



Influence of Post-Purchase Customer Experience on Repurchase Intention *A Review of Indian Online Food Delivery*

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the Indian online food delivery sector, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of post-purchase customer experience in online food retailing, specifically in online food delivery applications (OFDAs). This study investigated a five-determinant model to examine post-purchase dimensions influencing the customer experience with OFDAs and explore their impact on customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. The study adopted a structured questionnaire based on five-point Likert scale and the data was collected from Indian customers using online food delivery applications using purposive sampling technique. The final data analysis was conducted with 950 responses using AMOS-Structure Equation Modeling (SEM). Final analysis reported that factors including food quality, customer service, delivery, return and exchange and sustainable packaging significantly impact consumer satisfaction and their intentions to make repeat purchases.

Keywords: Online customer experience, post-purchase behavior, Customer satisfaction, Repurchase intention, Online Food Delivery, Hospitality

INTRODUCTION

The paradigms of shopping have been changed due to intervention of technology in seller-buyer interactions, which led to the opening up of new sales channels, i.e., websites and mobile applications (Bennett et al., 2024). Since the beginning of COVID-19, many shoppers have switched from brick-and-mortar stores to online mobile applications, or in short, apps, to have convenience and safety (Miao et al., 2022). According to IBEF, in India in the year 2021, 1.2 million daily transactions had been reported, and its gross merchandise value (GMV) from e-commerce would touch US \$350 billion by 2030, and 500 million more online shoppers are going to be added by 2030. Research also reported that the CAGR of the Indian retail industry is set to rise by 9% with an estimated size of 1407 billion by 2026, from which food and grocery retailing will be the major anchor of growth with 883 billion. So, the increasing adoption of online mobile applications among Indian customers and the vast market size have lured many conventional food

outlets and new market entrants to get orders through their own apps or websites or third-party online food delivery apps (OFDAs) like Zomato, Dunzo, and Swiggy.

During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all the dine-in restaurants around the globe had to face complex challenges to run their economic cycle smoothly (Trude et al., 2024). However, this has shifted them to deliver freshly prepared food through the adoption of OFDAs (Bonfanti et al., 2023) and it has also changed the customers' expectations and consumption behavior by providing convenience and offering them several restaurants along with their best delicacies (Gani et al., 2023). Having food delivered through OFDAs gives restaurants a safety net or cushion to diversify their risk and profitability. However, for customers who are surrounded by so many conventional and OFDAs, it is paramount for service providers to win over customers and make them repurchase. Anshu et al. (2022) insisted that to increase the repurchase

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propensity of customers, service providers need to look after what their customers are experiencing.

Customer experience (CEX) can be described as the customer's personal assessment of the tangible and intangible cues or offerings of a business that they encounter during their offline or online visit to the store (Becker and Jaakkola, 2020). Hospitality businesses, especially those that are operating conventionally, rely more on providing memorable dining experiences and involve more human interactions (Davari et al., 2022). However, online customer experience (OCEX) is distinct and challenging as compared to offline in the case of hospitality, whereas in the former human interactions are rare and customers are more cognitively engaged than physically while ordering food from OFDAs (Tsaur et al., 2023). So, it is crucial for OFDA operators to observe touch points, which makes OCEX pleasing by invoking favourable outcomes and supersedes the physical experience of having a meal in restaurants.

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) proposed in their study that researchers and OFDA operators need to view OCEX in three separate stages: pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase. Yilin et al. (2023) have supported this notion and opined that OFDAs, who look after their customers and effectively manage each stage of experience subtly, have maintained a competitive and reputed position in the market. Indwar and Mishra (2023) highlighted that customers have very limited experience with the service of OFDAs in the pre-purchase and purchase stages, as they form expectations only through graphical images and customer reviews. For OFDAs, customers' personal or physical encounter with the delivered food only occurs in the post-purchase stage, and the experience in this phase impacts the customers' intention to repurchase and patronise it.

Pham and Ahammad (2017) discussed that in the online retail space, all sorts of products are available, ranging from cognitive to experiential. Experienced products pose challenges for e-retailers, as they can be examined and evaluated only after ordering. So, in contrast to other products available in the online space, fresh food delivered through OFDAs instills scepticism in customers about its delivery, freshness, return, safety, health, and perishability, as information provided on mobile apps in the form of ingredients, pictures, and

quantity can only be verified after purchase (Ma et al., 2022). Customers in the case of online food retailing can only assess the actual tangible and intangible features of a meal in the post-purchase phase, so the experience at this stage ascertains their future course of action (Kumar and Anjaly, 2017).

