Effectiveness of E-Commerce Strategies in Enhancing Restaurant Business Growth in Jalpaiguri

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of e-commerce strategies on restaurant growth in the semi-urban town of Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, focusing on the adoption of Online Food Delivery (OFD) systems by local, small-scale eateries. It analyses the impact of digital transformation on revenue and brand visibility while addressing constraints like high commission fees and low digital literacy to provide insights on bridging the regional digital divide.

Keywords: E-commerce, Restaurant Growth, Semi-Urban, Jalpaiguri, Food Delivery, Digital Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Online Food Delivery (OFD), Digital Transformation.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has brought a profound transformation to the way businesses function globally. Among the many sectors impacted by this digital shift, the food and restaurant industry stands out as one of the most dynamically evolving. Online food delivery platforms such as Swiggy, Zomato, and Uber Eats have become an integral part of urban life in India, reshaping consumer expectations and how restaurants manage their operations. These platforms offer a new level of convenience to customers while providing restaurants with opportunities for increased visibility and expanded market reach. However, the success stories that dominate public and academic discourse are often limited to major cities, with very little attention paid to the unique realities of smaller towns and semi-urban regions.

Jalpaiguri, a growing district town in the northern part of West Bengal, represents a semi-urban landscape where digital adoption is still evolving. With rising internet penetration, the proliferation of smartphones, and changing consumer lifestyles, local restaurants are increasingly feeling the pressure to adapt to e-commerce platforms to stay competitive. While some restaurant owners in Jalpaiguri have embraced digital platforms and reported encouraging outcomes, others remain sceptical or dissatisfied, citing concerns such as high commission charges, operational complexities, and lack of proper delivery infrastructure.

There is a growing assumption that digital platforms are inherently beneficial to all businesses; however, this may not hold true for all geographic and economic contexts. Restaurant owners in towns like Jalpaiguri often operate with limited resources, face challenges in on boarding with technology, and rely heavily on direct, personal customer interactions. Moreover, they may lack adequate digital literacy or support to navigate the rapidly evolving e-commerce landscape. Despite these complexities, they are expected to adapt quickly to meet the expectations of a growing customer base that now prefers online convenience.

This study seeks to address that gap by investigating the effectiveness of e-commerce platforms in the restaurant industry of Jalpaiguri. Through direct engagement with restaurant owners, the research aims to understand their lived experiences-what benefits they perceive, what challenges they face, and how the adoption of online delivery services has impacted their business outcomes. It will explore how digital transformation is being received on the ground and whether it truly contributes to sustainable business growth or places new pressures on small-scale entrepreneurs.

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The insights gathered through this study will not only offer valuable information to the restaurant community in Jalpaiguri but may also inform the strategies of food delivery platforms aiming to expand in semi-urban regions. Additionally, it can serve as a useful resource for local policymakers, entrepreneurship trainers, and researchers interested in bridging the digital divide between urban and non-urban business environments.

In essence, this research is both timely and necessary. As India's digital economy continues to grow, it is crucial that small-town businesses are not left behind in the rush. By focusing on the specific context of Jalpaiguri, this study aims to contribute to a more inclusive understanding of how digital innovation impacts regional economies and how it can be made more accessible, supportive, and sustainable for all.

Scope of the Study

This study is geographically confined to the town of Jalpaiguri in West Bengal, India, a semi-urban location that represents a blend of traditional business practices and emerging digital adoption. The research focuses on a diverse cross-section of restaurants, including small local eateries, mid-range family-run restaurants, cafés, and independently owned food outlets. High-end restaurants and multinational fast-food chains are intentionally excluded from this study, as these establishments typically have access to advanced e-commerce infrastructure, brand-backed digital marketing, and dedicated technical teams, which would skew the analysis of challenges and opportunities faced by smaller local businesses.

The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how e-commerce strategies are being adopted and implemented by restaurants that operate with limited resources, yet seek to leverage digital tools to grow their businesses. Specifically, the research investigates various e-commerce strategies

Beyond identifying these strategies, the study examines their tangible impact on business performance. Key performance indicators such as revenue growth, customer retention, brand visibility, and operational efficiency are analysed to evaluate the effectiveness of digital adoption. The research also explores the challenges and barriers that restaurants face in implementing these strategies. These include limited technical knowledge, poor internet connectivity, financial constraints, resistance to organizational change, and the scarcity of skilled manpower required for digital operations.

By encompassing both the opportunities and constraints associated with e-commerce adoption, the scope of the study provides a holistic view of digital transformation in the restaurant sector of Jalpaiguri. It highlights how local eateries, despite resource limitations, can leverage digital platforms to enhance competitiveness, improve customer engagement, and achieve sustainable business growth in a small but evolving town. This localized focus allows for actionable insights that can inform policy recommendations, training programs, and future research aimed at empowering small-scale food service businesses in semi-urban India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A study conducted by Gayatri M P and Asma Anam (2018) titled *A Study on E-commerce: The Indian Scenario* emphasized the growing impact of e-commerce in transforming consumer behaviour in India. The research highlighted that unlike traditional commerce, e-commerce allows users to browse products, compare prices, and make purchases from their homes using a personal computer. The study underscored that the integration of B2B e-commerce models has improved access to global markets, particularly for developing countries. It concluded that advancements in e-commerce are not only vital for market expansion but also crucial for India's broader economic development in the digital era.

In their study on *The Effectiveness of the Marketing Strategy of Food Delivery Apps through Zomato and Swiggy*, Mythily R and Vishnuvarnan B (2023) explored how digital marketing tools have enhanced customer acquisition and retention for major food delivery platforms. The study found that Zomato and Swiggy effectively utilize multiple marketing channels such as social media platforms, email marketing, and referral programs to attract new users and engage existing customers. These targeted strategies not only improved visibility and user engagement but also contributed to increased sales, indicating the strong role of marketing in the digital food delivery ecosystem.

