

Impact of Food Delivery Apps on Consumer Behaviour of College Students

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Abstract—The rapid expansion of smartphone technology has given rise to a new era of digital food ordering, where college students have emerged as one of the most active user groups. This paper investigates how food delivery applications have shaped the purchasing decisions, spending habits, and daily routines of college-going individuals. With platforms like Zomato and Swiggy competing aggressively through discounts, speed, and variety, it becomes essential to examine what truly drives a student to tap ‘Order Now’ on their screen.

A structured primary survey was conducted among 217 respondents, predominantly from the 18–26 age bracket. The study explores three core dimensions: the role of convenience and time-saving, the influence of discount-driven behaviour, and platform preference between Zomato and Swiggy. Using descriptive analysis and multiple regression, the study identifies key behavioural patterns that define the modern student consumer in India’s food-tech ecosystem.

Index Terms—Food Delivery Apps, College Students, Consumer Behaviour, Zomato, Swiggy, Discount Influence, Time Saving, Digital Ordering

I. INTRODUCTION

Walk into any college hostel common room on a weekday evening and you are likely to find at least one student staring at a food app, navigating through restaurant options. This is not just a trend — it is a behavioral shift that has quietly redefined how the student community eats, spends, and socializes. Food delivery apps have transitioned from being a weekend luxury to an almost daily tool embedded in student life.

India’s food-tech sector has experienced exponential growth over the last decade. College towns and metropolitan cities are seeing an unprecedented surge in digital food orders, with platforms like Zomato and Swiggy running neck and neck in a race to win the

student wallet. According to industry estimates, the Indian online food delivery market is expected to cross USD 337 billion by 2034, growing at a CAGR of over 22%. Within this massive market, the youth segment — particularly college students — represents the most impressionable and fastest-growing user base.

What makes college students unique as consumers is their distinct combination of characteristics: limited budgets, high digital fluency, sensitivity to discounts, irregular meal schedules, and a strong social influence in decision-making. A student who discovers a great offer on Zomato will likely share it in the hostel group chat within minutes. This word-of-mouth dynamic, amplified through social media, makes student consumers both highly influential and highly reactive to platform behaviour.

Despite their significance, relatively few studies have focused exclusively on how food delivery apps shape the behaviour of college students in the Indian context. Most existing research treats all age groups uniformly or focuses on general urban consumers. This study attempts to fill that gap by examining the specific behavioural triggers, spending patterns, and platform preferences of the student population. The findings are intended to benefit both academic researchers interested in digital consumer behaviour and food-tech companies seeking to deepen their engagement with young users.

1.1 Problem Statement

College students represent a paradox for food delivery companies: they are among the most frequent users of these platforms, yet they are also the most price-sensitive and the quickest to switch platforms the moment a better deal appears. On one hand, the promise of hot food delivered to the dormitory door with zero effort is irresistible. On the other hand,

delivery charges, surge pricing, and the occasional cold meal can trigger immediate dissatisfaction.

The core problem this study addresses is the gap between what food delivery apps offer and what college students actually experience and value. Do discounts genuinely change a student's behaviour, or do they simply order whenever hunger strikes regardless of offers? Does saving time matter more than saving money? And when forced to choose, do students lean toward Zomato, Swiggy, or simply use whichever offers the better deal that day? Understanding these behavioural nuances is critical for designing platforms that can foster genuine loyalty rather than transactional usage among student users.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Phase 1: The Digital Shift in Food Ordering (2015–2019)

1. Chavan et al. (2015) – *International Journal of Computer Applications*: One of the earliest studies on mobile food ordering documented the transition from telephone-based restaurant orders to app-based systems. The research attributed this shift primarily to the visual interface of apps — the ability to browse menus with photographs, read reviews, and compare prices in real time made the digital route far more appealing to younger consumers than calling a restaurant.

2.. Kapoor & Vij (2018) – *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*: This Indian study explored why users adopted food ordering apps and found that perceived usefulness — specifically the notion that the app saves time and provides access to a wider choice — was the dominant adoption driver among millennials. Importantly, students cited the ability to order during study sessions without interrupting their work as a key behavioural trigger.