Food, as a basic necessity, has a high order frequency but a low profit margin for OFDAs, so instigating repurchase frequency by carefully examining post-purchase OCEX and nurturing long-lasting relationships is the key to their economic growth (Ma et al., 2022). Rashid and Rasheed (2024) extensively reviewed the quality of logistic service providers in e-tailing, however, this study focused on general merchandise and did not consider any difference in delivering different merchandise, as there is a contrasting difference between delivering food and other items like electronic gadgets, apparel, etc. So, this research is novel in its approach to give separate due attention to the post-purchase experience stage and shun the gaps by interpreting post-purchase OCEX better in the area of online food retailing.

Therefore, it is beneficial and imperative for stakeholders to identify what factors create the post-purchase experience for customers. The research objectives addressed in the study are: (1) To assess the dimensions of the post-purchase stage that encompass customer experience with OFDAs; and (2) To evaluate the impact of post-purchase dimensions on customer satisfaction (CS) and their mediating impact on inciting repurchase intention (RI).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Delivery, Customer Satisfaction and Repurchase Intention

Delivery of food is defined as providing convenience to customers in terms of various delivery options and fulfillment of their order by delivering the right meal in the right manner and at the right time (Bansal and Sharma, 2024). Customers prefer delivery of food due to safety concerns, convenience (Ghani et al., 2023) and access to restaurant comparisons and reviews over dining, however, if they face delivery-related issues, then the whole experience with the brand becomes inconvenient and unworthy (Bonfanti et al., 2023).

Delivery is one of the essential value-added activities in the post-purchase stage for a perishable commodity like freshly prepared food, as delivery failure due to late delivery, wrong, spilled, or damaged products leads to customer dissatisfaction and losing an important customer to a competitor (Miao et al., 2022). Saad (2021) discussed that availability to track their order, communication with the delivery partner, and expected order delivery time are trust-building practices for customers and to invigorate long-lasting relationships with customers, e-retailers need to cater to post-purchase delivery vistas. Deliverymen are the face of e-commerce and restaurant service providers, and they can help enhance the post-purchase experience by ensuring timely delivery, maintaining hygiene standards, and showing good conduct (Saarijärvi et al., 2024). Food e-retailers try to provide a more satisfactory customer experience than what they commit to in their advertising campaigns to increase the frequency of customer revisits.

- H_{1a} : Delivery has a positive and direct impact on customer satisfaction.
- H_{1b} : Delivery has a positive and significant indirect effect on repurchase intention through customer satisfaction.

Customer Service, Customer Satisfaction and Repurchase Intention

Customer service in the context of food delivery refers to the interaction and communication between a food delivery service provider and their customers, typically aimed at providing a positive customer experience and resolving any issues or concerns that may arise (Sinha et al., 2024). Customers have the chance to compare the difference between expected and delivered food only in the post-purchase stage. So, if the delivered fresh food does not match the expectations of the customers, their deplorable experience in the post-purchase period can shadow the overall experience with OFDAs. However, during the dine-in experience, issues related to the wrong order, taste, or flavour are resolved quickly by the restaurants. So, when these issues are faced by customers on OFDAs, communication with customers and their responsiveness to customer service becomes vital. The responsiveness of OFDAs can be seen in how customer care executives promptly and precisely comprehend the issues flagged by customers (Wattoo

and Iqbal, 2022). Responsiveness of customer service and quick resolution of complaints instill a sense of security in customers, which satisfies the customers, and this ecstatic experience with OFDAs supersedes their flagged concerns and promotes repurchase intention. So, this study proposes:

- H_{2a} : Customer service has a direct and positive effect on customer satisfaction.
- H_{2b} : Customer service has a positive and significant indirect effect on repurchase intention through customer satisfaction.

