

SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIES AND CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT IN FOOD DELIVERY APPS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF CONSUMERS IN THE MUMBAI METROPOLITAN REGION

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media and digital technologies has transformed the marketing strategies adopted by food delivery applications in India. Platforms such as Zomato, Swiggy, and other food delivery services extensively use social media strategies including influencer marketing, meme marketing, short-form videos, user-generated content, festive campaigns, and promotional offers to enhance consumer engagement and strengthen brand loyalty. The present study examines the impact of social media strategies on consumer engagement with food delivery apps in India, with special reference to the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR).

The study concludes that social media strategies play a significant role in shaping consumer engagement with food delivery apps. Businesses should therefore focus on creating innovative, culturally relevant, and interactive content to improve customer engagement and long-term brand loyalty. The findings of this study provide valuable insights for marketers, food delivery companies, researchers, and policymakers seeking to understand the evolving dynamics of digital consumer behaviour in India.

KEYWORDS: Social Media Strategies, Consumer Engagement, Food Delivery Apps, Digital Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Meme Marketing, User-Generated Content (UGC).

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digital technologies and the widespread adoption of social media platforms have transformed the way businesses communicate with consumers. In recent years, social media has emerged as a powerful marketing tool that enables firms to build brand awareness, foster customer relationships, and influence purchasing behaviour. The food delivery industry, in particular, has experienced remarkable growth due to increasing internet penetration, smartphone usage, urbanization, and changing consumer lifestyles. Food delivery applications such as Zomato and Swiggy have become an integral part of urban consumers' daily lives by providing convenience, variety, and instant access to food services. In this competitive environment, social media strategies have become essential for attracting, engaging, and retaining customers.

Consumer engagement refers to the degree of emotional, cognitive, and behavioural involvement that consumers exhibit toward a brand through interactions across multiple touchpoints. Social media platforms provide unique opportunities for brands to create engaging experiences through interactive content, influencer collaborations, user-generated content, memes, short-form videos, contests, and personalized promotional campaigns. Unlike traditional advertising, social media enables two-way communication, allowing consumers to actively participate in brand conversations, share experiences, and influence the opinions of other users. Consequently, understanding the effectiveness of different social media strategies has become an important area of research for both academics and practitioners.

1.1 Digital Transformation and Social Media Marketing

The emergence of digital technologies and the rapid expansion of social media platforms have revolutionized the marketing landscape. Businesses increasingly rely on social media to communicate with consumers, promote products and services, and build long-term customer relationships. Social media platforms provide interactive and real-time communication channels that enable brands to engage consumers more effectively than traditional marketing methods.

1.2 Growth of Food Delivery Apps in India

The Indian food delivery industry has witnessed tremendous growth due to increasing smartphone penetration, affordable internet access, urbanization, and changing consumer lifestyles. Food delivery applications such as Zomato and Swiggy have transformed food consumption habits by offering convenience, diverse cuisine options, and quick delivery services. The growing competition among these platforms has intensified the use of innovative digital marketing strategies.

1.3 Social Media Strategies in Food Delivery Marketing

Food delivery brands extensively use various social media strategies to attract and engage consumers. These strategies include influencer marketing, meme and humour-driven content, user-generated content (UGC), short-form videos, promotional offers, contests, polls, and customer service interactions. Such strategies not only increase brand visibility but also encourage active consumer participation and emotional connection with the brand.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) “Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media” defined social media as a group of Internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. The study emphasized that social media has transformed the traditional communication model into a two-way interactive system where consumers actively participate in content creation and sharing. The authors concluded that organizations must strategically utilize social media to strengthen consumer relationships and improve brand engagement.

2.2 Hollebeek, Glynn and Brodie (2014) “Consumer Brand Engagement in Social Media: Conceptualization, Scale Development and Validation” developed and validated a scale to measure consumer brand engagement in social media settings. The study conceptualized engagement as a multidimensional construct comprising cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions. The findings revealed that consumer engagement positively influences self-brand connection and brand usage intention. The study highlighted that social media platforms create opportunities for brands to establish stronger and more interactive relationships with consumers.

