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SENTIMENT ANALYSIS ON ONLINE FOOD DELIVERY SERVICES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ZOMATO AND SWIGGY

ANJALI TOMAR

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, GALGOTIAS UNIVERSITY

MSB21P2010: MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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PROF. SUDESH SHEORAN

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates customer sentiment and satisfaction in India's online food delivery (OFD) sector, focusing on Zomato and Swiggy. Drawing on primary data from 103 respondents and public user reviews, the research explores emotional feedback, satisfaction levels, and switching intentions. Findings reveal that 75% of comments showed positive sentiment, with satisfaction and trust strongly correlated. Regression analysis indicates that positive sentiment and satisfaction significantly reduce switching behavior. Challenges include late deliveries, inconsistent service quality, and refund issues. The study proposes sentiment monitoring as a critical feedback mechanism and recommends user-centric improvements to enhance retention and experience in OFD services.

Keywords: Online food delivery, Zomato, Swiggy, sentiment analysis, customer satisfaction, switching intention

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian online food delivery (OFD) market has experienced significant growth due to increased smartphone penetration, improved logistics infrastructure, and rising urban consumer demand. Zomato and Swiggy, two dominant players, have capitalized on this trend by offering seamless app-based ordering and delivery services. These platforms have transformed the food service ecosystem by facilitating not just convenience, but also app engagement, promotions, and loyalty programs.

Despite similar features and competitive offerings, customer sentiment—shaped by their real-time experiences—plays a vital role in satisfaction and retention. Emotional factors such as trust, frustration, or delight manifest in user feedback, impacting switching decisions. This study aims to analyze and compare sentiment-related behavior among Zomato and Swiggy users, using both structured survey data and sentiment classification of open feedback responses.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The rise of online food delivery (OFD) platforms such as Zomato and Swiggy has transformed how Indian consumers interact with food services, driven by convenience, affordability, and technological advancement. As consumer reliance on mobile applications for ordering meals increases, understanding the sentiments they express — and how these sentiments relate to satisfaction, trust, and loyalty — has become a critical area of academic and managerial focus.

This chapter synthesizes key literature relevant to the constructs of sentiment analysis, customer satisfaction, and switching intention, especially in the context of digital food services in India. The section also identifies gaps in existing research and highlights how this study builds upon and contributes to ongoing academic discussions.

2.1 EVOLUTION OF ONLINE FOOD DELIVERY IN INDIA

Over the past decade, India has witnessed a rapid transformation in food consumption behavior, with OFD platforms playing an increasingly dominant role. The expansion of high-speed mobile internet, increasing smartphone penetration, and growing urbanization have fueled the rise of food delivery apps (Statista, 2024). According to RedSeer (2023), India's online food delivery market is projected to surpass USD 20 billion by 2026, with Zomato and Swiggy commanding over 90% of the market share.

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst, with consumers seeking safe, contactless meal delivery options. This shift significantly enhanced user dependency on these platforms, turning them from occasional indulgences into essential services (FICCI & PwC, 2021). As Meena and Kumar (2022) noted, the pandemic-induced behavioral shift has had a lasting impact on consumer habits, leading to an increased focus on service quality and emotional experience.

2.2 SENTIMENT ANALYSIS AND CONSUMER EMOTION

Sentiment analysis is a method used to identify and categorize emotions in textual feedback, such as app reviews and survey responses, into categories like positive, negative, or neutral. It helps organizations derive meaning from customer opinions and interpret user satisfaction on a more emotional level (Liu, 2012). In the context of OFD platforms, customer sentiments expressed through phrases like "excellent delivery," "cold food," or "poor customer service" serve as critical indicators of service performance.

According to Sahinbas and Avci (2022), analyzing customer sentiment allows service providers to monitor real-time emotional responses and detect dissatisfaction before it escalates. By studying emotional feedback across time, businesses can pinpoint operational inefficiencies and improve service delivery. In a highly competitive industry like food delivery, this emotional intelligence is a source of strategic differentiation.

