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From Clicks to Cravings: The Recipe behind Zomato's Marketing

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of digital transformation on the marketing strategies of Zomato, a leading food delivery platform, within an increasingly competitive landscape. As digital technologies reshape consumer behaviour, understanding effective marketing approaches is crucial for sustaining brand loyalty and market share. This research explores Zomato's brand positioning as a comprehensive food discovery platform, emphasizing its unique value proposition that integrates quality, variety, and community engagement.

Through an analysis of digital customer engagement strategies, loyalty programs, and technological advancements, this study highlights how Zomato leverages user-generated content and personalized recommendations to enhance consumer experience. Furthermore, it compares Zomato's marketing initiatives with key competitor, Swiggy and Uber Eats.

By synthesizing existing literature and empirical data, this study explores Zomato's adaptive digital marketing strategies and highlights the importance of innovation in food delivery, offering insights and recommendations for future growth in the digital era.

Keywords: Digital transformation, Digital customer engagement, user-generated content, personalized recommendations.

I. INTRODUCTION

Launched in 2010 (Zomato, 2024)², Zomato is a leading food delivery and restaurant discovery platform that connects customers, restaurant partners, and delivery providers. It offers services such as restaurant search, customer reviews, food delivery, table booking, and digital payments. Additionally, Zomato supports restaurant partners with marketing tools and logistics, operates the B2B procurement platform Hyperpure, and provides flexible earning opportunities for delivery partners.

Origins and Growth: Zomato was initially founded as Foodiebay in 2008 by Deepinder Goyal and Pankaj Chaddah where they digitized restaurant menus. Following rapid expansion,

¹ Author is a Student at Meerut University, India.

² Zomato. (n.d.). *Who we are*. Zomato. <https://www.zomato.com/who-we-are>

the platform rebranded as Zomato in 2010. By listing restaurants from major Indian cities, it gained widespread popularity and later expanded internationally (*Business Today*, 2023)³.

Brand Identity and Expansion: As per *Times of India* (Nov 2024)⁴, Zomato's name was chosen to be short, memorable, and food-related, evolving from "tomato." As per *Forbes* (2016),⁵ Zomato's tagline, "Never have a bad meal," reflects its mission. The company expanded its services with Hyperpure, sourcing high-quality ingredients directly from producers for restaurants (*Zomato Blog*, Nov 2022).⁶

Funding and Market Expansion: Zomato secured its first funding of \$1 million from Info Edge India, followed by subsequent rounds totalling over \$225 by 2015. Investors such as Sequoia Capital, VY Capital, and Temasek contributed to its growth, enabling expansion across India and into Dubai, the UK, South Africa, and other global markets (*Mint*, September 2015).⁷

Business Model and Operations: Zomato operates on a platform-based business model, connecting users with restaurants for food delivery and dining. Its key revenue streams include:

1. Food Delivery – Commission from partner restaurants + delivery charges.
2. Zomato Gold/Zomato Pro – Subscription revenue offering exclusive deals.
3. Advertising – Restaurants pay for better visibility on the app.
4. Hyperpure – Supplies ingredients to restaurants (B2B model).
5. Blinkit – Quick commerce platform for grocery and essentials delivery.

Zomato leverages AI, data analytics, and personalization to optimize user experience, improve delivery logistics, and increase customer retention.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES: This study aims to analyse Zomato's marketing strategies and the role of AI in enhancing its competitive edge. The key objectives are:

³ Sen, S. (2012, May 23). *How Foodiebay became Zomato*. Business Today. <https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/corporate/story/foodiebay-zomato-30399-2012-05-23>

⁴ Times of India. (2024, November 13). *CEO Deepinder Goyal shares the story behind the name Zomato*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/technology/tech-news/ceo-deepinder-goyal-shares-the-story-behind-the-name-zomato-on-the-kapil-sharma-show/articleshow/115216100.cms>

⁵ Rai, S. (2016, February 8). Food startup Zomato is India's first e-commerce unicorn to break even, headed for profitability. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/saritharai/2016/02/08/food-startup-zomato-is-indias-first-unicorn-to-break-even-headed-for-profitability-by-mid-2016/>

⁶ Ranjan, R. (2022, November 23). *How Hyperpure is helping restaurants in their growth journey*. Zomato Blog. <https://blog.zomato.com/decoding-hyperpure>

⁷ Author Unknown. (2015, September 8). *Zomato raises fresh funds of \$60 million, taking Info Edge's stake down to 47%*. Mint. <https://www.livemint.com/Companies/zi7r9EP4TLuEI4H4QuqHbO/Zomato-raises-60-million-from-Temasek-Holdings-others.html>

1. To examine Zomato's digital marketing strategies, including social media engagement, influencer marketing, SEO, and paid advertising.
2. To explore future marketing trends and opportunities for Zomato in the evolving digital food delivery market.

