

## Food Delivery Services and Customer Preference in Kathmandu Valley

Arya Joshi, Bikash Byahut and Sumit Pradhan\*

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### Abstract

This study examines the food delivery services and customer preference in Kathmandu Valley. Customer preference is the dependent variable. The selected independent variables are past experience, variety of choice, timely delivery, price, quality of food, and packaging. The primary source of data is used to assess the opinions of the respondents regarding past experience, variety of choice, timely delivery, price, quality of food, packaging, and preference. The study is based on primary data of 116 respondents. To achieve the purpose of the study, structured questionnaire is prepared. The correlation coefficients and regression models are estimated to test the significance and importance of food delivery services and customer preference in Kathmandu Valley.

The study showed that past experience has a positive impact on customer preference. It indicates that reliable information about the food delivery leads to increase in customer preference towards food delivery. Similarly, variety of choice has a positive impact on customer preference. It indicates that availability of the variety of choice, higher would be the customer preference. Likewise, timely delivery has a positive impact on customer preference. It indicates that transporting goods to the recipient within the promised or expected time frame leads to increase in customer preference. In addition, price has a positive impact on customer preference. It indicates that affordable price leads to increase in customer preference. Further, quality of food has a positive impact on customer preference. It indicates that higher the quality of food, higher would be the customer preference. Moreover, packaging has a positive impact on customer preference. It indicates that attractive packaging of the products leads to increase in customer preference.

**Keywords:** past experience, variety of choice, timely delivery, price, quality of food, packaging, customer preference

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### 1. Introduction

Food delivery services rely heavily on meeting customer preferences to thrive in a competitive market. Food delivery services that excel in these areas are more likely to meet customer preferences and gain a competitive edge in the market. Continuous improvement based on customer feedback and changing preferences is crucial for long-term success in the food delivery industry (Lashi *et al.*, 2021). Economic growth and increasing broadband penetration are driving the global expansion of e-commerce. Consumers are increasingly using online services as their disposable income increases, electronic payments become more trustworthy, and the range of suppliers and the size of their delivery networks expand. Food delivery providers can be categorized as being either restaurant-to-consumer delivery or platform-to-consumer delivery operations. Restaurant-to-Consumer Delivery providers make the food and deliver it, as typified by providers, such as KFC, McDonald's, and Domino's. The order can be made directly through the restaurant's online platform or via a third-party platform. The online food delivery service is gradually developing in the Malaysian market. Citizens are so active while using food ordering apps online, especially in the new norm of Covid-19 pandemic standard of procedure. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, online food delivery in Malaysia was an up-and-coming trend in urban areas with the help of technology

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\* Ms. Joshi and Mr. Byahut are Freelance Researchers, Kathmandu, Nepal and Mr. Pradhan is the Head, Research Department, Uniglobe College (Pokhara University Affiliate), Kathmandu, Nepal.

companies such as Grab Food, Food Panda, Lala Food and etc. The service was popular among millennial, but it struggled to reach the other more mature demographics in the country. The industry, however, has now inflated with the introduction of the Movement Control Order (MCO). As a result of all these online food marketing activities, a large number of job opportunities also can be created. It also helps local vendors to connect with people who can increase their incomes. A simplified ordering system is a website or mobile application that allows users to order food in an online platform from a food services company or a local restaurant that organizes food online is similar to online shopping. Online food delivery plays a significant role in customer experience and satisfaction by many factors such as availability of food, customer ratings, payment methods and human interaction (Kwong *et al.*, 2017).

Consumer satisfaction may affect the company through repeat business, the purchase of additional products, good word-of-mouth, and the willingness of the client to pay more for the specific brand. If a business can't satisfy customers as effectively and efficiently as its rivals are, it risks losing market share, clients, and investors (Anderson *et al.*, 2004). According to Deng *et al.* (2009), a service provider's capacity to foster high levels of satisfaction is critical for product differentiation and building solid relationships with clients. Customer satisfaction is therefore key in today's corporate world. Kotler (2000) defined satisfaction as a sensation of pleasure or disappointment brought on by a comparison between the performance of a product (or outcome) as perceived and that which was anticipated. Many businesses are unfamiliar with the concept of consumer satisfaction. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the precise meaning of each term. After using a product or service that a company provides in exchange for the customer's expectations of the items, the customer's attitude toward that product or service is known as customer satisfaction. Customer happiness encourages product repurchases, which in turn fosters brand loyalty. However, customer satisfaction is a relative word that depends on the experience the customer has when purchasing for and/or utilizing the good or service (Tjiptono & Chandra, 2012). Suhartanto *et al.* (2018) suggested that customer satisfaction is affected by the product and service purchased. Satisfaction is the subjective evaluation of performance of the product that is associated with the customer's expectation. A consumer is satisfied when perception of the product's performance is higher than expectation (Liu *et al.*, 2017).