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According to Mohanapriya, Geetha, and Kumar (2020), economic development coupled with the widespread use of smartphones and the internet has played a crucial role in the expansion of e-commerce across the globe. Their study particularly pointed out that the Online Food Delivery (OFD) system has emerged as a significant growth driver for the e-commerce sector within the restaurant industry. As internet accessibility improves, customers increasingly rely on digital food ordering systems, making online platforms an indispensable part of modern restaurant business models.

The study conducted by Lee, Sung, and Jeon (2019) examined how consumer lifestyles are evolving in response to the growing convenience of online food ordering. The researchers found that users now prefer to compare menus and order meals through their smartphones, whether at home, work, or school. This shift has been largely driven by the increasing pace of life in urban India and the rise of nuclear families, for whom ordering food has become a regular practice. The study forecasted strong future growth for this sector, estimating that the Indian electronic food ordering market would grow at a compound annual growth rate of 16.2%, reaching $17.02 billion by 2023.

E-commerce has revolutionized the way businesses operate, particularly in the service sector. The food and restaurant industry has witnessed a major transformation with the advent of online food delivery platforms like Swiggy, Zomato, and Uber Eats. These platforms provide restaurants with access to a larger customer base, facilitate real-time order management, and offer new marketing tools (Kumar & Kumar, 2020). According to Singh et al. (2021), food delivery apps have not only increased convenience for consumers but also influenced dining patterns and customer loyalty.

However, the relationship between e-commerce and restaurant profitability remains complex. While some businesses report increased orders and visibility, others struggle with high commission rates, lack of technical knowledge, and platform dependence (Sharma, 2022).

Most research on e-commerce adoption focuses on metropolitan cities, but Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities are now seeing rapid growth in digital consumption. A RedSeer (2023) report noted that 60% of India's online food delivery order growth in 2022 came from non-metro cities. Despite this, restaurant owners in small towns often face infrastructural and operational challenges, such as inconsistent delivery networks, fewer skilled staff, and lack of awareness of how to fully utilize digital tools (Ghosh, 2021).

According to Sinha and Roy (2020), the key benefits for restaurants using online delivery platforms include greater reach, enhanced branding, data analytics support, and reduced dependence on physical footfall. Yet, there are drawbacks. High commission charges—often ranging between 20%–30%—significantly cut into profit margins, especially for small and medium-sized restaurants (FICCI, 2022). Other concerns include loss of customer relationship, data ownership by platforms, and the struggle to maintain food quality during transit.

Jain & Kaushik (2021) argue that while platforms provide logistical support, they also create a power imbalance, where small restaurants become overly dependent and lack bargaining power in pricing and visibility algorithms.

Customer behaviour has also shifted due to digital platforms. Fast delivery, discounts, real-time order tracking, and app-based payments have set new standards. Restaurants must now adapt not only to technological changes but also to rising customer expectations (Narayan et al., 2020). In towns like Jalpaiguri, where infrastructure may not fully support such systems, this can create pressure on restaurant owners to meet urban-level service standards without comparable resources.

Digital literacy plays a pivotal role in determining the success of e-commerce integration for small businesses. According to Patil and Chandra (2019), limited digital awareness among small restaurant owners in smaller cities often becomes a major barrier to effective utilization of platforms like Zomato or Swiggy. Many restaurateurs are unfamiliar with app interfaces, online dashboards, customer review management, or data analytics offered by these platforms, which can result in suboptimal usage or complete disinterest.

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The COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated the adoption of online food delivery services across India. A study by Deloitte (2021) revealed that during lockdowns, restaurants with digital ordering systems were more resilient and capable of sustaining operations. The crisis also shifted consumer behaviour toward safety, hygiene, and convenience—factors that favoured online ordering.

Mishra & Gupta (2021) observed that small-town consumers, once hesitant to order food online, became more open to it post-pandemic. However, the same study cautioned that many local restaurants lacked the digital infrastructure to capitalize on this surge in demand. For places like Jalpaiguri, this means there was a temporary spike in online activity, but long-term effectiveness depends on how well local businesses adapt and continue their digital presence.

Beyond food delivery, technology now touches multiple aspects of restaurant operations—from online reservations and digital payments to inventory and customer feedback systems. A report by Technopak Advisors (2022) highlights how restaurants using cloud kitchens, digital menu systems (QR-code-based), and AI-driven customer insights are seeing improved operational efficiency and customer satisfaction.

Yet, as observed by Banerjee & Sen (2022), small and independent restaurants in towns like Jalpaiguri often lack access to such technologies or view them as unaffordable luxuries. Therefore, even as the rest of the industry becomes tech-integrated, smaller players may find themselves left behind without strategic support or government-backed digital empowerment programs.

The Indian government has introduced several schemes to promote digital inclusion among MSMEs (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises), such as the Digital MSME Scheme and the Start-up India initiative. However, as noted by Das (2021), the awareness and implementation of these programs remain very low in smaller towns. Local restaurant owners in Jalpaiguri may not be aware of such resources or may find the application process too complex to engage with.

Kapoor & Verma (2021) highlight that food delivery platforms like Zomato and Swiggy enhance visibility for small restaurants, allowing them to reach a broader customer base. These platforms provide discoverability through ratings, trending menus, and customer reviews.

However, Bhatia & Luthra (2022) point out that consistent visibility often depends on paid promotions and algorithmic rankings, which can disadvantage smaller players. In towns like Jalpaiguri, where offline marketing options are limited, this visibility becomes crucial but underutilized due to lack of digital marketing knowledge or budget.