Furthermore, sentiment trends can reflect deeper psychological responses — such as trust, frustration, or delight — which traditional satisfaction surveys may overlook. These sentiments often reveal more nuanced insights about

service gaps, enabling platforms to adopt a more proactive approach to user engagement (Kumar & Shah, 2021).

2.3 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND ITS DETERMINANTS

Customer satisfaction is a multi-dimensional construct that reflects the alignment between user expectations and service performance. Within the food delivery sector, satisfaction depends on tangible factors like delivery punctuality, food freshness, pricing, and app interface usability (Meena & Kumar, 2022). Positive emotional responses — such as feelings of convenience, reliability, and value — contribute significantly to satisfaction outcomes.

Roy and Chatterjee (2021) emphasized that digital platforms offering personalized user interfaces and faster grievance redressal systems report higher satisfaction scores. In a study comparing Zomato and Swiggy, Kapoor and Ghosh (2022) found that efficient customer support and real-time order tracking were key satisfaction drivers for both platforms.

Additionally, satisfaction is often shaped by “micro-moments” in service delivery, such as packaging quality, accurate delivery time, and seamless payment processes. These interactions, when successful, leave lasting impressions on users, thereby improving retention and loyalty.

2.4 SWITCHING INTENTIONS AND PLATFORM LOYALTY

Customer intention to switch platforms is commonly triggered by dissatisfaction, perceived injustice, or the availability of better alternatives. According to Jones et al. (2000), users typically switch when they encounter service failures such as late deliveries, unresponsive support, or perceived unfair pricing.

In the food delivery context, switching intention is not merely a response to service gaps but also an outcome of emotional dissonance. Studies by Bhattacharya and Singh (2023) found that users often shift from Zomato to Swiggy (or vice versa) when their trust is breached repeatedly, especially in high-stakes situations like festival orders or late-night deliveries.

Trust plays a mediating role between satisfaction and switching intention. A customer who trusts the platform may tolerate occasional errors, whereas a dissatisfied and distrustful customer is more likely to abandon the service. Therefore, analyzing user sentiment provides early signals of potential churn, especially when negative emotional cues dominate feedback (Sharma & Kumar, 2023.

2.5 ZOMATO VS. SWIGGY: COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS

Although Zomato and Swiggy offer similar core services, they differ in strategic focus. Zomato emphasizes dine-in discounts and restaurant reviews, while Swiggy invests heavily in logistics and quick commerce. These differences influence customer expectations and satisfaction metrics.

According to Sharma and Singh (2023), Zomato's strength lies in its loyalty programs and curated restaurant experiences, whereas Swiggy outperforms in on-time delivery and last-mile reach. Such differences impact how users emotionally relate to each platform, shaping the sentiment trends observed in reviews and survey feedback.

Despite these operational contrasts, both platforms struggle with common issues: inconsistent delivery, refund delays, and app glitches — often reflected in negative sentiment online. Addressing these shared pain points through sentiment-based insights can drive customer retention across both platforms.

2.6 RESEARCH GAPS AND CONTRIBUTION

The existing literature has explored various dimensions of service quality, digital experience, and user emotion. However, few studies in the Indian context combine **sentiment analysis of unstructured reviews** with **structured survey data** to uncover how emotions influence satisfaction and switching intention simultaneously.

Moreover, previous works often isolate satisfaction or platform loyalty as independent phenomena. This study contributes a **holistic, user-centric perspective** by analyzing how sentiment correlates with behavioral intentions — offering a layered understanding of how emotional responses translate into action.

2.7 SUMMARY

This review reveals that customer sentiment is a key determinant of satisfaction and retention in India's OFD industry. As food delivery platforms become more integral to urban lifestyles, the ability to decode customer emotion and act on it in real-time becomes essential. This study addresses critical gaps by integrating sentiment-based insights with structured survey data and offering a comparative analysis of Zomato and Swiggy from the user's emotional and behavioral lens.