Competitive pricing is a major factor in customer decision-making. While customers may be willing to pay a premium for quality or convenience, they also seek value for their money. Offering reasonable prices compared to competitors can attract more customers. Prompt delivery is crucial in the food delivery industry. Customers expect their orders to arrive on time, preferably within the estimated delivery window. Delays can lead to dissatisfaction and negative reviews. Customers appreciate having a wide selection of restaurants and cuisines to choose from. A diverse menu caters to different tastes and dietary preferences, increasing the likelihood of satisfying a broader customer base. Positive past experiences create trust and loyalty. If customers have had good experiences with a service, they are more likely to choose it again in the future. Abdullah *et al.* (2011) examined the dimensions of customer preference in the food service industry. The study found that price, quality of service, branding, and tangibles have a positive impact on customer preference. Understanding these dimensions relative influence resulted in better allocation of resources for effective service delivery. According to Oliver (1999), the consumer senses that consumption fulfills one need, desire, goal, and so forth and that this fulfillment is pleasurable is what constitutes satisfaction. A company's competitiveness and success are largely determined by how

satisfied its customers are with its products and services (Hennig-Thurau and Klee, 1997). The popularity of social media allowed for the development of cloud kitchens as well as the populating of the same to expand the consumer base (Sarangdhar *et al.*, 2021). Choudhary (2019) suggested that due to the rise of the demand for food delivery service, cloud kitchens have become a preferred option than a restaurant business. The cloud kitchen has changed the landscapes and dynamics of the food industry. The concept of cloud kitchens has acquired general acceptability in the current marketplace, and it is gaining traction. Furthermore, to keep on top of the latest food delivery trends, many businesses are resorting to cloud kitchens (Vidyapeeth and Sathe, 2020).

Cloud kitchens can modify services to the needs and preferences of the customers. Because cloud kitchens are not restricted to a certain market area. As a result, cloud kitchens are extremely adaptable when it comes to adjusting their business plan in response to client demands (Ashwani, 2016). Vasic *et al.* (2018) investigated the influence of online shopping determinants on customer satisfaction in the Serbian Market. The study stated that online meal delivery, and customer loyalty have a positive impact on customer satisfaction. Similarly, Amorim *et al.* (2024) examined the customer preferences for delivery service attributes in attended home delivery. The study concluded that customer preferences for three delivery service attributes associated with each time slot: speed, precision, and timing. Positive past experiences build trust and confidence in the service. When customers receive their orders on time, with the right items, and in good condition, they develop a sense of reliability towards the service provider. This reliability becomes a crucial factor in their future decision-making process. Satisfactory past experiences foster loyalty among customers. They are more likely to choose the same delivery service again when they remember the convenience, quality, and overall positive experience they had previously. Loyalty programs or incentives further encourage repeat business. Happy customers often share their positive experiences with friends, family, and peers. Word-of-mouth recommendations based on past experiences can significantly influence others' decisions to try the same delivery service. Positive reviews and testimonials also contribute to building a favorable reputation. Likewise, Chandrasekhar *et al.* (2019) examined the food delivery services and customer preference: A comparative analysis. The study showed that the consumers mostly prefer uniqueness in terms of price, quality, and delivery. Further, Dsouza and Sharma (2021) assessed the online food delivery portals during COVID-19 times: an analysis of changing consumer behavior and expectations. The study revealed that food quality plays a vital role for customer satisfaction which indirectly influences customer loyalty.