Thomas & Kaur (2020) emphasize that consumer trust is built on hygiene, delivery reliability, and positive reviews. In smaller cities, Dasgupta (2021) observed that customers are more cautious when ordering online and often stick to known outlets unless trust is built through high ratings or word-of-mouth. For local restaurants, maintaining consistent service quality and actively managing online feedback are essential to gaining customer trust and long-term success through e-commerce.

Objectives of the study

i) To know the most preferred online delivery apps among the restaurant and food outlets.

ii) To know the satisfaction level of the restaurants on partnering up with the online delivery services.

iii) To know the pros and cons and the real time effectiveness of online delivery services on restaurants.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Geographically, this study focuses exclusively on Jalpaiguri town in West Bengal, India. This locale provides a representative context for analysing small and medium-sized restaurants within semi-urban environments. To achieve the defined research objectives, the following methodological framework was employed:

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Primary and Secondary Data

The research relies primarily on primary data, which was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to restaurant owners and managers. This questionnaire was designed to capture detailed insights into digital practices, operational challenges, and perceptions of online food delivery services.

In addition to primary data, the study also incorporates secondary data from relevant literature, online reports, and industry statistics to contextualize findings and provide a broader understanding of trends in the e-commerce and food delivery sector.

Population

The population for this study consists of restaurants and food outlets located within Jalpaiguri town that are registered on online food delivery platforms. This population includes small family-run restaurants, cafés, and independently owned eateries. High-end restaurants and large chains were excluded to maintain focus on establishments that face resource and infrastructure limitations in implementing digital strategies.

Sample Size

From the total population of eligible restaurants in Jalpaiguri, a sample of eight respondents was randomly selected. These respondents provided complete and duly filled questionnaires, which included a combination of close-ended, open-ended, and Likert-scale questions. Despite the small sample size, the selected respondents provide valuable insights into the practical challenges and advantages of digital adoption in a semi-urban context.

Sampling Method

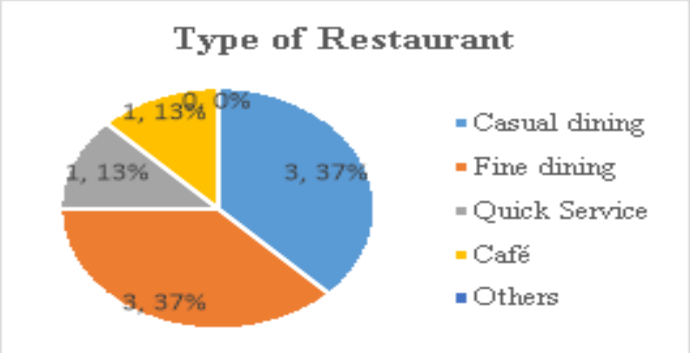
The study employed a simple random sampling method, ensuring that each restaurant registered on online delivery platforms within Jalpaiguri had an equal chance of selection. This approach was chosen to maintain objectivity and reduce bias in data collection. The selected sample represents a cross-section of small to medium-sized eateries actively using digital platforms for order management and customer engagement.

Analysis of Data

The collected data was systematically analysed to identify trends, patterns, and correlations in the adoption and effectiveness of e-commerce strategies. For ease of understanding and clarity, results are presented using bar charts and graphical representations, which allow for better visualization of the findings. The analysis also includes interpretation of open-ended responses to provide deeper insights into the experiences and perspectives of restaurant owners.

Data Representation and Interpretations:

Type of Restaurant



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

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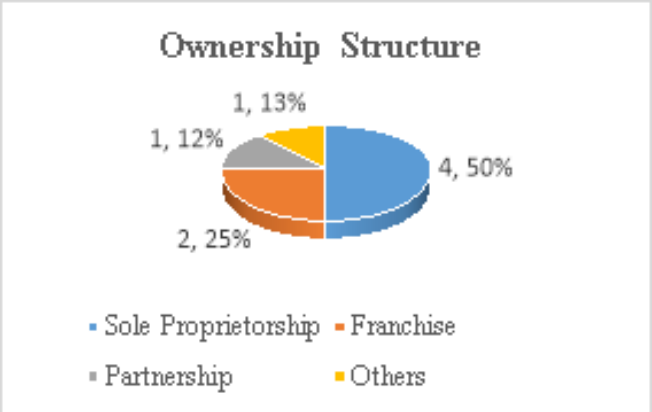
The data shows that Casual Dining and Fine Dining together dominate the sample, highlighting that both volume-driven and experience-focused operations are engaging with e-commerce. Casual Dining restaurants primarily cater to families and groups, where digital channels help manage larger, varied orders efficiently. Fine Dining establishments, in contrast, focus on curated experiences and premium menu offerings, yet still leverage digital platforms to maintain relevance and attract tech-savvy clientele.

Even though Café and Quick Service outlets represent a smaller share, their presence indicates that convenience-driven, fast-turnover, and niche offerings are also seeing value in e-commerce. This cross-segment adoption demonstrates that online platforms in Jalpaiguri are increasingly becoming a core part of restaurant operations across operational models, facilitating broader customer reach, order convenience, and incremental revenue generation.

Ownership Structure



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Sole proprietorships dominate the sample, implying that decision-making and digital adoption are centralized with the owner. This structure often correlates with tighter budgets, making low-maintenance digital solutions like aggregator platforms the preferred choice over investing in proprietary apps or websites.

Franchises, while fewer, operate under corporate guidelines and typically benefit from structured marketing support, standardized digital tools, and access to best practices.