LITERATURE REVIEW: Zomato leads the food delivery space with innovative digital marketing, using SEO, social media, paid ads, CRM, and AI-driven personalization to boost engagement, brand visibility, and growth.

A. Digital Marketing Strategies of Zomato: Zomato's digital marketing success stems from an integrated strategy using SEO, social media, push notifications, and paid ads (IIDE, 2023)⁸It engages users on platforms like Instagram and Twitter with humour and interactive content, boosting brand identity. *Simplilearn (2023)*⁹ highlights Zomato's use of Google AdWords and Display Ads to target relevant keywords and browsing behaviours, driving traffic and conversions.

B. Customer Perception of Digital Marketing Strategies: Consumer perception plays a key role in Zomato's marketing success. Research by *Priya (2023)*¹⁰ notes that personalized offers, AI-driven recommendations, and discounts boost customer loyalty. Social proof—through ratings, reviews, and user-generated content—enhances trust and engagement on the platform.

C. Relationship and Communication Strategies: Zomato has enhanced customer trust through effective relationship management strategies. *Challa, S. D., Kanakadurga, A., Jena, L. K., & Singh, S. (2023)*¹¹ emphasize that its success, especially before the IPO, was driven by responsive customer support, engaging loyalty programs, and consistent communication—fostering satisfaction and long-term loyalty. A key differentiator in Zomato's branding is its humorous and conversational tone, which sets it apart from competitors like Swiggy and Uber Eats. This relatable messaging appeals particularly to Millennials and Gen Z, helping Zomato build a strong emotional connection with its audience.

⁸ IIDE. (2023). *Everything About Zomato Marketing Strategy {2025 Updated}*. Retrieved from <https://iide.co/case-studies/zomato-digital-marketing-strategy/>

⁹ Simplilearn. (2023). *Zomato Marketing Strategy - A Case Study*. Retrieved from <https://www.simplilearn.com/tutorials/marketing-case-studies-tutorial/zomato-marketing-strategy>

¹⁰ Priya, P. N. (2023). *A Study on Customer Perception Towards Digital Marketing Strategies of Zomato*. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370630712_Journal_of_the_Asiatic_Society_of_Mumbai_A_STUDY_ON_CUSTOMER_PERCEPTION_TOWARDS_DIGITAL_MARKETING_STRATEGIES_OF_ZOMATO Co responding_Author

¹¹ Challa, S. D., Kanakadurga, A., Jena, L. K., & Singh, S. (2023). Zomato's triumph till IPO: Is it success through relationship? Retrieved from. <https://doi.org/10.1177/25166042231172893>

D. Market Expansion and Growth Strategies: Zomato's ability to adapt to changing market dynamics has played a crucial role in its expansion. Research by *Emerald Insight (2023)*¹² highlights the company's continuous efforts to scale operations before market saturation. Investments in AI-driven personalization, predictive analytics, and customer segmentation have given Zomato a competitive edge. These technologies allow the platform to analyse user preferences and offer tailored recommendations, thereby improving overall customer satisfaction.

E. Research Gaps and Future Scope: While current studies offer valuable insights into Zomato's marketing strategies, several areas warrant deeper investigation:

- The long-term impact of AI on Zomato's marketing efficiency remains underexplored.
- The role and effectiveness of influencer marketing in driving engagement for Zomato have not been extensively studied.
- Limited research exists on how Zomato manages customer data privacy and the ethical implications of its AI-powered marketing.
- The impact of sustainability marketing and eco-friendly initiatives on consumer perception and engagement remains largely unexamined.