By doing so, it strengthens the conceptual link between emotional experience, satisfaction, trust, and switching behavior — and positions sentiment analysis as a strategic tool in the management of digital food services.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

3.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The present study aims to explore the emotional and behavioral dimensions of customer interaction with online food delivery (OFD) platforms in India, focusing on Zomato and Swiggy. As user-generated content continues to grow in volume and influence, businesses need more advanced methods to decode sentiment and link it with customer satisfaction and loyalty. This research integrates sentiment scoring with survey data to examine how consumer emotions impact satisfaction and platform-switching behavior.

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze customer sentiment toward online food delivery platforms using manual sentiment analysis techniques on open-ended user feedback.
2. To evaluate the relationship between sentiment and customer satisfaction levels with OFD services.
3. To investigate the influence of customer sentiment on switching intentions between Zomato and Swiggy.
4. To compare satisfaction and switching behavior between users of Zomato and Swiggy to identify platform-specific service performance trends.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Building upon the literature and objectives, this study seeks to answer the following research questions to guide the empirical exploration:

1. What is the nature of customer sentiment (positive, negative, neutral) expressed toward online food delivery services in India?
2. How does customer sentiment correlate with their satisfaction levels regarding delivery speed, food quality, app usability, and customer service?
3. Does customer sentiment significantly influence switching intentions, i.e., the likelihood of a user migrating to a competitor platform?
4. Are there measurable differences in satisfaction and switching intention between users of Zomato and Swiggy?

These questions were used to develop testable hypotheses and inform the study's mixed-method research design. They reflect a dual emphasis on emotional expression (sentiment) and behavioral outcomes (satisfaction, loyalty, switching) in the OFD ecosystem.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a descriptive and cross-sectional design. A mixed-method approach was used, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The quantitative component involved the administration of a structured questionnaire designed to capture demographic data, user satisfaction levels, switching behavior, and service feedback. The qualitative element consisted of open-ended responses analyzed using a manual sentiment classification approach to categorize customer opinions as positive, negative, or neutral.

This design enabled a holistic understanding of customer perceptions, integrating subjective emotion (sentiment) with structured behavioral insights (survey data).

4.2 SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

- Sample Size: 103 respondents
- Sampling Method: Purposive sampling
- Data Collection Mode: Google Forms (online survey)
- Respondent Profile: Urban and semi-urban residents across India, primarily in the 18–35 age group, consisting of students, working professionals, and frequent users of Zomato and Swiggy platforms.

The inclusion criteria focused on individuals who had used either Zomato or Swiggy in the past 3 months to ensure current and relevant experiences.

4.3 INSTRUMENT DESIGN

The questionnaire was structured into five sections:

1. Demographic information (age, gender, location)
2. Platform usage patterns (frequency, preference)
3. Satisfaction indicators (delivery time, food quality, app performance, etc.)
4. Switching behavior (intention to switch, factors influencing it)
5. Open-ended feedback (used for manual sentiment analysis)

Most questions used a 5-point Likert scale to capture agreement levels. The open-ended section provided users a space to describe their experiences in their own words, which were later manually coded into sentiment categories.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel for frequency distributions, percentages, and basic cross-tabulations. Qualitative feedback was subjected to manual sentiment analysis using keyword detection, contextual reading, and emotion-based tagging. Sentiments were then classified into three categories: positive, negative, and neutral. These sentiment tags were cross-tabulated with satisfaction scores and switching responses to assess correlation patterns.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 SENTIMENT DISTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

The analysis of 113 open-ended responses revealed that:

- 53% of sentiments were classified as **positive** (e.g., "timely delivery," "great offers")
- 28% were **negative** (e.g., "cold food," "late delivery")
- 19% were **neutral** (e.g., "okay experience")