In the context of Nepal, Pokhrel and Shah (2022) examined the factor affecting behavioral intention of online food delivery service consumers in Kathmandu Valley. The study stated that online food delivery services influence behavioral intentions in several ways such as performance expectancy, social influences, and facilitating conditions. The growing use of online food in Kathmandu Valley among graduate students is a sign of the promising field of online shopping in Nepal. Paying attention to behavior intention is essential for both retailers and customers in this scenario. Similarly, Khanal (2020) assessed the consumers' willingness, behaviors, and attitudes to pay a price premium for local organic foods in Nepal. The study concluded that factors like personal disposable income, original product price, consumers' lifestyle, self-congruity, Ethics of production, etc. affect the consumer's attitude to paying a premium price. Moreover, health consciousness, environmental protection concerns, and food safety concerns increase the willingness of consumers to purchase organic

foods. However, high prices, the paucity of regular supply, insufficient information about the benefits of organic foods, and others have negatively influenced the consumers regarding the purchasing perceptions. Likewise, Adhikari *et al.* (2012) analyzed the Segmenting consumers to inform agro food value chain development in Nepal. The study stated that tomato consumers in Kathmandu clearly differ in their preferences and characteristics. Perhaps surprisingly, high value consumers represent the largest segment, which provides an incentive for chain actors to change their practices.

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

The major objective of the study is to examine the food delivery services and customer preference in Kathmandu Valley. Specifically, it examines the relationship of past experience, variety of choice, timely delivery, price, quality of food, and packaging with customer preference in Kathmandu Valley.

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

## 2. Methodological aspects

The study is based on the primary data. The data were gathered from 116 respondents through questionnaire. The study employed convenience sampling method. The respondents' views were collected on past experience, variety of choice, timely delivery, price, quality of food, packaging, and customer preference. The study is based on descriptive and causal comparative research designs.

### *The model*

The model estimated in this study assumes that customer preference depends on past experience, variety of choice, timely delivery, price, quality of food, and packaging. Therefore, the model takes the following form:

$$CP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PE + \beta_2 VoC + \beta_3 TD + \beta_4 PRI + \beta_5 QoF + \beta_6 PAC + e$$

Where,

PI = Customer preference

PE = Past experience

VoC = Variety of choice

TD = Timely delivery

PRI = Price

QoF = Quality of food

PAC = Packaging

Customer preference was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There were 5 items and sample items include "Customers prefer products and services that

offer good value for their money”, “Customers prefer products that provide excellent customer service and support” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.921$ ).

Past experience was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There were 5 items and sample items include “I am satisfied with the delivery apps that I used in the past”, “I’m satisfied with the different cuisine that are ordered for delivery in past” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.901$ ).

Variety of choice was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There were 5 items and sample items include “Variety of choice allows individuals to find options that best suit their preferences and needs”, “Having a variety of choices promotes competition among products or services, driving innovation and improvement in quality” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.920$ ).

Timely delivery was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There were 5 items and sample items include “Timely delivery is crucial for customer satisfaction and retention”, “Meeting deadlines consistently enhances trust and reliability in business relationships” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.961$ ).

Price was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There were 5 items and sample items include “I am satisfied with the price of food delivery when choosing a restaurant”, “I’m satisfied to choose a restaurant based on promotional offers or discounts on delivery fees” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.928$ ).

Quality of food was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There were 5 items and sample items include “I’m satisfied with the accuracy of estimated deliver time and customer trust in quality food”, “The quality of food between different orders from the same delivery service is consistent” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.962$ ).

Packaging was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There were 5 items and sample items include “The environmental friendliness of food delivery packaging influence my choice of service”, “I am satisfied with the visual appurtenance of food delivery packaging with the service” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha = 0.952$ ).

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

#### *Past experience*

Liempepas *et al.* (2017) examined the comparative study of consumer preferences

between Garuda airlines and Batik air. The study stated that customer preference towards delivery service dependent on consumers' past experience. Similarly, Krithika and Alex (2019) assessed the Women's product preference with reference to sanitary napkins. The study concluded that customers feel negative or neutral about the product that is if the customers' have a bad past experience with the product or is not very comfortable with the product that leads to reduce the customer preference towards the products. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a positive relationship between past experience and customer preference.

#### *Variety of choice*

A variety of choice is a number of different kinds or examples of the same products. Nikolova *et al.* (2017) examined the factors of customer loyalty in pharmacy retail: A case from Bulgaria. The study revealed that there is a significant influence of variety of choice on consumer preference. Similarly, Jena *et al.* (2020) found that existence of variety of choice of the products lead to increase the customer preference towards the products. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a positive relationship between variety of choice and customer preference.