Number of Employees

Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

The predominance of small teams (0–10 employees) suggests that restaurant owners often juggle multiple roles, including operations, order management, and basic marketing. While such flexibility allows for quick adaptation and decision-making, it also indicates a lack of specialized staff for managing e-commerce, social media, and analytics.

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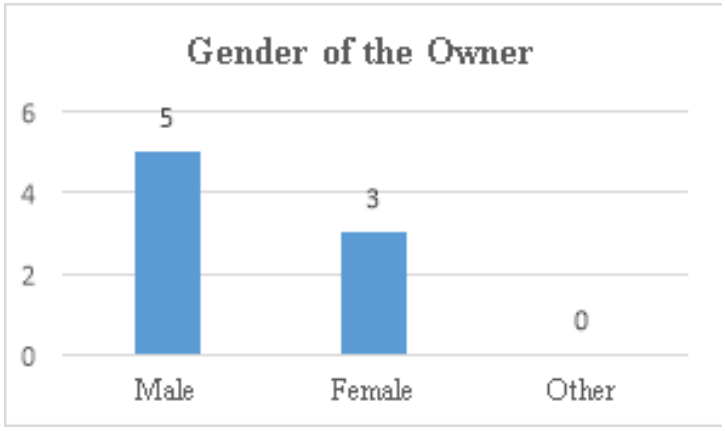
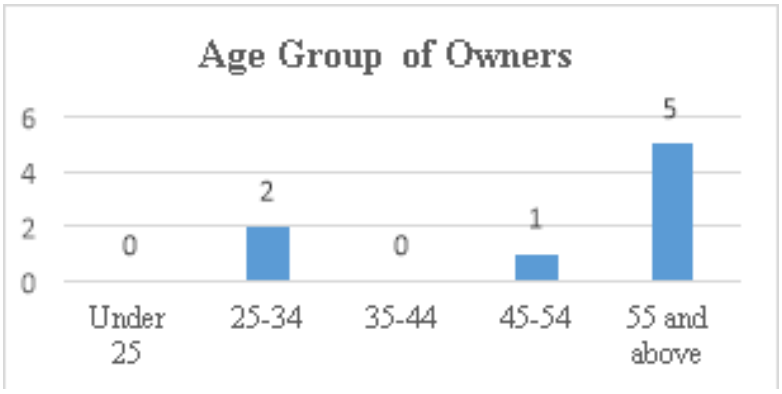
Gender of the Owner



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Male owners represent the majority, reflecting broader socio-economic trends in small business ownership in the region. Notably, a substantial 37.5% of female owners indicates inclusive participation, particularly in embracing digital tools.

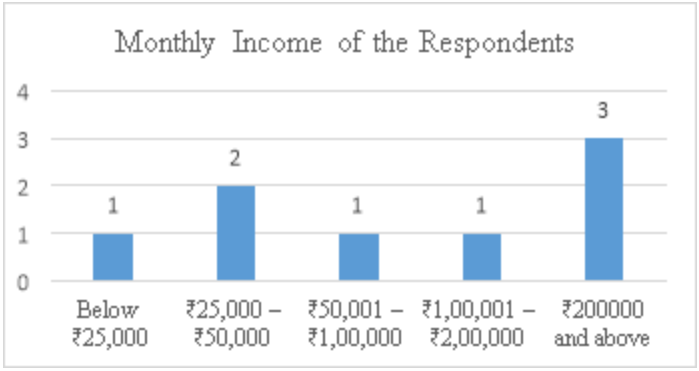
Age Group of Owners



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

The skew toward older proprietors (55+) reflects a significant presence of experienced, locally established restaurant owners. While older owners may traditionally be cautious in adopting new technologies, the study indicates a pragmatic approach-adopting e-commerce when clear business benefits are visible, such as increased orders or customer engagement.

Monthly Income (Reported)



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

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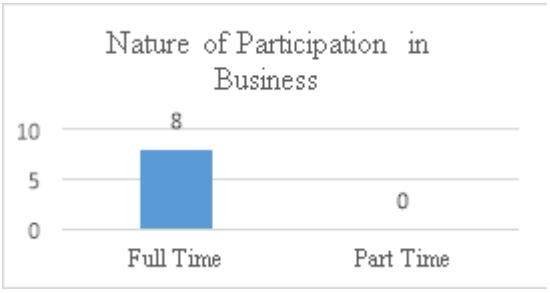
Income levels vary significantly, affecting investment capacity in digital marketing, website development, or own delivery infrastructure. Higher-income businesses are more likely to explore independent digital channels, whereas lower-income establishments depend predominantly on aggregator-driven traffic.

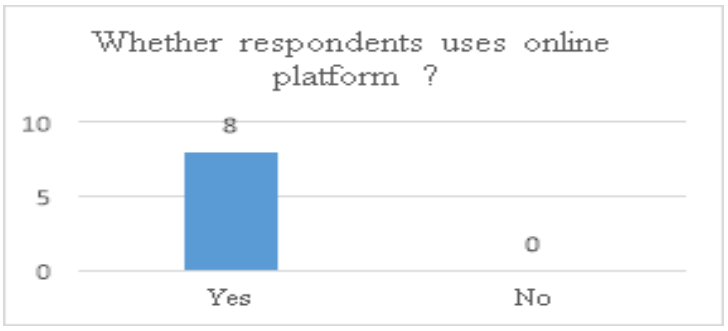
Is the business the owner's full-time income source?



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

All respondents are full-time operators, reflecting high personal investment in business outcomes. Full-time commitment translates into stronger motivation to leverage digital platforms effectively, as online performance directly impacts livelihood. Training and technology adoption are likely to be more readily embraced when the perceived return on investment is tangible and immediate.