2.3 Harrigan, Evers, Miles and Daly (2018) “Customer Engagement and the Relationship Between Involvement, Engagement, Self-Brand Connection and Brand Usage Intent” This study examined the relationship between customer involvement, brand engagement, self-brand connection, and usage intention in social media environments. The researchers found that customer engagement significantly enhances brand loyalty and purchase intentions. The study further emphasized that firms should focus on creating engaging and personalized social media experiences to strengthen long-term customer relationships.

2.4 Yadav and Rahman (2017) “Measuring Consumer Perception of Social Media Marketing Activities in E-Commerce Industry” Yadav and Rahman investigated consumers’ perceptions of social media marketing activities and their impact on customer equity. The study found that entertainment, interaction, trendiness, customization, and word-of-mouth are important dimensions of social media marketing. The results showed that effective social media activities positively influence consumer satisfaction and loyalty, thereby enhancing customer engagement.

2.5 Bilgin (2018) “The Effect of Social Media Marketing Activities on Brand Awareness, Brand Image and Brand Loyalty” Bilgin examined the impact of social media marketing activities on consumer perceptions and brand outcomes. The findings indicated that entertaining and interactive social media content significantly improves brand awareness and brand image, which in turn strengthens customer

loyalty. The study concluded that social media marketing has become an essential component of modern branding strategies.

Research Gap

The review of literature reveals that several studies have examined the role of social media marketing in shaping consumer attitudes, brand loyalty, and purchase intentions. Previous research has also explored the influence of engagement, emotional content, and social activism on consumer behaviour. However, limited studies have specifically investigated the combined effect of diverse social media strategies—such as influencer marketing, meme marketing, user-generated content, short-form videos, and cultural campaigns—on consumer engagement in the food delivery industry. Moreover, there is a scarcity of empirical research focusing on Indian consumers, particularly in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this gap by analysing the impact of social media strategies on consumer engagement with food delivery apps in India with special reference to the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the impact of social media strategies on consumer engagement with food delivery applications in India, with special reference to the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR). The study aims to identify the effectiveness of different social media strategies and analyse their influence on consumer engagement and behavioural outcomes.

3.2 Area of the Study

The geographical area of the study is the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), which includes Mumbai City, Mumbai Suburban, Thane, Navi Mumbai, Kalyan-Dombivli, Mira-Bhayandar, and surrounding urban areas. The region was selected because of its high internet penetration, widespread use of food delivery applications, and active social media user base.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study comprises consumers residing in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region who actively use food delivery applications such as Zomato, Swiggy, and other online food ordering platforms and are exposed to social media marketing activities.

3.4 Sample Size

A total of 100 respondents were selected as the sample for the study. The sample size was considered adequate to analyse consumer perceptions regarding social media strategies and their engagement with food delivery applications.

3.5 Sampling Technique

The study employed a convenience sampling method, which is a non-probability sampling technique. Respondents were selected based on their accessibility, willingness to participate, and active usage of food delivery applications and social media platforms. This method was chosen due to time constraints and ease of data collection.

3.6 Sources of Data

Primary Data

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed specifically for this study. The questionnaire consisted of multiple sections covering demographic information, social media platform usage, social media strategies, consumer engagement, behavioural outcomes, and cultural factors affecting engagement.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from:

- Research articles published in national and international journals.
- Books related to digital marketing and consumer behaviour.
- Conference proceedings and dissertations.

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- Industry reports and company websites.
- Online databases and academic websites.

3.7 Statistical Tools Used

The collected data were coded and analysed using the **Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)**. The following statistical tools were employed:

1. Frequency and Percentage Analysis
2. Mean and Standard Deviation
3. Multiple Regression Analysis
4. Friedman Test
5. Independent Samples t-Test
6. ANOVA
7. Descriptive Statistics

These statistical techniques helped in testing the hypotheses and analysing the relationship between social media strategies and consumer engagement.