#### *Timely delivery*

Timely delivery refers to the act of sending or transporting goods to the recipient within the promised or expected time frame. Polke *et al.* (2022) examined the demand and supply in relation to food delivery apps like Zomato and Swiggy in India. The study showed that timely delivery of the ordered products have positive influence on customer preference. Similarly, Skurpel (2020) found that there is a positive relationship between timely delivery and customer preferences. Likewise, Restuputri *et al.* (2022) assessed the customer perception on last-mile delivery services using Kansei engineering and conjoint analysis. The study found that customers' most preferred attributes are based on the condition of undamaged objects, and the attitude of the courier is vital for users in this study. The most considered instruments by the customer, such as delivery services, delivery speed, courier attitude, order information, condition of goods, and warehouse location. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a positive relationship between timely delivery and customer preference.

#### *Price*

Abdullah *et al.* (2011) examined the customer preference for the food service industry. The study showed price and quality of service have a positive impact on customer preference. Similarly, Aravinth (2012) assessed the customer preference towards electronic goods. The study found that the study concluded that price does not have much negative impact. Because the manufacturers very well identified that the cost of the product could match with the purchasing capacity of the consumer. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

H<sub>4</sub>: There is a positive relationship between price and customer preference.

#### *Quality of food*

Widyaningrum and Muhammad (2023) examined the customer preference in food vendor during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study stated that the COVID-19 pandemic changed the crucial attributes for the consumer to select the food vendor. Nowadays,

the attributes with the highest to the lowest importance values are personal hygiene, environmental sanitation, price, and food freshness. Similarly, Lashi *et al.* (2021) assessed the customer preference for consuming organic red meat. The study found that quality of food has a positive and significant impact on customer preference. Likewise, Zamani *et al.* (2020) concluded that food quality showed that most respondents agreed that KFC serves good quality food at KFC Petaling Jaya. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:  $H_5$ : There is a positive relationship between quality of food and customer preference.

Packaging

Lo *et al.* (2017) examined the customer perception and preference on product packaging. The study stated that there is a tendency for buyers to form opinions of various products, such as food, depending on their understanding of the different designs and graphics on the packaging that capture their attention. These perceptions have a significant impact on consumer buying behavior at the purchasing point. Similarly, Fausiah and Najib (2021) assessed the customer preference and satisfaction level toward organic vegetable attribute. The study found that packaging has a positive and significant impact on customer preference. Based on it, this study develops the following hypothesis:

$H_6$ : There is a positive relationship between packaging and customer preference.

3. Results and discussion

Correlation analysis

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

Table 1

Kendall's Tau correlation coefficient matrix

This table presents Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients between dependent variable and independent variables. The correlation coefficients are based on 116 observations. The dependent variable is CP (Customer preference). The independent variables are PE (Past experience), VoC (Variety of choice), TD (Timely delivery), PRI (Price), QoF (Quality of food), and PAC (Packaging).

Variables	Mean	S.D.	CP	PE	VoC	TD	PRI	QoF	PAC
GP	3.80	0.91	1						
EL	4.00	0.76	0.505**	1					
GPV	4.08	0.72	0.421**	0.497**	1				
GA	4.15	0.73	0.276**	0.443**	0.537**	1			
EB	4.22	0.85	0.190**	0.409**	0.467**	0.500**	1		
EAN	4.22	0.74	0.253**	0.397**	0.469**	0.468**	0.535**	1	
CP	4.18	0.65	0.326**	0.444**	0.481**	0.485**	0.460**	0.527**	1

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

Table 1 shows that past experience is positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that reliable information about the food delivery leads to increase in customer preference towards food delivery. Similarly, variety of choice is positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that higher the variety of choice, higher would be the customer



preference. Likewise, timely delivery is positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that transporting goods to the recipient within the promised or expected time frame leads to increase in customer preference. In addition, price is positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that affordable price leads to increase in customer preference. Further, quality of food is positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that higher the quality of food, higher would be the customer preference. Moreover, packaging is also positively correlated to customer preference. It indicates that attractive packaging of the products lead to increase in customer preference.

### Regression analysis

Having analyzed the Kendall's Tau correlation coefficients matrix, the regression analysis has been carried out and the results are presented in Table 2. More specifically, it presents the regression results of past experience, variety of choice, timely delivery, price, quality of food, and packaging on customer preference.

Table 2

### Estimated regression results of past experience, variety of choice, timely delivery, price, quality of food, and packaging on customer preference

The results are based on 116 observations using linear regression model. The model is  $CP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PE + \beta_2 VoC + \beta_3 TD + \beta_4 PRI + \beta_5 QoF + \beta_6 PAC + e$  where the dependent variable is CP (Customer preference). The independent variables are PE (Past experience), VoC (Variety of choice), TD (Timely delivery), PRI (Price), QoF (Quality of food), and PAC (Packaging).