3. Yeo, Goh & Rezaei (2017) – *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*: This study introduced hedonic motivation as a key variable. It found that beyond purely functional needs, users particularly younger ones, derived emotional satisfaction from the act of browsing food apps, reading reviews, and anticipating the arrival of their order. The study established that satisfaction was not just about what arrived at the door, but the entire digital journey.

4.Rathore (2016) – *International Journal of Engineering and Management Research*: An early

Indian study on satisfaction in digital food ordering that linked user interface simplicity directly to repeat purchase intention. Students with higher digital literacy rated app ease-of-use significantly higher, and this comfort correlated with higher order frequency. The study warned that cluttered app designs could deter otherwise willing buyers.

5. Pigatto et al. (2017) – *British Food Journal*: A comparative study across multiple delivery platforms that analysed how platform reputation shaped the initial download decision. The research showed that students tend to download apps primarily through peer referral or campus-level promotions, making college campuses a critically important acquisition channel for food delivery brands.

2.2 Phase 2: Discounts, Trust and Pandemic-Driven Transformation (2020–2022)

1. Alalwan (2020) – *International Journal of Information Management*: This study investigated how financial incentives — particularly first-order discounts, cashback, and referral bonuses — influenced the initial adoption and continued use of food apps. It found that while discounts successfully triggered first-time orders, they rarely drove long-term loyalty on their own. Users stayed on a platform only if the experience matched the promotional promise.

2. Mehroliia, Alagarsamy & Solaikutty (2020) – *Frontiers in Psychology*: Conducted during the COVID-19 lockdown period, this paper highlighted a dramatic shift in consumer priorities. Safety, hygiene certifications, and contactless delivery became decisive factors, particularly among student users living in shared accommodations. The research found that students were willing to pay a small premium for visibly hygienic packaging during this period.

3. Uzir et al. (2021) – *DREAM Journal of Management*: Applying the SERVQUAL framework to food delivery platforms, the researchers identified five dimensions of service quality that college students rated highest: reliability (order accuracy), responsiveness (customer support speed), assurance (trust in the platform), empathy (personalised communication), and tangibles (packaging quality). Among these, order accuracy emerged as the top disappointment driver.

4. Prasetyo, Castillo & Salonga (2021) – *PMC, National Institutes of Health*: Using structural equation modelling, this study quantified the relative

weight of different satisfaction factors. It found that for budget-constrained users like students, price fairness had a stronger effect on satisfaction scores than food variety or delivery speed. Students who felt the final price including fees was unjustified were significantly less likely to reorder.

5. Inthong et al. (2022) – Sustainability Journal: This study examined the social dimensions of food ordering behaviour among young adults. It found that students frequently made ordering decisions as a group activity — selecting restaurants based on what others in their peer group had tried or shared online. Social proof, in the form of in-app ratings and peer recommendations, held stronger sway over students than any sponsored promotion.

6. Koay, Cheah & Chang (2022) – British Food Journal: As platforms began adding grocery, medicine, and other delivery services, this study assessed whether this expansion helped or hurt user satisfaction. Among student users, the results were mixed: while some appreciated the convenience of a single app, the majority felt that adding non-food services made navigation more complicated, particularly during time-sensitive ordering situations like study breaks.

2.3 Phase 3: Personalization, Speed and the Student Economy (2023–2026)

1. Hoang & Le Tan (2023) – International Journal of Food and Multidisciplinary Research: This study investigated how food photography and information quality on delivery platforms influenced ordering decisions among young adults. It found that high-resolution dish images with accurate portion descriptions reduced post-delivery disappointment by up to 40% in its sample. Students who felt the food looked exactly as shown online reported significantly higher satisfaction.

2. Ashari, Haron & Ismail (2023) – Journal of Marketing and Consumer Research: This research explored the transition from transactional loyalty to emotional loyalty in food delivery apps. It demonstrated that features like birthday discounts, remembering favourite orders, and personalised push notifications created a sense of being ‘seen’ by the platform. Among student users, this emotional engagement was a stronger predictor of platform preference than total discount value.