Future research should address these gaps to provide a more holistic understanding of how emerging technologies and evolving consumer values are shaping marketing in the food delivery industry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: This study employs a descriptive research design, combining quantitative (survey-based) and qualitative (thematic) analysis to evaluate Zomato's marketing strategies, using a sample of 75 respondents, statistical tools, competitor analysis, and ethical considerations to ensure data integrity and reliability.

II. MARKETING STRATEGIES OF ZOMATO

A. AI-Powered Marketing Strategies: Zomato leverages AI-driven personalization to enhance customer engagement. According to *Economics Times (Feb, 2025)*¹³ Zomato's CEO, Deepinder Goyal, has introduced Nugget, an AI-backed customer support platform designed to enhance the company's services across its food delivery business, quick commerce vertical Blinkit, and Hyperpure. Moreover, AI analyses order history, browsing patterns, and location

¹² Emerald Insight. (2023). *Zomato: Shaping the Future of Food*. Retrieved from <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/eemcs-06-2022-0214/full/pdf>

¹³ ETMarkets.com. (2025, February 18). *Zomato shares in focus after launch of AI-backed customer support platform Nugget*. *The Economic Times*. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/markets/stocks/news/zomato-shares-in-focus-after-launch-of-ai-backed-customer-support-platform-nugget/articleshow/118343787.cms>

to offer personalized restaurant recommendations, dynamic pricing, and customized discounts.

B. SEO Strategy: As of February 2025, Zomato.com ranks for approximately 79.49 million organic keywords, according to SEMrush data. This substantial keyword presence contributes to its global rank of 6,041 and a country rank of 390 in India, with an estimated 12.24 million visits during that month. (*SEMrush, Feb 2025*)¹⁴

Zomato focuses on a broad spectrum of keywords, encompassing over 900,000 terms related to restaurant names, dishes, and user queries like "restaurants near me." This comprehensive approach ensures visibility across various search intents. (*Digital Scholar, September 2024*)¹⁵

C. Social Media Strategy: With 1M Instagram (*Instagram*)¹⁶ and 1.9M Facebook followers (*Facebook*)¹⁷, Zomato targets 18–35-year-olds using meme marketing, trend-based content, and interactive posts to drive engagement.

a. Meme Marketing: Zomato quickly adapts to viral trends ("Thala for a Reason") and creative campaigns (Mother's Day posts), strengthening brand recall. (*Instagram*)¹⁸

b. Outdoor Advertising: Eye-catching billboards like "Khaane ke liye kya karein? Swipe right on Zomato!". A clever reference to dating apps, making ordering food as fun and effortless as swiping on a dating profile, ensure high visibility, combining humour with strategic branding.

c. Push Notifications: Zomato uses AI to send personalized, engaging notifications based on user preferences, order history, location, occasions, and trending topics—boosting relevance and conversions beyond just discounts.

D. "Food Rescue" Initiative & Flash Sales: To reduce food wastage from 4 lakh monthly cancellations, Zomato offers discounted meals to nearby users through its Food Rescue initiative. AI-powered alerts notify potential buyers within a 3 km radius, ensuring quick delivery and partner compensation. 99.9% of restaurants have opted in (*Zomato Blog, Nov 2024*).¹⁹

¹⁴ SEMrush. (2025, February 12). *zomato.com website traffic, ranking, analytics [January 2025]*. SEMrush. [https://www.semrush.com/website/zomato.com/overview/Web Statistics and Analysis | HypeStat+4](https://www.semrush.com/website/zomato.com/overview/Web%20Statistics%20and%20Analysis%20|%20HypeStat+4)

¹⁵ Digital Scholar. (2024, September 30). *Case study on Zomato's digital marketing strategies – Which no one knows!* <https://digitalscholar.in/zomatos-digital-marketing-strategies/>.

¹⁶ Zomato. (n.d.). *Instagram profile*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/zomato/>

¹⁷ Zomato. (n.d.). *Facebook page*. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/zomato/>

¹⁸ Zomato. (2023, March 22). *This is post no. 2711 —> 2+7-1-1 = 7*. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/C0twG3DSxmI/> and Zomato. (n.d.). [*Instagram post*]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C633CMNPw-J/>

¹⁹ Singh, Y. (2024, November 10). *Food Rescue: An initiative to minimize food wastage*. Zomato Blog.