3.8 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify and classify the social media strategies.
2. To analyse consumer engagement levels across different social media platforms.
3. To examine the relationship between social media strategies and consumer engagement.
4. To investigate the influence of demographic variable.

3.9 Hypotheses of the Study

H01: Social media strategies do not significantly influence consumer engagement with food delivery apps.

H02: There is no significant difference in engagement levels across different social media platforms in food delivery marketing.

H03: Social media engagement with food delivery brands does not significantly predict behavioural outcomes such as app usage frequency, order conversion, retention, and advocacy.

H04: Demographic variables do not significantly moderate the relationship between social media strategies and consumer engagement.

H05: India-specific cultural factors do not significantly affect the effectiveness of social media strategies in driving consumer engagement.

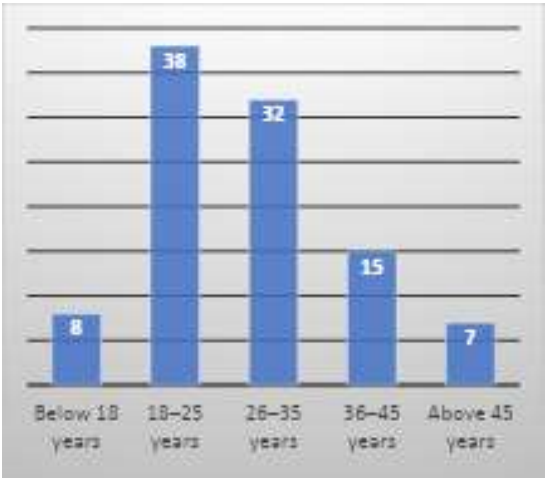
3.10 Limitations of the Study

1. The study is limited to consumers residing in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region only.
2. The sample size is restricted to 100 respondents.
3. The study is based on respondents' perceptions and self-reported behaviour.
4. The findings may not be generalized to all regions of India.
5. Time and resource constraints limited the scope of the study.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

1. Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Below 18 years	8	8
18–25 years	38	38
26–35 years	32	32
36–45 years	15	15
Above 45 years	7	7
Total	100	100

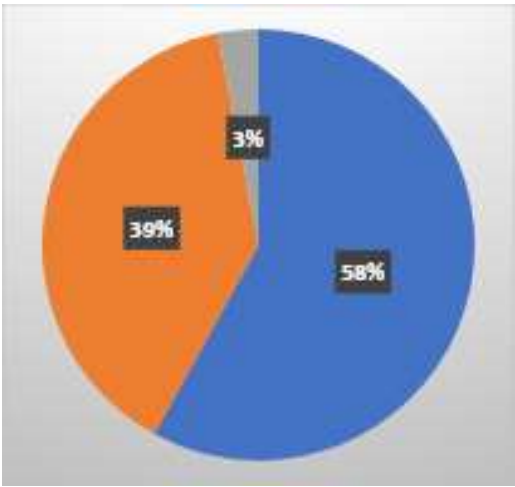


Interpretation

Table 4.1 presents the age-wise distribution of the respondents participating in the study. Out of the total 100 respondents, the largest proportion of respondents belongs to the 18–25 years age group, accounting for 38% of the sample. This is followed by respondents in the 26–35 years category, representing 32% of the total sample. The 36–45 years age group comprises 15% of the respondents, while 8% of the respondents are below 18 years of age. The smallest proportion of respondents (7%) belongs to the above 45 years category.

2. Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	58	58
Female	39	39
Prefer not to say	3	3
Total	100	100



Interpretation

Table 4.2 presents the gender-wise distribution of the respondents included in the study. Out of the total 100 respondents, 58 respondents (58%) are male, constituting the largest proportion of the sample. Female respondents account for 39% of the sample, while 3 respondents (3%) preferred not to disclose their gender.