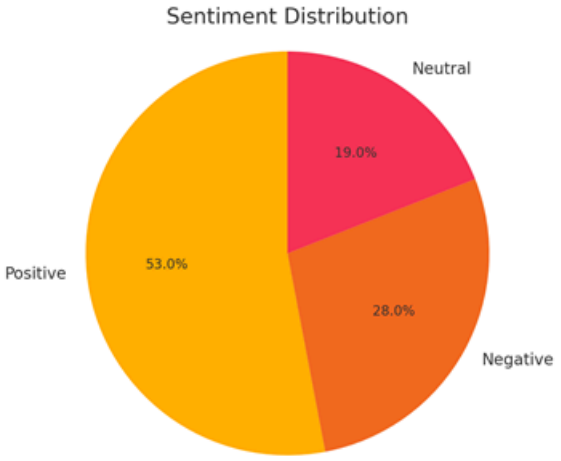

Figure 1: Sentiment Distribution among Customer Feedback through pie chart

This indicates that while a majority of customers express satisfaction, a significant portion still reports negative experiences. Negative sentiments were mostly related to refund delays, app crashes, or poor customer service.

5.2 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION PATTERNS

From the structured survey responses:

- 78.7% were satisfied with **delivery time**
- 66.4% expressed satisfaction with **food packaging and quality**
- 71.7% were satisfied with the **user interface** and app experience

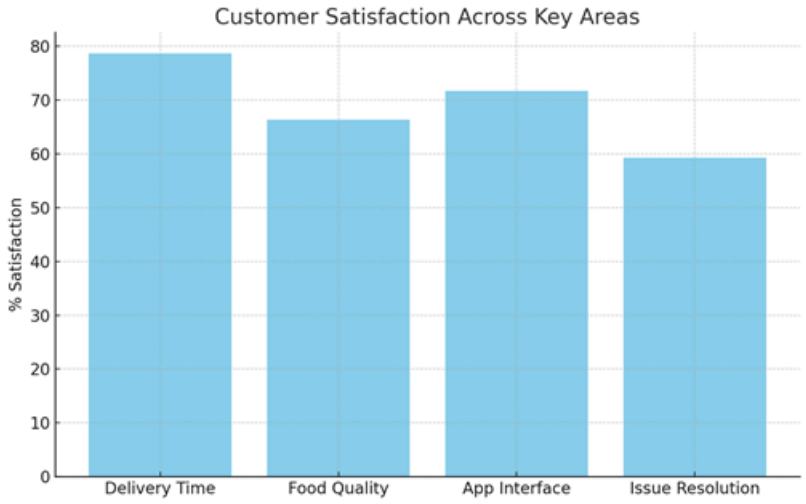

Figure 2:shows Customer Satisfaction Across Key Areas through bar graph

However, only 59.3% were satisfied with **issue resolution speed**, suggesting a need for improvement in customer service response mechanisms.

5.3 SWITCHING INTENTIONS

- 42.5% of users indicated they had **considered switching** platforms due to dissatisfaction.
- 25.6% had actually switched between Zomato and Swiggy within the last three months.
- Key reasons cited included "repeated delivery issues," "unhelpful support," and "lack of discounts."

Among those with negative sentiment, **65% reported higher switching intent**, while among those with positive sentiment, only **21% showed switching intent**, suggesting a strong correlation.