Zomato's Flash Sales offer limited-time meal discounts, promoted via push notifications and social media to boost urgency, orders, and engagement.

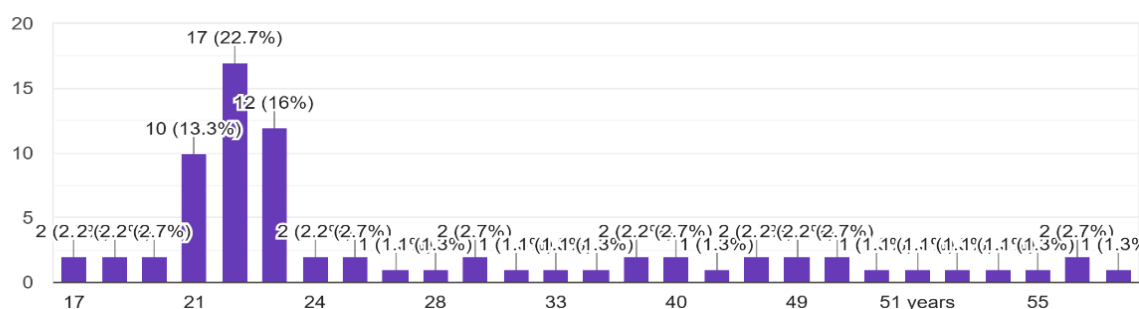
E. Expansion into Ticketing: In August 2024, Zomato acquired Paytm's WEPL & OTPL, entering the movie & event ticketing space through TicketNew & Insider, expanding its market reach (*Hindustan Times, August 2024*)²⁰

III. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

1. Demographic profile of the respondents

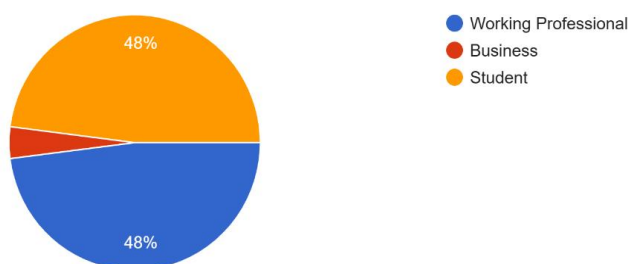
Age of the respondent

75 responses



Occupation of the respondent

75 responses

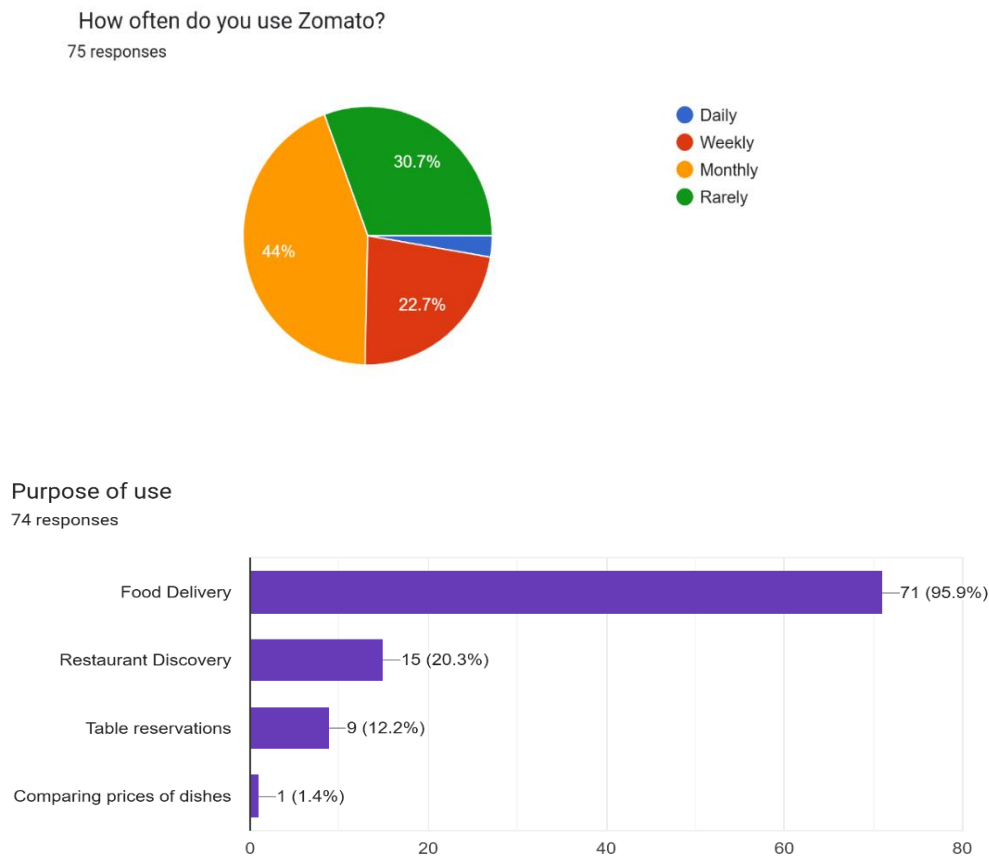


The survey indicates that 57% of Zomato's users are aged 21-25, with 48% being working professionals or students, highlighting the platform's popularity among young adults with busy schedules who prefer online food delivery services.

<https://blog.zomato.com/food-rescue>

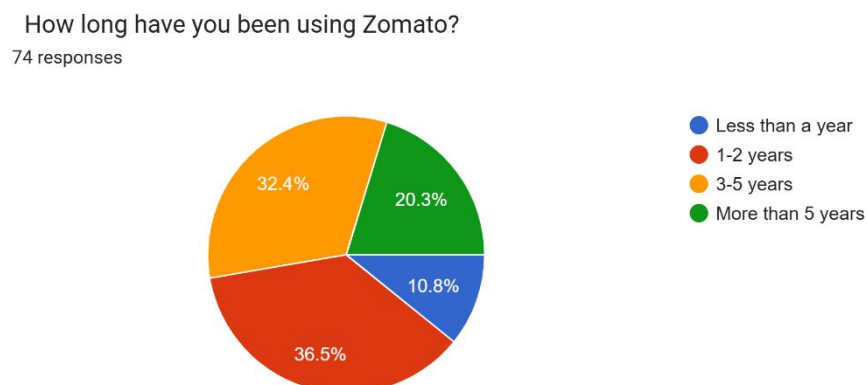
²⁰ HT News Desk. (2024, August 28). *Zomato completes acquisition of Paytm's entertainment and ticketing business*. Hindustan Times. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/business/zomato-completes-acquisition-of-paytms-entertainment-and-ticketing-business-101724824526402.html>

2. Usage Patterns and Consumer Behaviour:



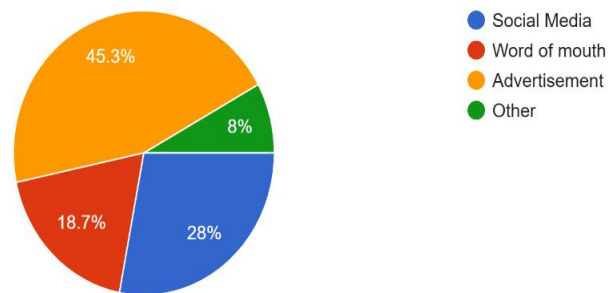
Survey data reveals that 44% of respondents use Zomato monthly, indicating a mix of regular and occasional users. The majority primarily utilize the platform for food delivery, underscoring its core function. Additionally, 36.5% have been customers for 1-2 years, reflecting strong retention rates

3. Awareness and Marketing Influence:



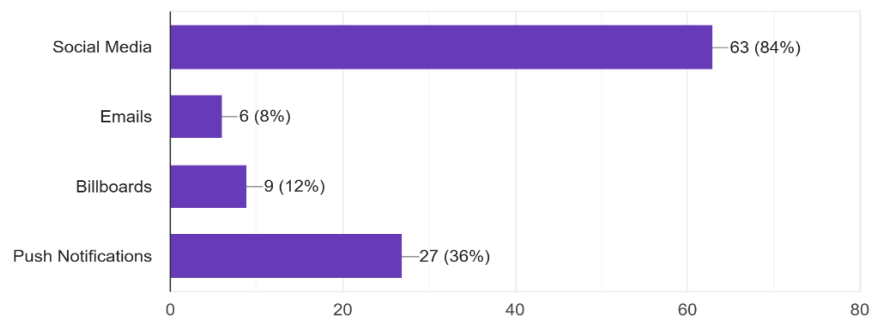
How did you first hear about Zomato

75 responses



Which marketing channels do you notice Zomato using most?