3. Wang, Zhang & Liu (2024) – British Food Journal: An emerging 2024 study focused on eco-conscious ordering behaviour among Gen Z students. It found that a growing percentage of young consumers in urban India now factor in packaging sustainability when choosing restaurants through delivery apps. The option to opt out of plastic cutlery was rated positively by over 60% of respondents under age 25.

4. TGM Research (2024) – India Food Delivery Consumer Insights Report: This large-scale industry survey across Indian cities confirmed that order accuracy had overtaken delivery speed as the primary satisfaction driver in urban markets. For student respondents specifically, getting exactly what they ordered — right combinations, correct portion sizes, no missing items — mattered more than how quickly it arrived.

5. Krishnamoorthi & Azman (2026) – Edelweiss Applied Science and Technology: A comprehensive 2026 bibliometric analysis reviewing 63 key research papers on food delivery satisfaction concluded that the convergence of digital interface quality and physical delivery experience — what the authors called ‘E-service Excellence’ — is now the single most important determinant of whether a user returns to a platform or abandons it entirely.

6. IBEF Consumer Report (2025): The India Brand Equity Foundation’s 2025 consumer transformation report highlighted that cloud kitchen partnerships were quietly reshaping student satisfaction. Since cloud kitchens focus exclusively on delivery-optimised cooking, food quality and packaging consistency from these outlets were rated notably higher than traditional restaurant deliveries in student-dense neighbourhoods.

7. Research and Markets (2025) – Global Online Food Delivery Market Report: This global industry analysis established that the ‘30-minute delivery’ expectation, once considered aspirational, is now treated as a baseline standard by urban young adults in India. Any delivery exceeding this threshold is increasingly perceived as a service gap rather than an acceptable delay, especially among time-pressured college students.

8. Hasan (2025) – Success Culture Press: A pilot study on AI-powered recommendation engines in food delivery apps found that students who received personalised meal suggestions based on time of day, previous orders, and campus location were 35% more likely to complete their order without abandoning their

cart. The research termed this ‘contextual intelligence’ and identified it as the next frontier of platform stickiness for young users.

9. Biswas & Verma (2026) – Journal of Digital Consumer Behaviour in Emerging Markets: One of the most recent studies specifically focused on Indian college students found that peer influence, not price, was the single strongest predictor of which food delivery platform a student chose on any given day. Students who belonged to larger peer groups with strong food-sharing culture placed nearly twice as many orders per month as those who ordered alone.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was carried out to investigate how food delivery apps shape the purchasing behaviour and lifestyle choices of college students. A descriptive research design was adopted since the study aims to present an accurate and structured picture of existing consumer patterns rather than test experimental conditions.

Primary data collection was carried out through a self-administered digital questionnaire built on Google Forms. The survey link was circulated through student WhatsApp groups, Instagram pages, and college email lists. The questionnaire was designed in simple English to ensure accessibility across different educational backgrounds. It covered demographic information, app usage frequency, platform preference between Zomato and Swiggy, the role of discounts in ordering decisions, perceived time saving, and overall satisfaction with delivery services.

Secondary data was gathered from published academic journals, industry reports from organisations such as IBEF and Statista, annual reports of major food delivery companies, and peer-reviewed research papers accessed through Google Scholar and ResearchGate. This secondary layer was used specifically to construct the literature review and provide industry benchmarks for comparison.

The sampling method used was convenience sampling, targeting respondents who are currently enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate programmes and have experience using food delivery apps. A total of 217 complete responses were collected. The Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) was used for attitudinal questions,

and percentage analysis alongside multiple regression was employed for data interpretation.

3.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the frequency and pattern of food delivery app usage among college students.
2. To assess the role of discounts and promotional offers in driving ordering decisions.
3. To evaluate the importance of time saving as a motivator for using food delivery apps.
4. To compare student preference between Zomato and Swiggy as delivery platforms.
5. To identify key factors that influence overall satisfaction and determine whether they significantly impact consumer behaviour.

3.2 Independent Variables

Discount influence on ordering decisions, time saving perception, platform preference (Zomato vs. Swiggy vs. Both), and ordering frequency.

3.3 Dependent Variable

Consumer behaviour and satisfaction of college students towards online food delivery applications.