Platform Usage (Swiggy, Zomato, Own Website, etc.)



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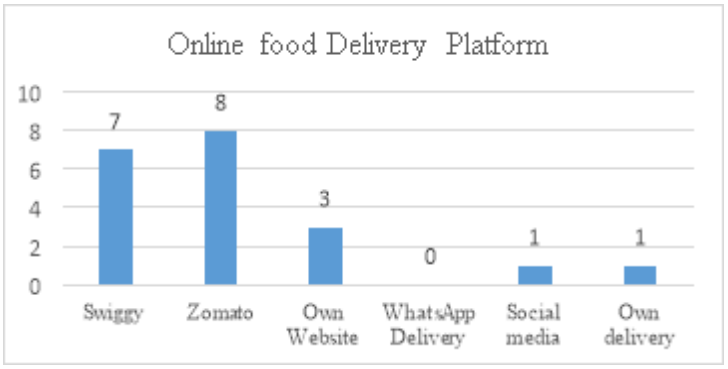

Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Aggregator platforms dominate usage, confirming their role as the primary channel for customer reach and order fulfilment. A smaller proportion of restaurants maintain their own websites or delivery systems, reflecting resource constraints or early-stage digital adoption.

The hybrid model-using both aggregators and proprietary channels-enables restaurants to balance reach and margin control. The minimal use of WhatsApp or social media for direct ordering suggests untapped opportunities for low-cost digital engagement and repeat customer retention.

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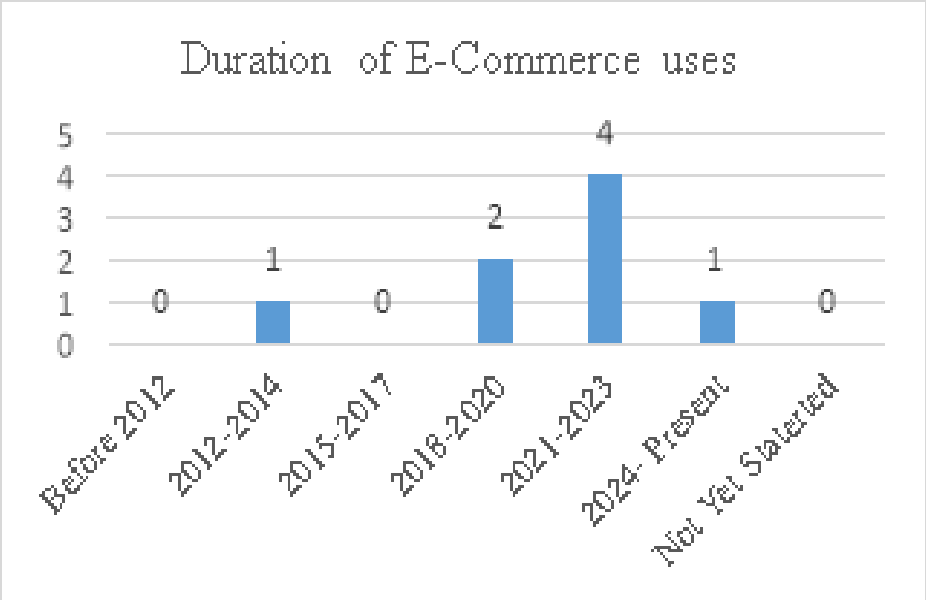
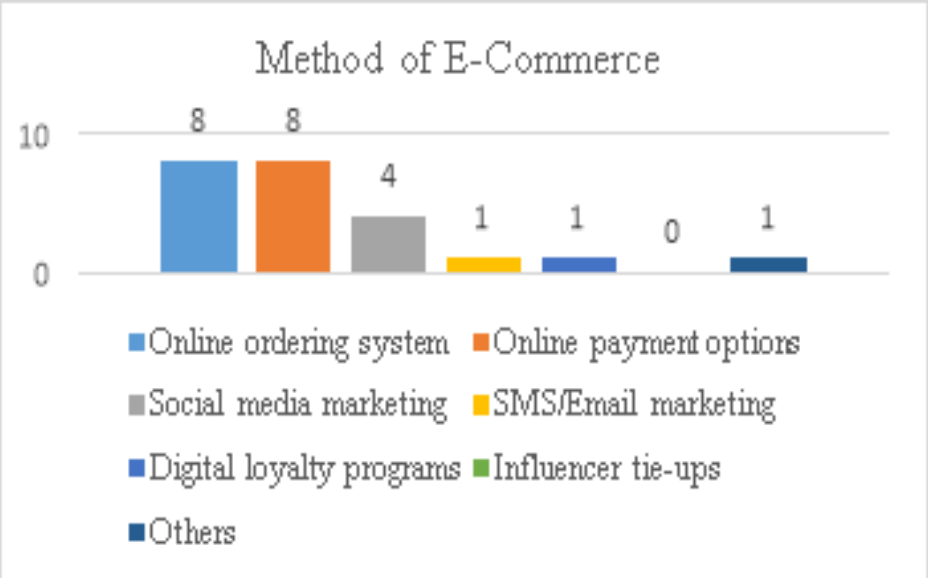
Duration of E-commerce Use (Approximate Years)



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Most restaurants joined the digital space recently (2021–2023), likely influenced by pandemic-driven shifts in consumer behaviour. Early adopters (2012–2014) offer insights into long-term benefits, optimization strategies, and operational integration. Recent adopters are likely experimenting with best practices, highlighting the need for targeted guidance and benchmarking against early adopters to accelerate learning and maximise returns.