75 responses

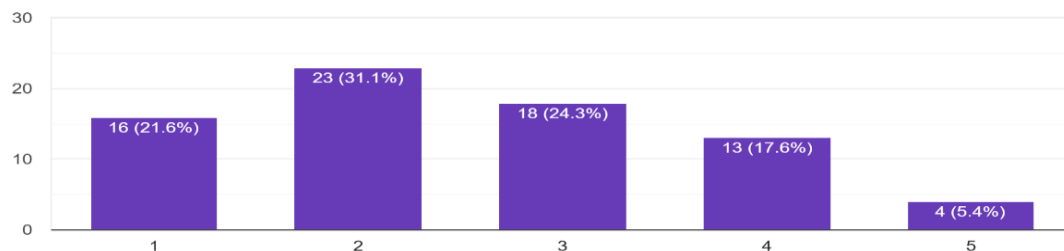


The survey reveals that 45.3% of respondents became aware of Zomato through advertisements, demonstrating the effectiveness of promotional campaigns. Moreover, 84% of respondents noticed Zomato's presence on social media, reinforcing its strong digital marketing strategy.

4. Consumer Perception of Zomato's Services:

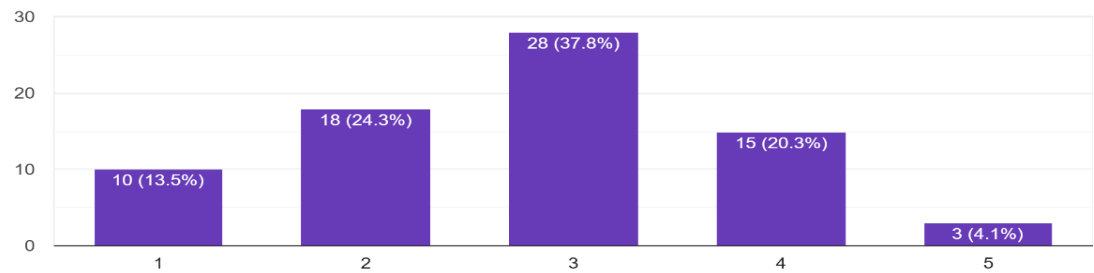
How does Zomato compare to its competitors (like Swiggy, Uber Eats) in terms of marketing?

74 responses



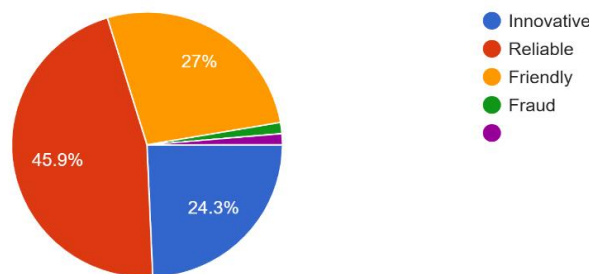
How effective do you find Zomato's promotional offers and discounts?

74 responses



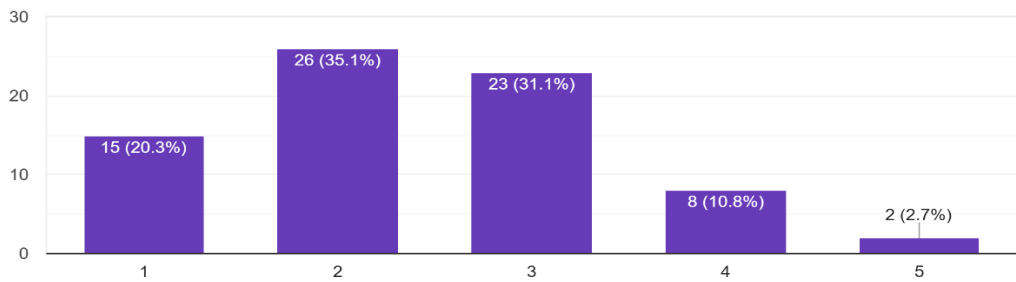
How would you describe Zomato's brand image?