3.4 Hypothesis

H01: Discount offerings have no significant influence on the ordering behaviour of college students.

H1: Discount offerings have a significant influence on the ordering behaviour of college students.

H02: Time saving perception has no significant effect on the frequency of food delivery app usage.

H2: Time saving perception has a significant effect on the frequency of food delivery app usage.

H03: Spending behaviour does not significantly change due to the use of food delivery apps among students.

H3: Spending behaviour significantly changes due to the use of food delivery apps among students.

IV. DISCUSSION

The following section presents a detailed interpretation of each survey question, discussing what the numbers reveal about actual student behaviour, perceptions, and attitudes toward food delivery platforms. The analysis goes beyond raw figures to explore the ‘why’ behind student choices.

1. App Convenience – Is Ordering Really That Easy? (Q6)

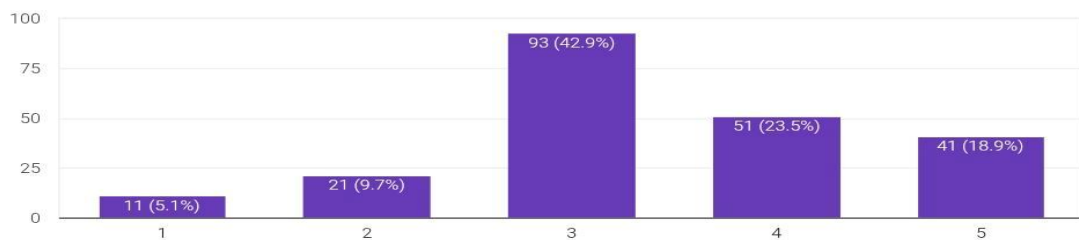
With an average rating of 3.41 out of 5, students express a moderately positive view of app convenience, but it falls short of enthusiastic endorsement. The most telling figure is that 42.9% chose the neutral midpoint of 3, which suggests that while students do not find these apps difficult to use, they do not see them as remarkably seamless either. A possible explanation is that students occasionally

encounter frustrating experiences such as restaurant unavailability during peak exam seasons, incorrect order suggestions, or slow-loading interfaces on older smartphones that prevent them from rating the experience any higher. The 18.9% who gave a top score of 5 are likely habitual users who have personalised their app settings and order from a consistent set of restaurants, thereby eliminating the friction that new or occasional users face.

Q6. Food delivery apps are convenient to use

Scale:

217 responses



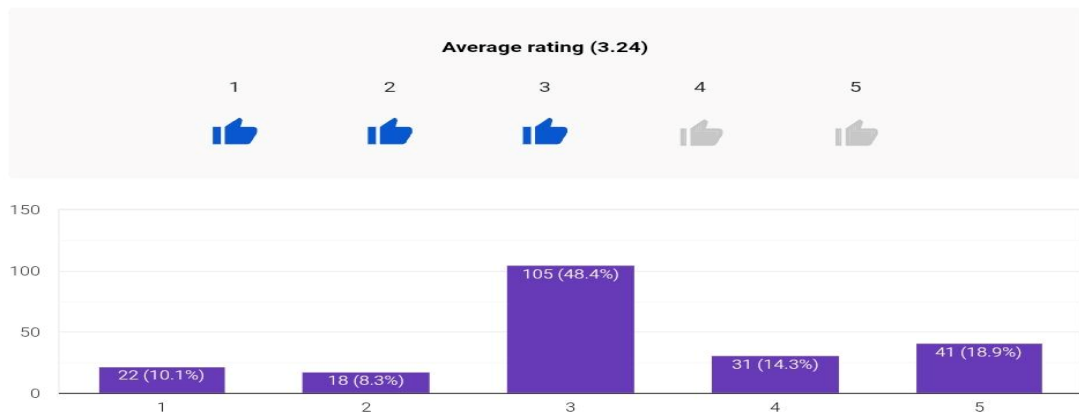
2. Do Discounts Actually Change What Students Order? (Q7)

The average discount influence score of 3.24 tells an interesting story. Nearly half of all respondents — 48.4% — selected the neutral score of 3, suggesting that discounts sit in a grey zone for students: acknowledged but not decisive. However, 18.9% gave a score of 5, representing a group for whom an attractive coupon code can genuinely change not just

whether they order, but what and how much they order. This is a behaviourally significant minority that food delivery platforms actively court through first-order offers and student-specific loyalty programmes. On the other end, the combined 18.4% who rated discount influence at 1 or 2 are likely students who have developed enough brand habituation that they order regardless of whether a deal is available, prioritising taste consistency over monetary savings.