Quality of Food, Customer Satisfaction and Repurchase Intention

Food quality is the key for restaurants that impacts directly restaurant's revenue, goodwill, and customer loyalty (Han et al., 2025). Food quality is determined by a combination of tangibles (quantity, presentation, and food choices) and intangibles (flavour, nutrition, and aroma) elements (Hanaysha, 2022). During COVID-19, food quality and safety measures became a subject of priority for OFDAs (Vazquez-Noguerol and Prado-Prado, 2025). As per the expectation-disconfirmation theory of Oliver and DeSarbo (1988), a customer feels satisfied when their expectations for merchandise or services line up with what they actually experience after making a purchase. At the time of pre-purchasing, customers expect the food they order to be delicious, made of fresh ingredients, neatly presented and packed (Pal et al., 2022), and delivered food matches their order in the post-purchase phase or after receiving it. Customer satisfaction will therefore depend upon the quality of the food offered by OFDAs (Yoopetch et al., 2022). Customers will be thrilled and continue to buy from the same service provider if the food meets their expectations.

- H_{3a} : Food quality has a direct and positive influence on customer satisfaction.
- H_{3b} : Food quality has a positive and significant indirect effect on repurchase intention through customer satisfaction.

Return and Exchange, Customer Satisfaction and Repurchase Intention

Customers are buying food online so that they can stay in their familiar surroundings and satisfy their

needs while relaxing at home. However, the risk of erroneous meal orders, foreign objects in food, and untimely delivery put scepticism among customers about the service failure by food delivery providers, and the high perishability of food health and safety apprehensions, the salvage value of returned food is almost negligible for firms and can affect their profit margins as well (Chang and Meyerhoefer, 2021). However, the existence of a generous refund and compensation policy plays an effective role in alleviating the risks of customers and reassuring them to repurchase (Li et al., 2023). Increased satisfaction with post-possession services, such as simple refunds, exchanges, and adequate compensation, can encourage customers to order online in the future, resulting in more enjoyable encounters and fewer hesitations (Saha et al., 2023). The customer's perception of a simple return and exchange process is considered one of the most important measures of superior customer service (Ma et al., 2022). Customer satisfaction and their repurchase propensity will improve if firms can offer customers a simple, adaptable, and managed return and exchange process that goes beyond their expectations (Zhou et al., 2025). In light of this, this study proposes that positive return and exchange experience increase customer satisfaction and repurchase intention.

- **H_{4a}**: Return and Exchange has a direct and positive impact on customer satisfaction.
- **H_{4b}**: Return and Exchange has a positive and significant indirect effect on repurchase intention through customer satisfaction.

Sustainable Packaging, Customer Satisfaction and Repurchase Intention

Sustainable packaging is synonymous with green or eco-friendly packaging, which not only caters to the needs of OFDAs but also fulfills the demands of the environment (Nguyen-Viet, 2023). However, due to the effect of COVID-19 and customers are seeking convenience, food deliveries through OFDAs are on the rise, and more single-use plastic waste is generated (Shimul and Cheah, 2023). Customers expect two-fold purposes from their packaged meals: one, it should maintain the quality of the meal in terms of spillage and condition, and second, it should serve environmental needs (Yooptech, 2022). After the placing of the order and before the actual delivery of the meal, the

quality and design of the packaging of the meal are of paramount importance in demonstrating the quality and brand image of the firm (Suleman et al., 2025). E-retailers who have adopted sustainable packaging measures have seen customers become more satisfied with firms' efforts and loyal to them. Agnihotri et al. (2023) found that the sustainable identity of OFDAs has superseded even the negative effects of service failure faced by customers and made them stick to the same brand.

- **H_{5a}**: Sustainable packaging has a direct and positive effect on customer satisfaction.
- **H_{5b}**: Sustainable packaging has a positive and significant indirect effect on repurchase intention through customer satisfaction.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF POST-PURCHASE OCEX

Operationalization of Variables

The conceptual model for this study is further illustrated based on the literature review and arguments indicated above. The model includes the post-purchase OCEX's elements and output variables, as well as hypothesized relationships. The conceptual paradigm for post-purchase OCEX was conceived from the study of Kumar and Anjaly (2017), which is scale formation research. The dimensions of post-purchase OCEX devised in this study were 'product-in-hand', 'customer service', return and exchange', 'delivery', 'feel-good factor', and 'perceived benefits. In contrast to this, our research omitted the two dimensions 'feel-good factor' and 'perceived benefits'. 'Feel-good Factor' can be understood as the attributes like easy navigation, a pleasing surfing experience, aesthetics, etc., of online mobile applications that invoke favorable emotional feelings in the customers for being nicely taken care of (Lallemant et al., 2015). However, Ma et al. (2022) refuted and supported this deletion of the 'feel-good factor' by describing this dimension as a pre-purchase phenomenon as it is only experienced during website surfing and exploring merchandise on the e-retailer's website.