E-Commerce Methods Employed



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Online ordering systems and payment options are universal (100%), reflecting necessary infrastructure for e-commerce. Social media marketing is used by 50%, while digital loyalty programs appear in only 12.5% of responses. The limited use of loyalty programs and SMS/email suggests a missed opportunity; once customers order online, low-effort retention programs could increase repeat business without heavy ad spend.

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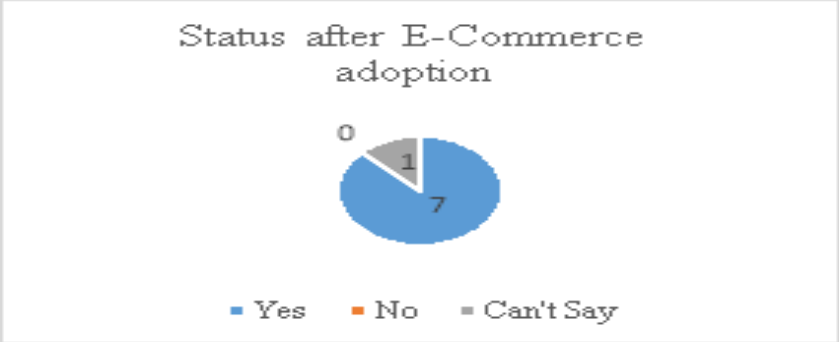
Observed Increase in Customer Orders after E-commerce Adoption



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

All respondents who answered reported an increase in customer orders. Reported uplift clusters around two groups: 10–30% and over 50%. This indicates that for some restaurants, e-commerce introduces incremental but moderate demand, while for others it represents a transformative channel. Variations may depend on restaurant type, promotional intensity, menu suitability for delivery, and platform visibility. Further cross-tabulation (e.g., % increase by restaurant type) could reveal which segments benefit most.

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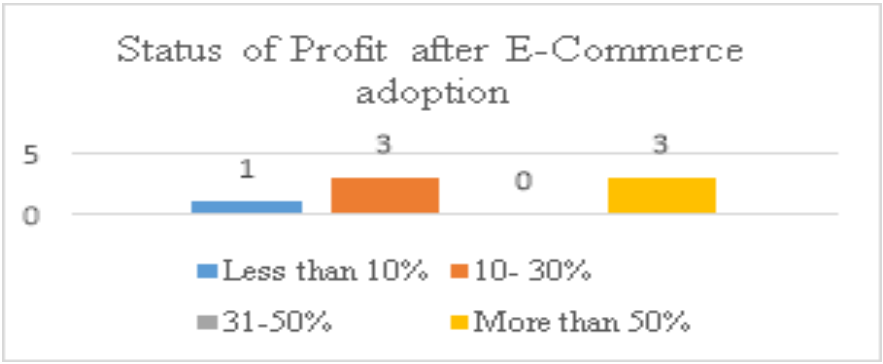

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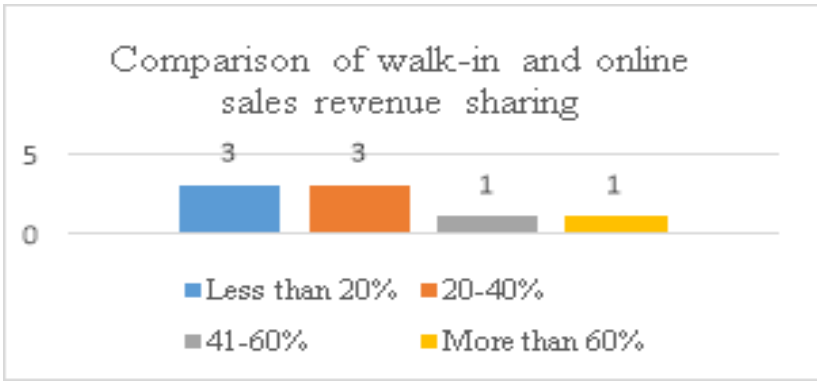
Revenue Share from Online Orders (vs Walk-ins):



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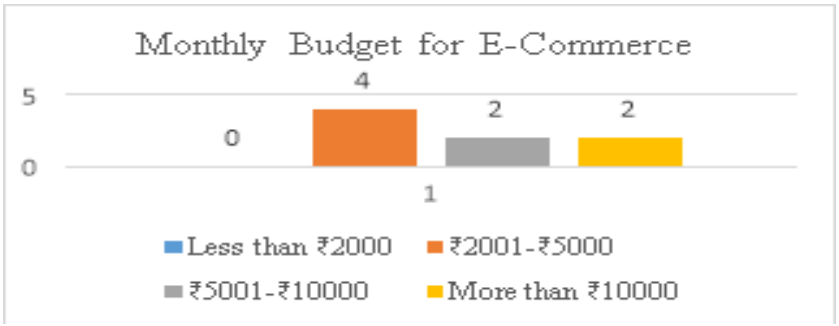
The proportion of revenue coming from online orders varies widely. Restaurants earning more than 40–60% of revenue online are likely heavily dependent on digital channels for sustainability, indicating a mature integration of e-commerce into their business model. Conversely, those earning less than 20% may either be new adopters or operate in segments less suited to delivery, like Fine Dining. This diversity suggests that the benefits of e-commerce are context-specific: factors like menu type, delivery feasibility, platform visibility, and customer demographics directly impact online revenue contribution. For restaurants with higher online revenue shares, investments in direct-order channels could improve margins further.