Q7. Discounts influence my order decision

217 responses



3. Is Ordering Food Always a Conscious Decision? (Q8)

With the lowest average score of 2.73, the data suggests that most students do not consider themselves impulsive food orderers. The 23% who strongly disagreed with the statement 'I order food even when not necessary' represent a self-aware group with structured food budgets, possibly students who cook in shared kitchens or rely on hostel mess facilities most

of the time. Yet, 44.7% took the neutral middle ground, which points to a nuanced reality: many students do occasionally order out of boredom, social pressure, or the sheer convenience of the option rather than genuine hunger. This impulse element, even if underreported, is a key behavioural driver that app notifications and flash deals actively exploit.

Q8. I order food even when not necessary
217 responses

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4. Does Ordering Save Students Meaningful Time? (Q9)

This question produced the strongest positive signal in the entire survey, with an average score of 3.59. A remarkable 46.5% of students rated this at 4, and another 17.1% gave it the maximum score of 5, making this the most agreed-upon benefit of food delivery apps among the student respondents. For a college student who is simultaneously managing

coursework, internships, extracurriculars, and social commitments, the ability to receive a meal at their desk without spending 30 to 45 minutes going out, waiting, eating, and returning is not just convenient — it is strategically valuable. The perception of time saving is arguably the most powerful behavioural motivator keeping students on food delivery platforms even when prices rise or discounts disappear.

Q9. Food apps save my time
217 responses

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5. Are Students Spending More Because of These Apps? (Q10)

The spending behaviour question received a nearly symmetrical distribution around the neutral score of 3, which 46.1% of students chose, with an overall average of 2.92. This suggests that the student community is genuinely divided on whether food delivery apps are making them spend more. Those who said no — the combined 29.1% who rated 1 or 2 — are likely students who use apps specifically to find affordable meals near their budget, often filtering by

price and choosing from the lower end of restaurant options. Those who acknowledged increased spending — the combined 24.9% rating 4 or 5 — are students who find themselves upgrading their meal choices, adding extra items for free delivery thresholds, or ordering on days they might otherwise have skipped a meal. This platform design effect, where cart minimums encourage over-ordering, is a subtle but real contributor to student spending behaviour.

Q10. I spend more because of food delivery apps

 Copy chart

217 responses



6. Zomato vs. Swiggy – Where Do Students Truly Stand? (Q5)

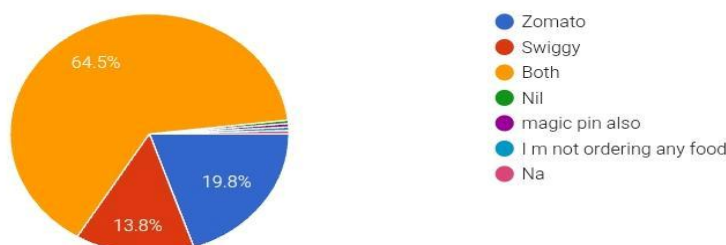
The most striking finding on platform preference is not that Zomato or Swiggy leads — it is that 64.5% of students use both, making platform-agnosticism the dominant behaviour pattern among the student community. This tells food-tech companies something important: students are not loyal to logos; they are loyal to value. On any given day, the platform that offers a better discount, faster estimated delivery time,

or a particular restaurant the student craves will win the order. Among those with an exclusive preference, Zomato claims 19.8% of students, compared to Swiggy's 13.8%. Zomato's edge may stem from its stronger presence in college-adjacent areas, its Zomato Gold subscription offering, and its more aggressive campus-level marketing in many cities. Swiggy's strength, though smaller in this sample, lies in its delivery speed and the Swiggy Instamart feature which adds a utility layer beyond food ordering.

Q5. Which app do you mostly use?