Kim et al. (2008) described 'perceived benefits' as the customers' opinion about the levels of gains they will realize in terms of time savings, convenience, and discounts before availing of any type of service

at online stores. Al-Debei et al. (2023) opined that perceived benefits assist customers in making decisions during the pre-purchase stage to choose online stores over traditional stores. So, in the case of online food delivery, perceived benefits are the customers' decision to choose online food delivery apps (OFDAs) for convenience, discounts, cashback, or points over dine-in or the hassle of going out to take food, which is a pre-purchase phenomenon (Mehroli et al., 2020). Hence this study omitted this parameter.

Moreover, in the study of Kumar and Anjaly (2017), the scale was not validated or used for any particular industry, so in this study, researchers attempted to scrutinize the paradigm of customers' post-purchase experience in the online food delivery industry. Researchers considered 'product-in-hand' i.e., the actual features and quality of the product rephrased as the 'quality of food' to fit in the context of the study. 'Sustainable Packaging' was adopted from the study of Escursell et al. (2020) as in the post-purchase phase, the type of packaging and the quality of the meal depend upon the packaging, which ultimately influences customer satisfaction with OFDAs. The five elements of post-purchase OCEX include delivery, customer service, quality of food, returns and exchanges, and sustainable packaging. The model asserts that online repurchase intention is brought about by the mediating effect of online satisfaction on post-purchase OCEX. The diagram shows the suggested links between the constructs (Figure 1).

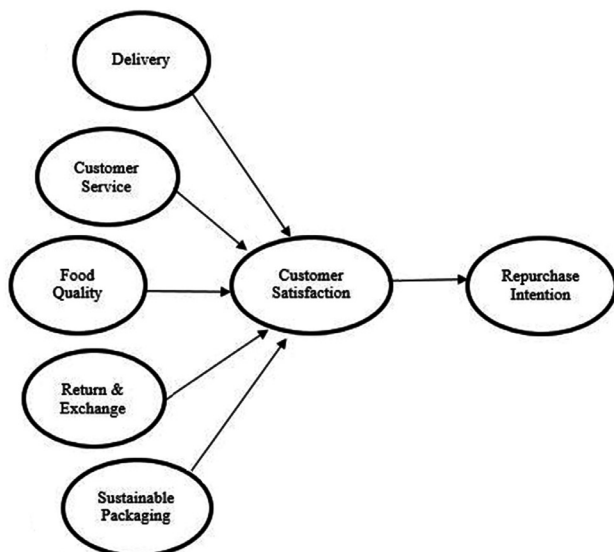


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling

The current study comprises seven factors, namely delivery, customer service, food quality, returns and exchanges, sustainable packaging, customer satisfaction, and repurchase intention, as shown in Figure 1. A questionnaire was created using Google Forms based on a five-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree). This study is explicitly introspecting customer's experience with the service aspects in the post-purchase phase and how this experience affects the level of satisfaction and their propensity to repurchase from the same firm. So, the scale proposed by Kumar and Anjaly (2017) is a better fit to serve the context of the study. It was developed by adapting items from online retailing and post-purchase OCEX literature, and as the items were studied for all products sold through online retailing services, however, to better detect the factors, they had been amended specifically according to the online food delivery context. The survey, which included a total of 31 items, was used to assess the degree of agreement among construct components related to post-purchase OCEX, its dimensions, and its impact on customer satisfaction. The target group for the study consists of users of Indian mobile food ordering apps (Zomato, Swiggy, EatSure, and Dunzo), and purposive sampling was adopted to collect responses from the target population. Since the research study adopted a purposive sampling technique for data collection and customers use online mobile applications for all sorts of needs, so to better reach to intended respondents, the questionnaire contained two questions (1) "Do you use online mobile applications for fulfilling your shopping needs?" and (2) "Have you ordered food through online food delivery applications?". The insertion of screening questions assisted in generating responses from only those respondents who have ordered and have already been using OFDAs. Before conducting the final data collection stage, pilot testing was performed by generating inputs from a small set of actual respondents. Pilot testing comprised 71 respondents of different age groups (16–55 years), and it was executed to verify the comprehension of items in terms of language and accuracy from the respondent's point of view. One item related to delivery was

paraphrased, and one item related to food quality was paraphrased.