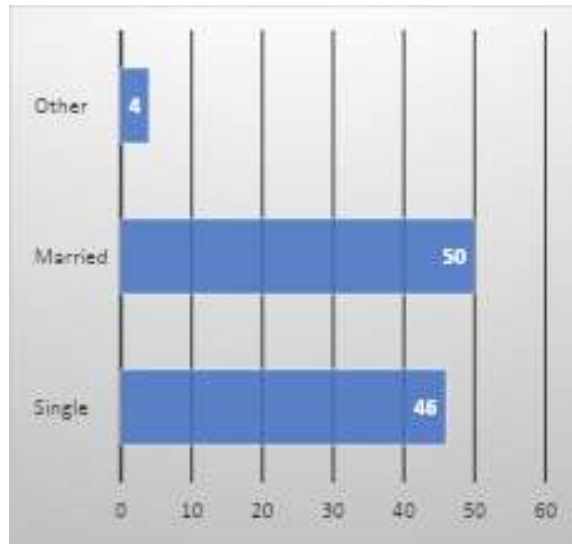
The results indicate that both male and female consumers are well represented in the study, with a slightly higher participation from male respondents. The inclusion of respondents who preferred not to disclose their gender reflects the study's commitment to inclusiveness and respondent privacy. The

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balanced representation of different gender groups provides a comprehensive understanding of consumer engagement with food delivery apps and social media strategies across diverse demographic segments.

3. Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	46	46
Married	50	50
Other	4	4
Total	100	100

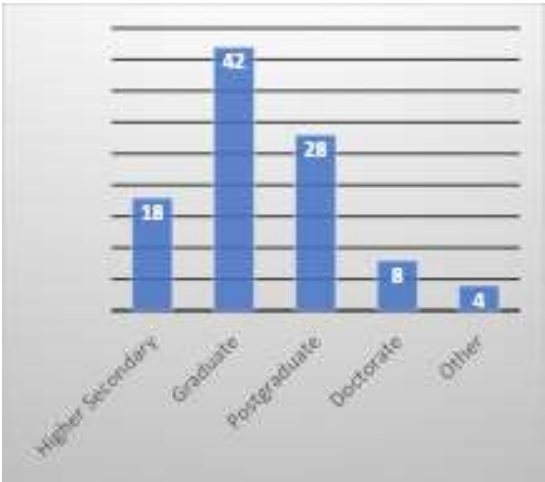


Interpretation

Table 4.3 presents the marital status distribution of the respondents participating in the study. Out of the total 100 respondents, 50 respondents (50%) are married, representing the largest group in the sample. Single respondents account for 46% of the total sample, while 4 respondents (4%) belong to the 'Other' category.

4. Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Higher Secondary	18	18
Graduate	42	42
Postgraduate	28	28
Doctorate	8	8
Other	4	4
Total	100	100



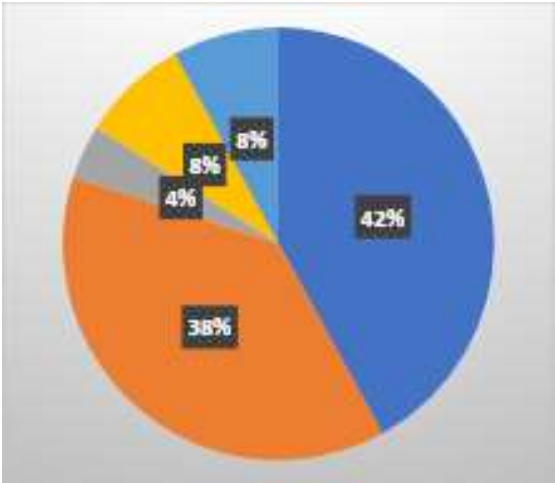
Interpretation

Table 4.4 presents the educational qualification of the respondents included in the study. Among the 100 respondents, 42 respondents (42%) are graduates, constituting the largest group in the sample. Postgraduate respondents account for 28%, followed by Higher Secondary respondents at 18%. A smaller proportion of respondents possess a Doctorate degree (8%), while 4 respondents (4%) fall under the ‘Other’ category.