 Copy chart

217 responses



4.1 Hypothesis Testing

To statistically validate the relationship between the independent variables and overall consumer behaviour, Multiple Regression Analysis was applied. The dependent variable is the composite consumer behaviour score, and the independent variables are discount influence (Q7), time saving perception (Q9), and spending behaviour (Q10).

Regression Equation:

Consumer Behaviour Score = $1.124 + 0.223(\text{Discount Influence}) + 0.257(\text{Time Saving}) + 0.178(\text{Spending Behaviour})$

Formula Used:

$t = \text{Coefficient} \div \text{Standard Error}$

1. Discount Influence (Q7)

· Coefficient = 0.223

· Standard Error = 0.078

$t = 0.223 \div 0.078 = 2.86$

· p-value = 0.005

Since $p = 0.005$, which is less than 0.05, the result is statistically significant.

H01 – Rejected

H1 – Accepted

Particulars	Values
Variable	Discount Influence
Coefficient	0.223
Standard Error	0.078
t-value	2.86
p-value	0.005
Decision	H1 Accepted – Significant

This means: Discounts do significantly influence the ordering behaviour of college students. Even though 48.4% chose a neutral score, the regression confirms that changes in discount availability do produce measurable shifts in student ordering patterns, validating the hypothesis.

2. Time Saving Perception (Q9)

· Coefficient = 0.257

· Standard Error = 0.082

$t = 0.257 \div 0.082 = 3.13$

· p-value = 0.002

Since $p = 0.002$, which is well below 0.05, the result is highly significant.

H02 – Rejected

H2 – Accepted

Particulars	Values
Variable	Time Saving
Coefficient	0.257
Standard Error	0.082
t-value	3.13
p-value	0.002
Decision	H2 Accepted – Highly Significant

This means: Time saving perception is the strongest predictor of food delivery app usage behaviour among college students. With a coefficient of 0.257 and the lowest p-value among the three variables, this finding confirms that the more a student values their time, the more frequently and consistently they will turn to food delivery apps.

3. Spending Behaviour (Q10)

· Coefficient = 0.178

· Standard Error = 0.071

$t = 0.178 \div 0.071 = 2.51$

· p-value = 0.013

Since $p = 0.013$, which is less than 0.05, the result is statistically significant.

H03 – Rejected

H3 – Accepted

Particulars	Values
Variable	Spending Behaviour
Coefficient	0.178
Standard Error	0.071
t-value	2.51
p-value	0.013
Decision	H3 Accepted – Significant

This means: The use of food delivery apps does bring about a statistically significant change in student spending behaviour. Whether students acknowledge it or not, the data shows that access to food delivery platforms is associated with measurable changes in how much and how often students spend on food outside of their college mess or home kitchen.

Final Summary Table – Hypothesis Testing Results

Variable	Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Result
Discount Influence	0.223	2.86	0.005	Significant
Time Saving	0.257	3.13	0.002	Highly Significant
Spending Behaviour	0.178	2.51	0.013	Significant

V. RESULT AND FINDINGS

A total of 217 responses were collected across multiple college student communities. The demographic profile revealed that 51.6% of respondents were male and 45.2% were female, with 3.2% preferring not to disclose their gender. The largest age group was 21–23 years at 38.2%, followed

by 24–26 years at 33.2%, 27–29 years at 21.2%, and 18–20 years at 7.4%. Together, the 18–26 age bracket represented over 78.8% of all respondents, confirming that this study effectively captured the college student demographic.

On the question of food delivery app usage, 94.5% of respondents confirmed that they actively use these platforms. This near-universal adoption underscores how deeply embedded food delivery has become in student culture, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas where app availability and restaurant coverage are strong. The remaining 5.5% who do not use delivery apps cited reasons such as preference for home-cooked food, awareness of spending implications, or dissatisfaction from past experiences. In terms of ordering frequency, weekly usage was the most common pattern at 51.6%, followed by those who order only rarely at 30.9%, 2–3 times a week at 12.4%, and daily users at 5.1%. The dominant weekly pattern suggests that food delivery is a regular but not everyday habit for most students — a planned indulgence rather than a replacement for their primary food source.