Data Collection

The final data collection stage was conducted in Northern cities of India Like New Delhi, Jammu, Gurugram, Chandigarh, Kurukshetra, Shimla, and Panipat from which a total of 1200 users were contacted through sharing a link on WhatsApp and e-mail, out of which 1100 responses were answered and after omitting 150 responses attributed to partial responses and straight-line (same answer choices), 950 responses were found to be viable for the study. The conceptual framework was analyzed and confirmed in this study through the use of the structural equation modelling (SEM) approach. Hair et al. (1998) suggested that there should be 5 to 10 responses for each item utilised in the construct measurement. This study included 31 items and the threshold sample size for SEM is 310. For the final analysis, this study used a sample size of 950, which is regarded as extremely good.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

	<i>No. of Respondents (950)</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	569	59.9
Female	381	40.1
<i>Age Group (in years)</i>		
16-25	384	40.5
26-35	284	29.9
36-45	181	19.1
46-55	101	10.5
<i>Education</i>		
Under Graduate	228	24.1
Graduate	343	36.2
Post Graduate	208	21.9
Others	171	17.8
<i>Ordering Frequency (per week)</i>		
Daily	40	4.06
<2	152	16.04
2-4	288	30.4
4-6	470	49.5

Source: Authors' Creation

Descriptive statistics are exhibited in Table 1. Table 1 lists the respondents' demographic details. The majority of participants in this study were male (59.9%), and most respondents ordered online food more than twice a month (95.96%). It can be understood that most customers are well-adapted to the practice of online food ordering and they frequently order food through online applications.

Scale Validation

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was applied to validate the variables of the construct, which have shared attributes of covariance. Brown (2015) highlighted that in studies where a premeditated conceptual framework was proposed, CFA tests how collected data supports the proposed construct and its interrelationships. The criteria for evaluating whether a model proposed in the study adheres to the sample dataset are provided by the model fit indices (Hooper et al., 2008). The values reported in Table 2 signified that the data supported the validity of the proposed model.

Table 2: Model Fit Indices for Measurement Model

<i>Model Fit Index</i>	<i>Values Derived from the Model</i>	<i>Acceptable Values</i>
CMIN/df	2.814	Less than 3
CFI	0.951	> 0.90
GFI	0.926	> 0.80
RMSEA	0.044	< 0.08 is a good fit
RMR	0.039	<0.05 is a good fit

Source: Authors' Creation

Convergent Validity

Hair et al. (1998) advised that to check the convergent validity of the scale, items related to respective factors must load or converge onto the respective factors. Factor Loading is the correlation of items with their corresponding construct. Factor loading of a particular item depicts how much variance produced by the latent construct is explained by the item. Factor loadings generally vary from 0 to 1. The more the factor loading is near to 1, the better the explanation of the latent construct is given by that particular item. So, items having loadings greater than 0.5 were retained, and items with loadings less than 0.5 were omitted from the final scale. So, one item of food quality and sustainable

packaging was omitted and factor loadings of the final items are presented in Table 3.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is a metric used in factor analysis SEM to assess the convergent validity of the measurement model. A higher AVE indicates better convergent validity for the construct being assessed. It is commonly recommended that an AVE value of 0.5 or higher indicates acceptable convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). So, the values of AVE reported in Table 3 confirmed the convergent validity of the construct as its value for each factor is greater than 0.5.

Table 3: Convergent Validity

<i>Factor</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>Factor Items</i>	<i>Item Loadings</i>
Delivery	0.604	DEL1	0.769
		DEL2	0.808
		DEL3	0.860
		DEL4	0.831
		DEL5	0.690
Customer Service	0.556	CSER1	0.855
		CSER2	0.731
		CSER3	0.727
		CSER4	0.663
		CSER5	0.695
Food Quality	0.549	FQ1	0.839
		FQ2	0.788
		FQ3	0.777
		FQ4	0.695
Return and Exchange	0.556	REX1	0.851
		REX2	0.788
		REX3	0.731
		REX4	0.766
Sustainable Packaging	0.602	SPAK1	0.745
		SPAK2	0.819
		SPAK3	0.808
		SPAK4	0.822
Customer Satisfaction	0.627	CS1	0.879
		CS2	0.783
		CS3	0.826
		CS4	0.789
Repurchase Intention	0.619	RI1	0.765
		RI2	0.731
		RI3	0.759
		RI4	0.817
		RI5	0.903

Source: Authors' Creation

Reliability Analysis

According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), Cronbach's alpha is a widely recognized reliability metric that determines the internal consistency of items. The reliability values displayed in Table 5 are Cronbach's alpha for each of the seven factors. Its value normally falls between 0 and 1. Cronbach's alpha coefficient which is close to 1 indicates that the scale's items are more consistent with one another (Brown, 2015). This study's overall Cronbach's alpha value is 0.915, which indicates that the internal consistency of the data is satisfactory.