74 responses



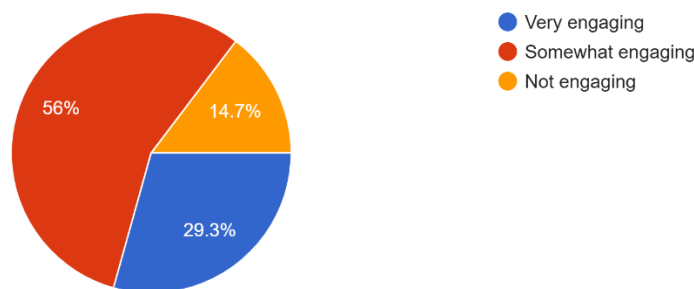
How satisfied are you with Zomato's customer service?

74 responses



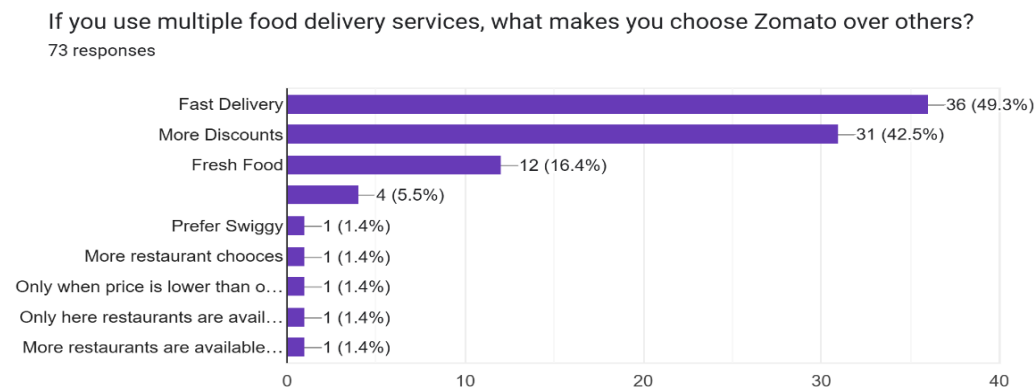
How engaging do you find Zomato's content on social media?

75 responses



Survey results show 31.1% of respondents view Zomato as better than competitors, indicating moderate preference. While 45.9% find its service reliable, only 35.1% are satisfied with customer support, highlighting a need for improvement. Discounts were rated "moderate" by 37.8%, and 56% found social media content somewhat engaging, suggesting potential for more interactive, personalized campaigns.

5. Factors Influencing Consumer Choice:



One of the key reasons consumers prefer Zomato over competitors is its fast delivery service, with 49.3% of respondents citing this as a primary factor. This highlights Zomato's efficiency in logistics and last-mile delivery as a competitive advantage.

IV. AI DRIVEN INTERPRETATION OF CONSUMER INSIGHTS IN ZOMATO:

1. AI-Powered Consumer Segmentation:

Findings:

- i. A majority (57%) of Zomato users are aged between 21-25.
- ii. 48% of respondents are students or working professionals.

Implication:

Zomato's primary audience consists of young, tech-savvy users who prefer online delivery of food due to busy lifestyle making cooking less feasible.

This group is accustomed to digital platforms and expects tailored interactions based on their preferences.

AI Application:

Zomato can implement AI-driven segmentation models to categorize users based on their activity, order history, and demographic factors. Machine learning algorithms can be used:

- a. To cater to this demographic by offering personalized meal recommendations aligned with their dietary choices. Young adults and working professionals are increasingly health-conscious, often adhering to specific dietary preferences such as vegan, keto, or gluten-free diets.
- b. Offer real-time, contextual promotions such as student discounts, lunch-hour deals for professionals, or combo meal suggestions based on order history.

AI can also predict peak ordering times and optimize marketing efforts accordingly, ensuring the right promotions reach the right users at the right time.

2. AI-Enhanced Personalized Recommendations:

Findings:

- i. 44% of respondents use Zomato on a monthly basis.
- ii. 36.5% have been using the platform for 1-2 years.

Implication:

While Zomato enjoys strong engagement, there is room for improvement in order frequency. The challenge lies in keeping users engaged and encouraging repeat purchases.