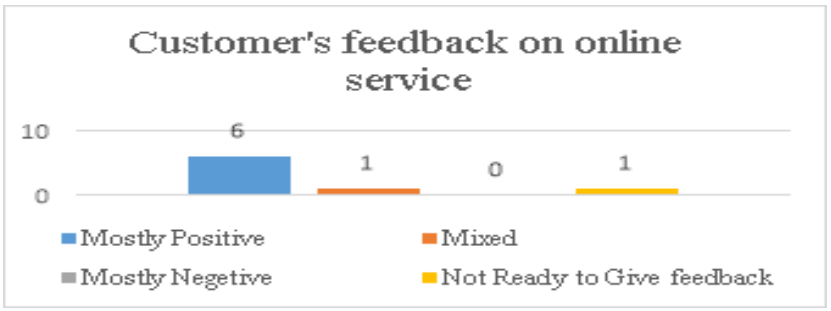
Monthly Budget for E commerce (Marketing, Commissions, etc.):



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Most respondents allocate modest budgets (₹2–5k), which constrains experimentation with paid campaigns but ensures sustainability in the short term. Efficient allocation of limited budgets can still yield measurable outcomes. The key takeaway is that budget constraints dictate the type and intensity of e-commerce engagement, highlighting the need for low-cost, high-impact strategies for smaller businesses.

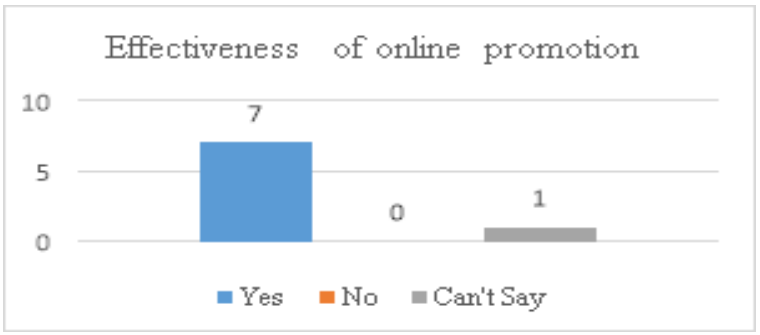
Customer Feedback on Online Services:



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

A significant majority of respondents acknowledged that multi-channel online promotions exert a direct, positive influence on business performance, ultimately serving as a primary driver for accelerated sales revenue.

Promotions: Effectiveness & Modes:



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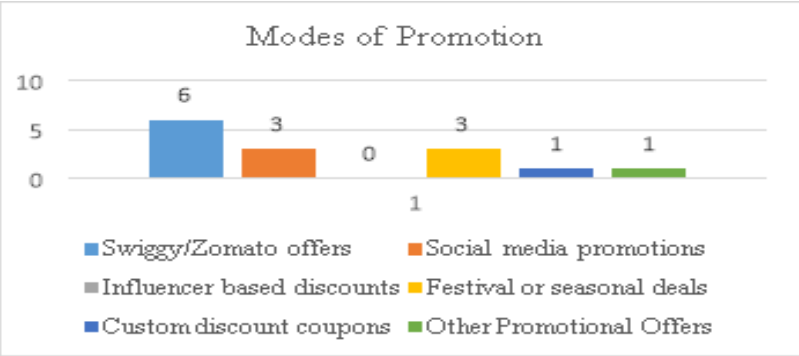

Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Food delivery giants Swiggy and Zomato act as the primary growth drivers for the restaurant sector in Jalpaiguri. However, their reach is heavily supplemented by localized social media marketing and festive promotional campaigns, both of which are instrumental in boosting restaurant visibility and overall sales revenue.

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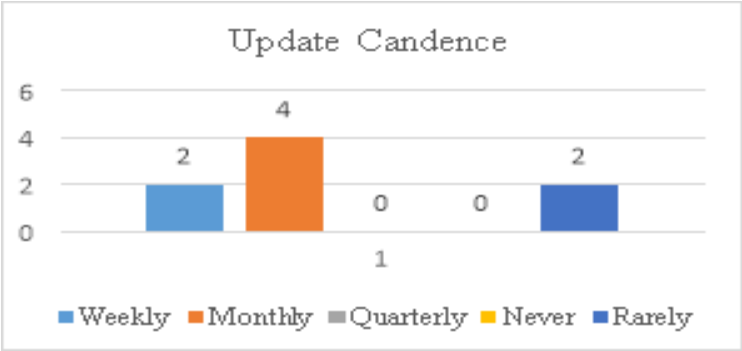
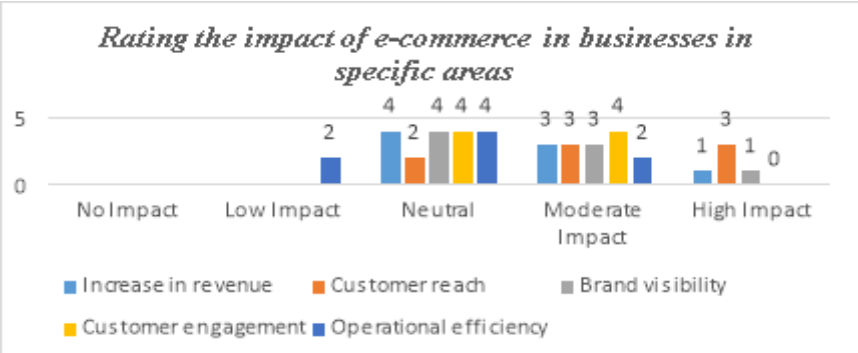


Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Aggregator-led promotions are the most widely used and effective, reflecting the platform-driven nature of online ordering in Jalpaiguri. Social media and festival promotions serve as supplementary marketing channels. Inconsistent update cadence-ranging from weekly to monthly to rarely-suggests some restaurants lack a structured promotional strategy.