Bacon et al. (1995) defined composite reliability (C.R.) as an estimate of the degree to which items within a scale measure a single underlying construct by examining the correlation between items. Hair et al. (1998) highlighted that constructs show a convincing state of reliability when the value of C.R. is generally greater than 0.70. The values depicted in Table 5 highlighted the reliability of the scale as the values of C.R. for each factor are greater than 0.70.

Table 4: Validation Criteria

<i>Convergent Validity</i>	<i>Discriminant Validity</i>
CR > 0.7	AVE > MSV
AVE > 0.5	AVE > ASV
CR > AVE	

Notes: CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance explained; MSV = maximum shared variance; and ASV = average shared variance.

Source: Fornell and Larcker (1981)

Table 5: Reliability of a Scale

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Composite Reliability</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha</i>
Delivery	0.883	0.849
Customer Service	0.860	0.865
Food Quality	0.827	0.820
Return and Exchange	0.832	0.817
Sustainable Packaging	0.857	0.839
Customer Satisfaction	0.870	0.840
Repurchase Intention	0.889	0.867

Source: Authors' Creation

Discriminant Validity

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), to obtain discriminant validity, the items of factors or constructs

must not converge or correlate. The validity statistic is computed in line with the guidelines in Table 4, and the results are displayed in Table 6 using the Stats Tools package proposed by Professor Gaskin (Gaskin and Lim, 2012). Table 6 shows that discriminant validity has been proven to be obtained because each factor's AVE is greater than 0.5. Moreover, the discriminant validity is guaranteed since the average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than the constructs' maximum shared variance (MSV), which represents the highest amount of variance that a construct shares with another construct and it is the square of the highest correlation between any two constructs in the model (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 6: Discriminant Validity

<i>Factors</i>	<i>AVE</i>	<i>MSV</i>
Delivery	0.604	0.187
Customer Service	0.556	0.233
Food Quality	0.549	0.157
Return and Exchange	0.556	0.101
Sustainable Packaging	0.602	0.233
Customer Satisfaction	0.627	0.089
Repurchase Intention	0.619	0.099

Source: Authors' Creation

Hypothesis Testing

The analysis of structural model in Table 7 showed that food quality has a huge impact on customer satisfaction among all the factors. It has significant influence on repurchase intention through improved customer satisfaction. Delivery demonstrates a strong

Table 7: Hypothesis Testing Results (* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$)

<i>Hypotheses</i>	<i>β Coefficients</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Delivery-CS (H1a)	0.230	***
Delivery-CS-RI (H1b)	0.050	***
Customer Service-CS (H2a)	0.200	***
Customer Service-CS-RI (H2b)	0.043	***
Food Quality-CS (H3a)	0.282	***
Food Quality-CS-RI (H3b)	0.061	***
Return and Exchange-CS (H4a)	0.202	**
Return and Exchange-CS-RI (H4b)	0.043	**
Sustainable Packaging-CS (H5a)	0.118	0.016*
Sustainable Packaging-CS-RI (H5b)	0.025	0.016*

Source: Authors' creation

influence on customer satisfaction and positively affects repurchase intention through enhanced customer satisfaction. Similarly, customer service was found to significantly improve customer satisfaction and positively impact repurchase intention via increased customer satisfaction. Return and exchange policies were shown to enhance customer satisfaction and positively impact repurchase intention through increased customer satisfaction. Moreover, sustainable packaging also significantly influences customer satisfaction and repurchase intention.

DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

This study looked at significant CS and RI factors and assessed Indian consumers' post-purchase OCEX in OFDAs. Study discovered that "food quality" is the most important and key factor for delightful post-purchase OCEX, which is consistent with the findings of Macias et al. (2023), who looked into the repurchase intention (RI) of Ecuadorian consumers using OFDAs. Consumers are currently more concerned with the food's quality and nutritional worth and their expectations for strict safety measures, have made food safety and hygiene the top concerns.