AI Application:

AI-powered recommendation engines can enhance the user experience by offering hyper-personalized suggestions. Zomato can utilize:

- a. Order history analysis: AI can track a user's past orders and suggest similar meals or restaurants.
- b. Context-based recommendations: AI can analyse factors like weather, time of day, and special events to recommend relevant food options (e.g., hot beverages on a rainy day or party platters for game nights).
- c. Collaborative filtering: This technique allows AI to analyse similar users' preferences and suggest meals based on their choices.

Such personalized recommendations create a seamless, engaging experience, ultimately increasing order frequency and customer satisfaction.

3. AI in Targeted Advertising & Social Media Engagement:

Findings:

- i. 45.3% of respondents discovered Zomato through advertisements.

- ii. 84% noticed Zomato on social media the most.

Implication:

Digital ads and social media presence play a crucial role in influencing consumer behaviours.

AI Application:

AI-driven advertisement optimization can enhance Zomato's digital marketing effectiveness by:

- a. Analysing browsing behaviours to serve hyper-targeted ads on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube.
- b. AI can also help optimize social media content strategy by identifying trending food topics, viral challenges, and user-generated content opportunities. This ensures Zomato remains relevant and engaging to its audience.

4. AI-Powered Sentiment Analysis & Customer Feedback:

Findings:

- i. 31.1% of respondents rated Zomato better than competitors.
- ii. 37.8% rated its discounts and offers as moderate.

Implication:

Zomato enjoys a positive perception, but there is still room for improvement in pricing and promotional strategies.

AI Application:

AI-driven sentiment analysis can help Zomato:

- a. Analyse customer reviews, feedback, and social media discussions to gauge sentiment around pricing, discounts, and competitor comparisons.
- b. Personalize offers based on price sensitivity—for example, AI can detect users who frequently engage with discount-based promotions and provide them with special deals.
- c. By aligning pricing strategies with AI-driven insights, Zomato can maintain customer satisfaction while remaining competitive.

5. AI in Customer Service Optimization

Findings:

- i. 35.1% of respondents are satisfied with Zomato's customer service.

- ii. 45.9% find Zomato reliable.

Implication:

While Zomato is perceived as reliable, its customer service satisfaction could be further improved.

AI Application:

AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants can significantly enhance Zomato's customer service by:

- a. Providing instant support for common inquiries like order status, delivery tracking, and refund requests.
- b. Using Natural Language Processing (NLP) to analyse customer complaints and escalate unresolved issues to human representatives.

6. AI-Driven Logistics for Faster Delivery:

Findings:

- i. 49.3% of respondents prefer Zomato over competitors due to fast delivery.

Implication:

Speed of service is one of the strongest differentiators in the food delivery industry.

AI Application:

AI can enhance logistics efficiency by:

- a. Route optimization: AI can analyse real-time traffic conditions, weather patterns, and restaurant preparation times to suggest the fastest delivery routes.
- b. Predictive demand analysis: AI can anticipate high-demand hours and peak locations to optimize driver availability and reduce delays.
- c. Automated order dispatching: AI algorithms can assign orders to the nearest delivery partner, reducing wait times and ensuring seamless execution.

V. CONCLUSION: AI AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN FOOD DELIVERY

The findings of this study highlight several consumer behaviour patterns that are crucial for Zomato's growth and customer retention. AI presents a transformative opportunity for Zomato to refine its marketing, personalization, logistics, and customer service strategies.

By integrating AI-driven customer segmentation, personalized recommendations, predictive advertising, sentiment analysis, automated customer support, and optimized delivery logistics,

Zomato can:

- Enhance user engagement by offering highly tailored experiences.
- Increase order frequency through hyper-personalized promotions and discounts.
- Improve operational efficiency by automating logistics and customer support functions.
- Strengthen brand positioning by ensuring AI-backed customer insights drive strategic decision-making.

In an era where consumer expectations are rapidly evolving, AI-driven innovation will play a pivotal role in shaping Zomato's future success.

Aligning with the *Viksit Bharat 2047* vision, AI adoption positions Zomato as a leader in India's digital economy, essential for sustaining its competitive edge and long-term customer loyalty.