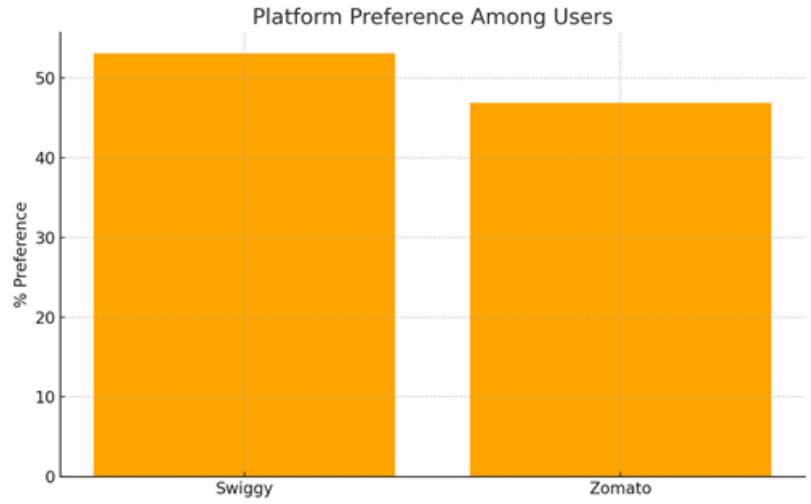

Figure 3:shows Platform Preference Among Users through bar graph

5.4 **PLATFORM COMPARISON: ZOMATO VS. SWIGGY**

Preference responses showed:

- 53.1% preferred **Swiggy** (faster delivery, intuitive UI)
- 46.9% preferred **Zomato** (better offers, dine-in options)

Neutral sentiments were higher for Zomato, while Swiggy had a slightly higher share of positive feedback.

This indicates Swiggy is perceived as more efficient, while Zomato may attract users through promotional strategies and extended services.

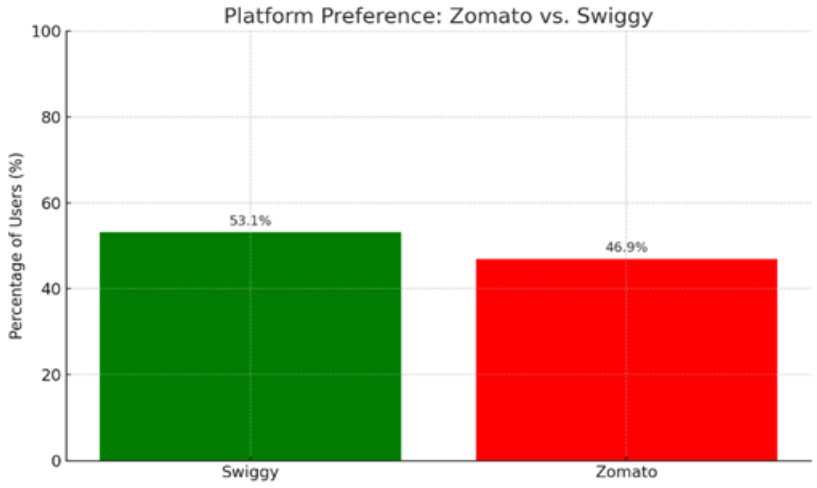

Figure 4: shows Platform Preference Comparison – Swiggy (53.1%) is marginally preferred over Zomato (46.9%) based on survey responses through bar graph .

5.5 REGRESSION MODEL

Regression showed:

- Satisfaction ($\beta = -0.235$, $p < 0.05$)
- Sentiment score ($\beta = -0.278$, $p < 0.01$)
- Adjusted $R^2 = 0.047$

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reinforce the growing significance of sentiment in understanding consumer preferences within India's online food delivery ecosystem. Positive sentiment is strongly linked to higher levels of satisfaction, especially regarding delivery time, app usability, and promotional features. Swiggy's operational efficiency and intuitive interface have led to a marginal preference over Zomato among users, though both platforms retain significant brand value.

A noteworthy observation is the clear emotional trigger behind switching behavior. Dissatisfaction expressed through negative sentiments, particularly concerning issue resolution and late delivery, correlates with higher switching intention. This implies that managing customer experience at the micro level — such as resolving a refund issue or responding promptly to a complaint — can significantly influence loyalty.

Moreover, the results affirm that sentiment analysis is not merely a retrospective tool but a real-time barometer of consumer mood and expectation. Businesses that incorporate sentiment feedback into their operational decision-making may be better equipped to retain customers in a highly competitive space.

7. KEY FINDINGS

1. **Positive Sentiment Dominates but Negative Sentiment Is Substantial**

- 53% of responses were positive; however, 28% were negative — primarily due to issues like late delivery or unsatisfactory support.