Customer support, which Ahmad et al. (2018) had previously identified for Jordanian consumers, was found to be an important component for both CS and RI. As food is a perishable commodity and returns and exchanges are more difficult compared to non-perishable goods, customer service becomes essential when purchasing food online. Customers may be dissatisfied, which lowers the propensity to repurchase when retailers respond slowly or attempt to solve problems ineffectively.

Return and Exchange have a big impact on CS and RI. Online shopping places greater importance on product return due to consumers' inability to physically inspect products (Das and Kunja, 2024). Customer's repurchase intentions can be impacted by retailers' return and exchange policies (Javed et al., 2020). Customers have a safety net with return and exchange policies in online meal delivery because they know that if something goes wrong with their purchase, their complaints will be immediately addressed.

Sustainable packaging is also found to be a significant factor in impacting customer satisfaction which is

consistent with the results of Ma et al. (2022), who have explored packaging among Chinese and Vietnamese customers. This is need of the hour and however, despite its prominent role in achieving sustainable development goals, restaurants and online food retailers in India despite being aware of the sustainability practices, are still using single-use plastic packaging.

For a business to maintain a long-term relationship with its customers, timely delivery is essential. Delays can occasionally be brought on by errors made by the company or by unexpected circumstances. Customers are less likely to be dissatisfied when businesses notify them of the delay in delivery (Miao et al., 2022). “On-time delivery” and “Product fulfilled expectations” are the two most important elements of satisfaction in ratings that come after product delivery. This agrees with the findings of Liébana-Cabanillas et al., (2024).

IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Theoretical Implications

This research on customers’ post-purchase experiences with OFDAs adds to the body of e-commerce and food literature by offering insights about the evolving Indian food business driven by digital platforms by evaluating customer experience and satisfaction metrics. This study offers useful information for researchers and practitioners looking into online food services because there haven’t been many studies that have novelly sought to explicitly examine post-purchase stage of online customer experience (OCEX).

Additionally, this research has spanned the gap between sustainability and the expanding e-commerce industry, by offering insightful information about how environmental responsibility and customer satisfaction interact. However, Ma et al. (2022) examined the role of packaging in impacting Chinese customer’s satisfaction with OFDAs, however, this study advanced the literature of the post-purchase online customer experience by originally studying the role of sustainable packaging in customers’ satisfaction and their repurchase intention, as the mounting figure of plastic waste due to advent of OFDAs is also an environmental concern.

The study shows that, in the context of OFDAs, the first thing that stands out as a key factor influencing

post-purchase satisfaction is food quality. The standard of the food that is provided affects the customer’s inclination to reorder and patronizing the brand. Secondly, the effectiveness and trustworthiness of the delivery process have a huge impact on customer satisfaction and it can be improved through on-time deliveries and precise order fulfilment. Theoretical models can also investigate the complexities of delivery logistics, encompassing elements like delivery time, route optimization, and real-time tracking to better comprehend their impact. Thirdly, there is a theoretical significance to the growing concern for sustainable packaging. Customers are evaluating sustainability measures, including packaging and waste reduction efforts, as environmental consciousness rises. A deeper knowledge of how eco-friendly actions affect customer satisfaction and repurchase intention can be gained by including sustainability measures in customer satisfaction models.

Fourthly, the effectiveness of interactions between customers and support staff should take into account like response time, problem-solving, and empathic communication to illustrate the strong association between customer service and satisfaction.

Lastly, customer satisfaction is influenced by return and exchange policies. When problems develop, flexible and customer-focused return procedures can restore satisfaction. Further research into the methods by which return and exchange policies affect post-purchase satisfaction may lead to a better understanding. Various studies (Pal et al., 2022; Anbumathi et al., 2023) investigated the same factors of this study, however, these studies were attempted in the nascent stages of the development of OFDAs and in the current competitive and crowded market space (Mundy, 2018), where the challenge for food delivery providers is not to find customers to purchase, but to make themselves stand out so that customers remain stick by repurchasing.

Practical Implications

Research findings show that various post-purchase factors, including food quality, prompt and correct delivery, customer service, return and exchange policies, and sustainable packaging, influence satisfaction. Findings indicated that the most integral and essential

factor for inducing customer satisfaction and retaining customers is the food quality. Customers demand the same level of quality with every transaction. Retailers should make sure that the food ingredients used in cooking are fresh and properly stored. OFDAs should encourage their customers to submit feedback about the quality of the food, through surveys, reviews, or direct conversations so that they can use that information to make improvements. Indian OFDAs like Zomato, Swiggy, etc. need to set standard quality assurance parameters for restaurants to meet so after that they can avail their delivery and customer acquisition services before floating them on platforms.