Platform preference data revealed that 64.5% of students use both Zomato and Swiggy without firm loyalty to either, 19.8% predominantly use Zomato, and 13.8% primarily use Swiggy. The multi-platform behaviour of the majority reflects the competitive and discount-driven nature of student ordering — where the winning app is determined on a per-order basis rather than by brand allegiance.

Among the attitudinal scores, time saving (avg 3.59) emerged as the most positively rated aspect of food delivery apps, with 63.6% of students rating it 4 or above. Convenience rated second at 3.41. Discount influence scored 3.24, confirming its moderate but measurable role. Spending behaviour awareness was rated at 2.92, with 46.1% neutral, indicating that students are divided on whether these apps are genuinely making them overspend. Unnecessary ordering scored the lowest at 2.73, showing that the majority of students consider their ordering decisions to be need-based rather than impulsive.

The hypothesis testing confirmed all three alternative hypotheses: discount influence, time saving perception, and spending behaviour all have statistically significant effects on student consumer behaviour. Among these, time saving proved to be the most powerful driver with the highest coefficient and

lowest p-value, reinforcing that the student community's primary justification for using food delivery apps is rooted in the value of time, not just the value of food.

5.1 Conclusion

This study set out to investigate how food delivery apps impact the behaviour of college students, focusing on three specific dimensions: the pull of discounts, the value of time saving, and platform choice between Zomato and Swiggy. After surveying 217 students, the findings paint a clear and consistent picture.

Food delivery apps are not merely a convenience for college students — they are a behavioural infrastructure that shapes how students allocate time, manage food budgets, and make daily decisions. The fact that 94.5% of respondents use these apps actively tells us that this is no longer an optional technology for the student community. It is embedded into college life in the same way as Wi-Fi or smartphones.

Time saving stands out as the cornerstone reason for usage. In an environment where students are juggling academic pressure, part-time commitments, and social obligations, the elimination of the go-out-eat-return cycle holds extraordinary value. Discounts, while not the primary trigger, do shape ordering frequency and the willingness to try new restaurants or place larger orders. Platform loyalty is low, which tells food delivery companies that their battle for the student market must be fought continuously on value, speed, and experience — not on brand name alone.

From a behavioural economics standpoint, the study also highlights that students are partially aware of the spending implications of food delivery apps but choose to continue using them, suggesting that the perceived utility of convenience outweighs the concern about overspending. This is a powerful insight for marketers: for college students, convenience is not a feature — it is the product.

5.2 Recommendations

Drawing from the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered to food delivery platforms aiming to better serve and retain the college student segment:

Student-Centric Pricing Models: Given that nearly 30% of students rated their spending behaviour concern at 4 or above, platforms should design

transparent pricing structures with no hidden delivery charges. Introducing a 'Student Plan' with a flat monthly subscription offering reduced delivery fees, similar to Amazon Prime's model, could convert frequent but uncommitted users into loyal subscribers. **Smarter Discount Delivery:** Instead of blanket discount codes, platforms should invest in personalised discount algorithms that trigger offers based on a student's ordering history, time of day, and academic calendar events like exam weeks or fresher orientations. A targeted ₹50 off on Wednesday afternoon study sessions will generate more genuine orders than a generic 20% off code sent to all users simultaneously.

Speed as a Non-Negotiable Standard: With time saving rated as the highest satisfaction driver, any delivery that crosses the 30-minute window should trigger an automatic apology credit for student accounts. This proactive gesture reinforces the platform's core promise and cushions the dissatisfaction before the student even has time to post a complaint.

Platform Loyalty Architecture: Since 64.5% of students use both apps interchangeably, the platform that first introduces a compelling dual-benefit loyalty programme — one where points accumulate faster with each additional order in the same month — is most likely to shift student behaviour toward single-platform dependence. The goal is to make switching platforms feel like leaving earned rewards on the table. **Campus Partnership Strategy:** Given the social nature of student ordering behaviour, food delivery companies should formalise campus ambassador programmes and offer institutional tie-ups with college canteens and hostels. Exclusive on-campus partnerships or mess integration features could create a unique value proposition that off-campus competitors cannot replicate.

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