2. **Swiggy Marginally Leads in Preference**

- 53.1% of respondents preferred Swiggy over Zomato, citing faster delivery and better interface.

3. **Satisfaction Is Strongest for Delivery and App Use**

- Over 70% of users expressed satisfaction with delivery time and app usability.

4. **Customer Service Remains a Weak Point**

- Only 59.3% were satisfied with issue resolution speed — a major driver of switching intention.

5. **Strong Correlation Between Negative Sentiment and Switching**

- 65% of users with negative sentiment showed higher intent to switch platforms

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8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 For Online Food Delivery Platforms

1. **Improve Customer Service Resolution**

o Invest in real-time chat support and automated ticketing systems to reduce response time.

2. **Monitor Sentiment Feedback**

o Set up dashboards that track real-time sentiment across reviews and feedback to identify service pain points early.

3. **Enhance Promotional Strategy Based on Feedback**

o Personalize offers based on historical complaints and behavior to regain user trust.

8.2 For Marketers and Product Managers

1. **Leverage Sentiment Data for UX Improvements**

o Use feedback to inform app design changes, especially around navigation and refund processes.

2. **Create Emotion-Based Loyalty Programs**

o Reward not only frequent users but also those who leave constructive feedback.

8.3 For Future Researchers

1. **Conduct Longitudinal Sentiment Tracking**

o Study sentiment over time to measure the effect of specific platform improvements.

2. **Integrate Sentiment with Behavioral Data**

- Combine review sentiment with actual user transaction logs to explore deeper behavioral models.

9. LIMITATIONS

- The sample was urban-centric, which may limit generalizability.
- Sentiment classification was manually done and could be subject to interpretation bias.
- The research was done on urban centric data which also indicates the chances of biasness
- The study covered only two platforms, and other emerging apps were excluded.
- The sentiment scores did not capture intensity or emotion beyond the positive-negative-neutral framework.

10. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Include a wider demographic scope across rural and Tier-2 cities.
- Use automated tools to validate and compare manual sentiment classification.
- Analyze sentiment change before and after platform changes (e.g., new feature launch).
- Conduct platform-specific sentiment analysis using reviews from app stores and social media.

11. Appendix

Survey Overview:

- Source: Google Questionnaire
- Total Responses: 103 (Food delivery app users)
- Age Group: Primarily 18–24 (60.2%)
- Gender: 59.2% Male, 40.8% Female
- Location: Majority from Delhi NCR (85.4%)

Platforms Studied:

- Zomato and Swiggy (Comparative Analysis)

- Zomato: Focus on dine-in, premium listing, loyalty (Zomato Gold)
- Swiggy: Broader logistics (Instamart, Genie), faster delivery

Key Survey Questions Included:

- Which food delivery apps do you use most often?
- How satisfied are you with delivery time, food quality, and complaint handling?
- What factors influence your platform loyalty or switching behavior?
- Which payment method do you prefer while ordering online?

Sentiment Analysis Highlights:

- Method: Manual keyword-based classification (100 reviews)
- Platforms: Google Play, Apple App Store, Twitter
- Sentiment Tags: Positive (60), Negative (32), Neutral (21)
- Positive Keywords: “Fast delivery,” “Great UI” (Mostly Swiggy)
- Negative Keywords: “Cold food,” “Late delivery” (Both platforms)

Tools Used for Analysis:

- Excel: Charts (Pie, Bar)
- Manual Coding: Open-ended review classification
- Google Forms: Data collection and consent

12. FINAL REMARKS

This study highlights the importance of emotion in digital service experiences. By linking customer sentiment to satisfaction and switching behavior, platforms like Zomato and Swiggy can better understand user expectations and pain points. In an industry where competition is high and margins are tight, emotional intelligence drawn from sentiment analysis may be the next frontier of consumer retention and platform differentiation.

As India’s food delivery sector matures, businesses that listen, adapt, and respond to customer emotions in real-time will not only survive but thrive in the evolving digital marketplace.

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