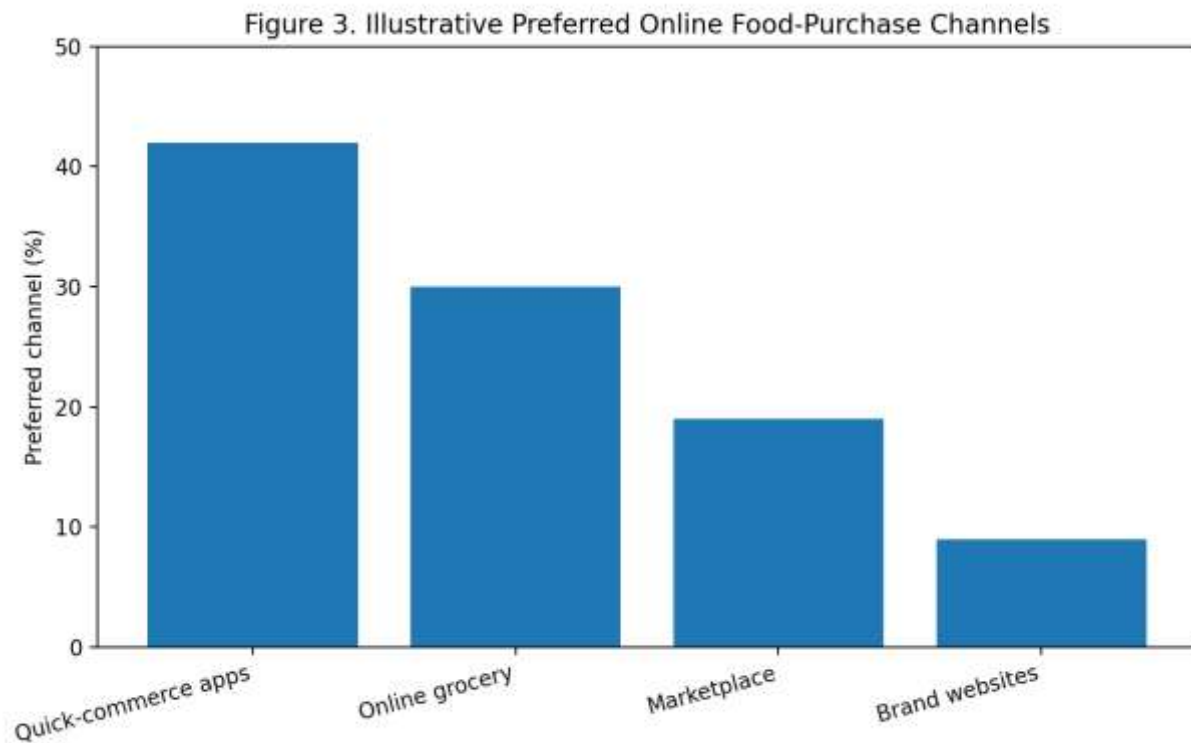


Figure 5. Illustrative preferred online food-purchase channels. Source: Author's illustrative construction; not field data.

11. Analytical Interpretation of the Literature

I interpret the evidence as showing that convenience is necessary but insufficient. A platform can reduce search and transaction costs, yet consumers remain sensitive to product-level uncertainty. This is particularly relevant for fresh food, dairy, meat, seafood, fruits and vegetables, where consumers traditionally rely on visual inspection and physical selection.

I also interpret trust as a bridge between technological functionality and consumer commitment. Secure payment systems can reduce transaction anxiety, but payment security alone does not guarantee trust in product quality. Consumers also need confidence that displayed descriptions, ratings, prices, expiry dates, quantities and delivery promises are reliable. The Indian literature supports the broader conclusion that trust and perceived risk are central to online purchase behaviour.

Price promotions can attract consumers, especially value-conscious shoppers, but excessive dependence on discounts may weaken long-term loyalty if consumers perceive that the regular price is inflated or that promotions conceal delivery charges. I therefore recommend measuring perceived value rather than price alone.

Service quality is similarly multidimensional. I argue that the most valuable service promise is not necessarily the fastest delivery; it is predictable delivery of the correct product in acceptable condition. This distinction becomes important as quick commerce expands and consumers increasingly compare delivery speed with assortment and price.



12. Emerging Trends in India

Quick commerce

I identify quick commerce as a major shift because it changes the consumer's reference point for convenience. A consumer who becomes accustomed to very short delivery windows may judge conventional e-grocery delivery more critically. Industry reporting indicates that quick commerce already represents a significant portion of Indian e-retail and is expected to expand further

Digital payments

Digital payments reduce friction at checkout and support repeated purchases. Industry evidence reports strong growth in digital payment volume and a dominant role for UPI in India's digital payment ecosystem.