Results provide additional evidence that Indian customers value “customer care” after post-purchase transactions. Businesses make sure that customers feel valued and heard immediately by addressing their issues, maintaining clear and open communication, and exhibiting empathy. Complaints with OFDAs might encompass complex issues including order mistakes, poor food quality, or difficult deliveries in which human agents are better suited to handle these complex situations. Additionally, customers value the chance to have a genuine two-way conversation so they might have thorough justification and prompt responses. However, AI chatbots can still be a useful addition for OFDAs, particularly when it comes to answering routine queries, tracking orders, or giving short responses to frequently asked questions. An ideal combination of effectiveness and individualized help can be achieved by combining both human and AI customer service.

“Return and Exchange” serves as the linchpin of post-purchase CS and RI. To avoid unnecessary difficulty in the transaction, OFDAs platforms should make sure that their return and exchange policies are visible and simple to grasp. Online food retailers must provide their customers with the facility to report issues with quality or order accuracy and swiftly resolve these problems, whether by issuing refunds or replacing the meal. Customers are more inclined to stick with the platform and recommend it to others when they are certain that the service provider will handle problems quickly and fairly.

Findings uphold that “sustainable packaging” has played a crucial role in influencing customer

satisfaction in the post-purchase phase. Results implies that customers are not only conscious about consumption but also about the means of consumption, as these practices are not only crucial for online food delivery industry but also for the whole e-commerce industry across India. Food delivery platforms can build a strong brand image by actively reducing their carbon footprint through packaging waste. Moreover, the Indian Government banned the use of single-use plastic items w.e.f. July 1, 2022, to comply with sustainable development goals (SDG), but the use of single-use plastic is still prevalent in the food delivery industry in the form of plastic plates, cups, glasses, forks and spoons, and packing films and tapes. Indian food delivery giants Swiggy and Zomato need to include sustainable rating parameters for food stores or restaurants and should include food stores that adhere to the norms and can promote sustainable packaging-making firms by liaisoning with their restaurant partners in particular locations. For example, Agnihotri et al. (2023) suggested an environmental indicator for restaurant performance based on sales amount. Online food delivery partners can make their customers involved in reducing their carbon footprint by having reviews about the packaging adopted by restaurants.

“Delivery” plays a crucial role in determining post-purchase CS and RI. The foundation of customer satisfaction is timely, accurate, and well-communicated deliveries that fulfil the fundamental requirement of getting what was bought when it was expected. Additionally, the quality of the food when it arrives and the competence of the delivery staff have a significant impact on the overall experience. Offering flexible delivery alternatives and quick post-delivery assistance demonstrates a dedication to solving customers’ problems. By offering choices for placing prior orders for events and gatherings, online meal delivery providers have the chance to expand their market. They can include the option that enables customers to schedule delivery of their favorite delicacies for the following day, making it an option that can be chosen throughout the purchase process. This study offers advice for new market entrants on how to concentrate on and enhance key target areas. Additionally, it aids OFDAs in their understanding of the Indian food market and the actions of online users.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

In the context of this study, our investigation focused on the Indian internet meal delivery market. As a culturally varied country with distinctive dietary tastes, culinary traditions, and regional differences, India offers a challenge when attempting to generalize our findings to the entire nation. Given India's enormous cultural diversity, concentrating on one city or region may not be sufficient to capture the whole range of post-purchase experiences. To address this restriction, researchers may decide to carry out multi-site studies that cover a wider geographic area and, in their analysis, take into account the cultural quirks that lead to regional differences in post-purchase experiences.

Future studies may broaden their focus to incorporate various e-commerce industry sectors, including those for clothing, jewelry, and more. With this addition, post-purchase experiences across diverse industries would be better understood more thoroughly and holistically. Furthermore, the validated model created in this study may be used to compare and contrast the online shopping experiences provided by various merchants, regardless of whether they specialize in specialty products or provide a wider range of generic commodities.

It is critical to recognize that our results are influenced by the behavioral preferences of Indian users of OFDAs. As a result, there may be some limitations on how broadly our findings may be applied to people with different ethnocultural backgrounds. In order to address this, additional research initiatives can look into post-purchase experiences in various locales and among people from various cultural backgrounds, ensuring a more inclusive and thorough perspective.

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