The findings indicate that the majority of respondents are well educated, with 70% having graduate or postgraduate qualifications. This suggests that the respondents are likely to be familiar with digital technologies, social media platforms, and food delivery applications, enabling them to provide informed opinions regarding social media strategies and consumer engagement. The inclusion of respondents with different educational backgrounds ensures diversity and enhances the comprehensiveness of the study.

5. Which food delivery app do you use most frequently?

Food Delivery App	Frequency	Percent
Zomato	42	42
Swiggy	38	38
Uber Eats (if applicable)	4	4
EatSure	8	8
Other	8	8
Total	100	100



Interpretation

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The above table presents the food delivery app most frequently used by the respondents in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Out of 100 respondents, 42% reported that they use Zomato most frequently, making it the most preferred food delivery platform among the surveyed consumers. This indicates Zomato's strong market presence, extensive restaurant network, and effective digital marketing strategies that attract and retain users.

Swiggy is the second most preferred platform, with 38% of respondents selecting it as their primary food delivery app. The close percentage between Zomato and Swiggy suggests intense competition between these two leading brands in the Indian food delivery market. Meanwhile, EatSure is preferred by 8% of respondents, whereas Uber Eats accounts for 4% of the responses, mainly reflecting past usage or residual brand recall since its operations in India have ceased independently. Another 8% of respondents use other food delivery applications. Overall, the findings reveal that Zomato and Swiggy dominate consumer preferences, jointly accounting for 80% of the total responses, thereby highlighting their significant influence on consumer engagement and food delivery consumption behaviour in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

6. How frequently do you place orders on food delivery apps?

Order Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	14	14
Several times a week	29	29
Once a week	24	24
Few times a month	22	22
Rarely	11	11
Total	100	100



Interpretation

Table 4.6 presents the frequency with which respondents place orders using food delivery applications. Among the 100 respondents, 29 respondents (29%) reported that they place orders several times a week, making it the most common ordering pattern. This is followed by 24 respondents (24%) who order once a week. Additionally, 22 respondents (22%) place orders a few times a month, indicating moderate usage of food delivery services.

A smaller proportion of respondents, 14%, use food delivery apps daily, reflecting a segment of highly active users who rely extensively on these platforms for their food requirements. On the other hand, 11% of respondents reported that they rarely place orders through food delivery apps. The findings suggest that food delivery applications have become an integral part of consumers' lifestyles, with the majority of respondents using these services regularly rather than occasionally.

7. What is your average monthly expenditure on food delivery apps?

Monthly Expenditure	Frequency	Percentage
Less than ₹500	16	16
₹500 – ₹1,000	27	27
₹1,001 – ₹2,000	31	31
₹2,001 – ₹5,000	19	19
Above ₹5,000	7	7
Total	100	100



Interpretation

Table 4.7 presents the average monthly expenditure of respondents on food delivery applications. Out of the total 100 respondents, the largest group, 31 respondents (31%), spends between ₹1,001 and ₹2,000 per month on food delivery services. This is followed by 27 respondents (27%) who spend between ₹500 and ₹1,000 monthly. Together, these two categories account for 58% of the respondents, indicating that moderate spending on food delivery apps is the most common consumption pattern.

Further, 19 respondents (19%) spend between ₹2,001 and ₹5,000 per month, reflecting a segment of consumers with relatively higher usage of food delivery services. A smaller proportion, 16%, spends less than ₹500 monthly, while only 7% of respondents spend above ₹5,000 per month. The findings suggest that although a majority of consumers use food delivery apps regularly, their expenditure remains within a moderate range, reflecting conscious spending behaviour and selective ordering patterns.