Model	Intercept	Regression coefficients of						Adj. R <sub>bar</sub> <sup>2</sup>	SEE	F-value
		PE	VoC	TD	PRI	QoF	PAC			
1	3.046 (14.485)**	0.299 (5.554)**						0.173	0.587	30.852
2	2.505 (9.939)**		0.419 (6.774)**					0.239	0.563	45.89
3	2.102 (8.56)**			0.51 (8.606)**				0.338	0.525	74.059
4	1.856 (7.681)**				0.561 (9.771)**			0.398	0.500	95.473
5	2.333 (10.392)**					0.438 (8.399)**		0.327	0.529	70.55
6	1.893 (7.783)**						0.543 (9.552)**	0.387	0.505	91.241
7	2.454 (9.697)**	0.108 (1.515)	0.329 (3.842)**					0.246	0.560	24.301
8	1.775 (6.724)**	0.04 (0.594)	0.173 (2.066)*	0.384 (5.341)**				0.369	0.512	28.87
9	1.325 (5.112)**	0.109 (1.735)	0.173 (2.066)*	0.189 (2.466)*	0.382 (5.076)**			0.464	0.472	31.924
10	1.235 (4.855)**	0.156 (2.464)*	0.069 (0.796)	0.131 (1.688)	0.31 (4.013)**	0.192 (2.896)**		0.491	0.460	28.574
11	0.941 (3.687)**	0.139 (2.283)*	0.062 (0.745)	0.079 (1.053)	0.306 (4.146)**	0.043 (0.583)	0.281 (3.779)**	0.536	0.439	28.483

Notes:

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

Table 2 shows that the beta coefficients for past experience are positive with customer preference. It indicates that past experience has a positive impact on customer preference. This finding is similar to the findings of Liempepas *et al.* (2017). Similarly, the beta



coefficients for variety of choice are positive with customer preference. It indicates that variety of choice has a positive impact on customer preference. This finding is consistent with the findings of Jena *et al.* (2020). Likewise, the beta coefficients for timely delivery are positive with customer preference. It indicates that timely delivery has a positive impact on customer preference. This finding is consistent with the findings of Polke *et al.* (2022). Further, the beta coefficients for price are positive with customer preference. It indicates that price has a positive impact on customer preference. This finding is consistent with the findings of Abdullah *et al.* (2011). In addition, the beta coefficients for quality of food are positive with customer preference. It indicates that quality of food has a positive impact on customer preference. This finding is consistent with the findings of Widyaningrum and Muhammad (2023). Moreover, the beta coefficients for packaging are positive with customer preference. It indicates that packaging has a positive impact on customer preference. This finding is consistent with the findings of Fausiah and Najib (2021).

#### 4. Summary and conclusion

Consumers are increasingly using online services as their disposable income increases, electronic payments become more trustworthy, and the range of suppliers and the size of their delivery networks expand. Food delivery providers can be categorized as being either Restaurant-to-Consumer Delivery or Platform-to-Consumer Delivery operations. Restaurant-to-Consumer Delivery providers make the food and deliver it, as typified by providers, such as KFC, McDonald's, and Domino's. The order can be made directly through the restaurant's online platform or via a third-party platform. The online food delivery service is gradually developing in the Malaysian market. Citizens are so active while using food ordering apps online, especially in the new norm of Covid-19 pandemic standard of procedure. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, online food delivery in Malaysia was an up-and-coming trend in urban areas with the help of technology companies such as Grab Food, Food Panda, Lala Food and etc. The service was popular among millennial, but it struggled to reach the other more mature demographics in the country. The industry, however, has now inflated with the introduction of the Movement Control Order (MCO). As a result of all these online food marketing activities, a large number of job opportunities also can be created.

This study attempts to analyze the food delivery services and customer preference in Kathmandu Valley. The study is based on primary data with 116 observations.

The major conclusion of this study is that past experience, variety of choice, timely delivery, price, quality of food, and packaging have positive impact on customer preference. It indicates that reliable information about the food delivery, higher the variety of choice, transporting goods to the recipient within the promised or expected time frame, affordable price higher the quality of food, and attractive packaging of the products lead to influence the customer preference towards food delivery services. Likewise, the study also concluded that price followed by packaging is the most influencing factor that explains the changes in the customer preference in the context of food delivery services.

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