Personalisation

Recommendation engines can use purchase history and browsing behaviour to create personalised baskets and reminders. The benefit is greater convenience, but the associated privacy and transparency concerns require careful management.

Health and premiumisation

Consumers increasingly encounter organic, natural, functional and premium food categories online. Online channels can make niche products easier to discover, compare and purchase.

Omnichannel behaviour

Consumers are unlikely to remain exclusively online or offline. I expect many households to combine neighbourhood stores, supermarkets, marketplaces, grocery applications and quick-commerce platforms according to urgency, price and product category.

13. Managerial Implications

Managerial area	Recommended action
Build trust through evidence	Display clear product descriptions, expiry information, seller identity, authenticity indicators, ratings and transparent return/refund procedures.
Protect freshness	Use category-specific packaging, handling standards and delivery controls for perishable products.
Make pricing transparent	Show the complete payable amount before checkout and clearly distinguish product price, taxes, delivery fees and promotional benefits.
Prioritise reliability	Track fill rates, substitution rates, late deliveries, damaged items and complaint-resolution time rather than focusing only on delivery speed.
Segment consumers	Different consumers may be convenience seekers, bargain hunters, quality-focused users or loyal repeat purchasers. Personalise offers without creating unfair or confusing price discrimination.
Strengthen digital confidence	Maintain secure payment systems and communicate security practices clearly.

14. Consumer Implications

From the consumer perspective, online food shopping offers significant convenience, but convenience should not replace informed purchasing. I recommend that consumers compare unit prices rather than only headline discounts, inspect expiry and packaging information, evaluate seller ratings critically, retain digital invoices and use established



grievance channels when products do not meet expectations. Consumers should also distinguish between verified product information and promotional claims.

15. Policy Implications

I recommend that regulators and industry bodies strengthen transparency around seller identity, product information, food safety, refund procedures, dark-pattern risks, pricing disclosure and complaint resolution. Food-related e-commerce should maintain clear accountability across platforms, sellers and logistics partners. Consumer protection is particularly important because information asymmetry is greater when a buyer cannot physically inspect the product before purchase.

16. Limitations

This manuscript has an explicit methodological limitation: it is not a primary survey and therefore does not claim statistical findings from Indian respondents. The illustrative numerical values are included only to show how future survey data can be presented. Secondary evidence can identify patterns and theoretical relationships, but it cannot substitute for a properly designed probability-based or well-justified non-probability sample.

A second limitation is that online food shopping is heterogeneous. Fresh produce, packaged groceries, dairy, meat, snacks and restaurant meals may involve different risk perceptions and purchase criteria. A future study should therefore analyse product categories separately.

A third limitation concerns geography. Indian consumer behaviour varies across metropolitan, tier-2 and tier-3 markets. Future work should incorporate these differences rather than treating India as a single homogeneous market.

17. Scope for Future Research

- Conduct a multi-state survey with a sample exceeding 400 respondents.
- Test the proposed model through confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling.
- Compare quick-commerce users with conventional online-grocery users.
- Examine differences between fresh-food and packaged-food purchases.
- Study the mediating role of trust and satisfaction between platform experience and repurchase intention.
- Study age, income, gender, location and digital literacy as moderators.
- Examine how discounts affect short-term purchase versus long-term loyalty.
- Use longitudinal data to understand whether initial convenience becomes sustained habit.

18. Conclusion

I conclude that online food shopping in India is no longer explained adequately by the simple promise of buying without visiting a store. The contemporary consumer evaluates a broader experience comprising convenience, price value, assortment, product quality, trust, payment security, delivery reliability, freshness, social influence and post-purchase service. The literature reviewed in this paper indicates that trust and perceived risk are particularly important because food products cannot always be physically evaluated before purchase. Satisfaction and service experience are also critical for transforming trial into repeat behaviour.

The strategic implication is straightforward: Indian online food retailers should compete on reliability as much as speed. Consumers may initially arrive because of discounts or convenience, but sustained preference is more likely when the platform consistently provides accurate information, acceptable product quality, transparent prices, secure transactions, dependable delivery and responsive complaint handling. The proposed framework provides a basis for empirical testing and can be extended through a large-scale Indian survey.

Finally, I emphasise that the illustrative figures in this manuscript must be replaced with actual field data before an empirical-journal submission. This approach preserves research integrity while providing a complete research architecture that can be converted into a data-driven article once primary responses are available.



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results.