8. Please rate how frequently you engage with food delivery brand content on each platform.

Platform	VR	R	S	O	V O	Total
Insta	10	15	28	30	17	100
Facebook	18	22	25	20	15	100
YouTube	12	18	30	25	15	100
Twitter/X	20	24	26	18	12	100
Josh/Moj	16	19	27	23	15	100

Interpretation

Table 4.8 presents the frequency of respondents' engagement with food delivery brand content across different social media platforms. The findings indicate that Instagram is the most actively used platform for engaging with food delivery brands. About 47% of respondents reported engaging with food delivery content often or very often on Instagram, while only 25% reported rare or very rare engagement. This suggests that Instagram is an important channel for brand communication, promotional campaigns, and customer interaction in the food delivery industry.

YouTube also demonstrates considerable engagement, with 40% of respondents reporting that they engage with food delivery content often or very often. In contrast, Facebook and Twitter/X show comparatively lower engagement levels, as a larger proportion of respondents reported rare or occasional interaction with food delivery brand content. Similarly, Josh/Moj short-video platforms exhibit moderate engagement, with many respondents indicating that they engage with content sometimes or often.

5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

1. The study found that the majority of respondents (70%) belonged to the age group of 18–35 years, indicating that young adults are the primary users of food delivery applications and are highly active on social media platforms.
2. Male respondents constituted a slightly higher proportion of the sample (58%) compared to female respondents (39%), suggesting that both genders actively participate in online food ordering and social media engagement.
3. Married and single respondents were almost equally represented in the study, demonstrating that food delivery apps are widely used across different marital groups.
4. Most respondents possessed higher educational qualifications, with graduates and postgraduates accounting for 70% of the sample, indicating that educated consumers are more likely to adopt digital food ordering platforms.

5.2 Food Delivery App Usage Behaviour

5. The study revealed that **Zomato** and **Swiggy** are the most preferred food delivery applications, together accounting for approximately 80% of the respondents.
6. More than half of the respondents place food orders at least once a week, reflecting the growing dependence on online food delivery services.
7. The majority of respondents spend between ₹500 and ₹2,000 per month on food delivery applications, indicating moderate but regular consumption behaviour.

Overall Finding

The study concludes that social media strategies positively influence consumer engagement with food delivery applications in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Although the strength of the relationship varies across strategies, customer-centric communication, influencer collaborations, visual content, and culturally relevant campaigns contribute to stronger engagement. The findings further reveal that demographic characteristics have minimal moderating effects, whereas behavioural and cultural factors play a supportive role in shaping consumer engagement and brand interaction.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the impact of social media strategies on consumer engagement with food delivery applications in India, with special reference to the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. The findings reveal that social media has become an integral marketing communication channel for food delivery platforms, influencing consumer awareness, brand perception, and engagement behaviour. Consumers actively interact with food delivery brands through multiple social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter/X, and short-video applications, indicating the growing importance of digital engagement strategies.

The demographic analysis indicates that the majority of respondents are young adults belonging to the 18–35 years age group, who are highly active users of food delivery applications. Most respondents possess graduate or postgraduate qualifications and regularly use platforms such as Zomato and Swiggy for their food ordering needs. The study further reveals that consumers place orders frequently and spend a considerable amount on food delivery services every month, reflecting the increasing acceptance and dependence on online food delivery platforms.

Overall, the study concludes that social media strategies play a meaningful role in shaping consumer engagement with food delivery applications, even though their direct statistical impact may

vary across dimensions. The effectiveness of social media marketing lies not only in promotional content but also in building trust, creating interactive experiences, and maintaining cultural relevance. Therefore, food delivery companies should adopt an integrated, customer-centric, and culturally sensitive social media strategy to enhance consumer engagement and sustain long-term brand loyalty in the highly competitive Indian food delivery market.

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