Rating the impact of e-commerce in businesses in specific areas:



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

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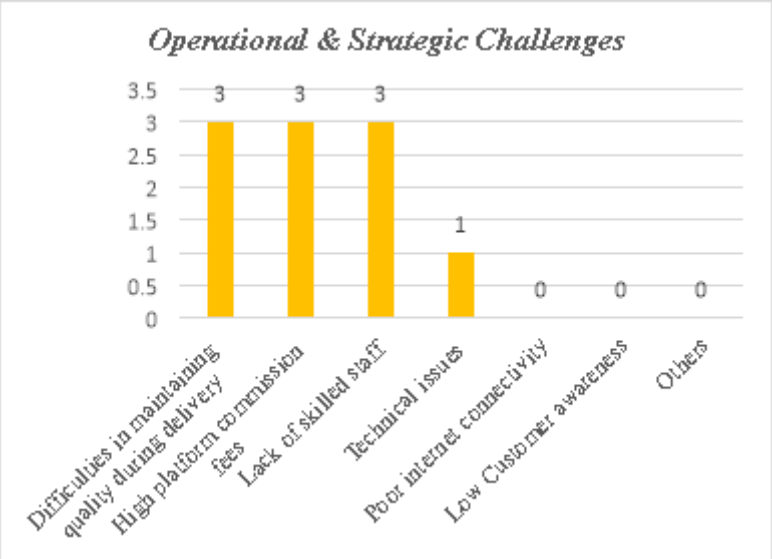
E-commerce adoption significantly boosts customer reach, with moderate, transactional impacts on revenue, engagement, and operational efficiency. Strategic focus should shift towards enhancing brand identity and integrating digital channels with internal systems to move from average performance to high impact.

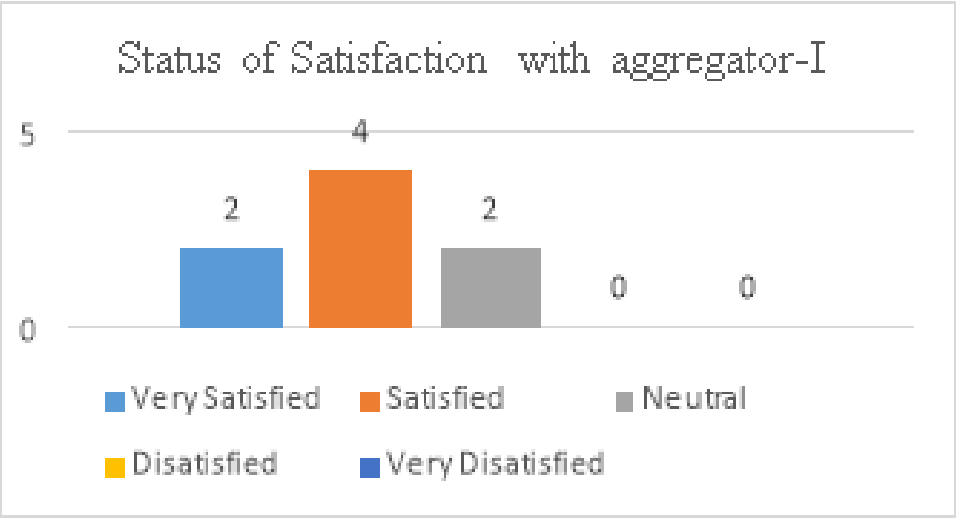
Operational & Strategic Challenges:



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Key operational challenges include maintaining food quality during transit and managing platform fees, which impact margins and service standards. Staff limitations exacerbate these challenges, as small teams struggle to coordinate orders, delivery, and customer service simultaneously. Technical issues, while less common, can disrupt workflows. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-pronged approach: improved packaging and SOPs for delivery, cost management strategies to mitigate high commissions, and targeted staff training for efficient e-commerce management.

Satisfaction & Commission Perceptions:



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

While many report being satisfied or neutral about aggregator support, a significant share feel commissions are high and would prefer rates around 10-15%. This tension reflects the dual role of aggregators as both traffic providers and cost centers. Restaurants must therefore track channel-wise margins and explore direct-order incentives to reduce dependence.

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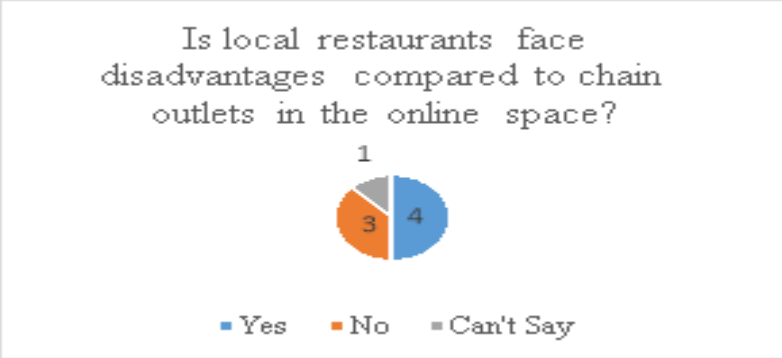
Small/Local Restaurants vs Chain Outlets (Perceived Disadvantages):



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Small/Local Restaurants vs Chain Outlets (Perceived Disadvantages):

Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Local restaurants perceive systemic disadvantages due to platform algorithms favouring large chains, brand trust biases, and limited marketing budgets. These constraints reduce visibility and order inflow, potentially entrenching large chains' dominance. Local outlets can counteract these disadvantages through high-quality listings, soliciting customer reviews, participating in local promotions, and co-marketing initiatives to amplify reach.

Training & Support for E commerce:

Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Only half of the sample received formal or informal training, highlighting a skill gap. Targeted workshops focusing on practical aspects-like running promotions, managing online orders, and analysing dashboard metrics-can accelerate adoption and operational efficiency. Context-specific, hands-on training is particularly valuable for owners and staff managing multiple role.

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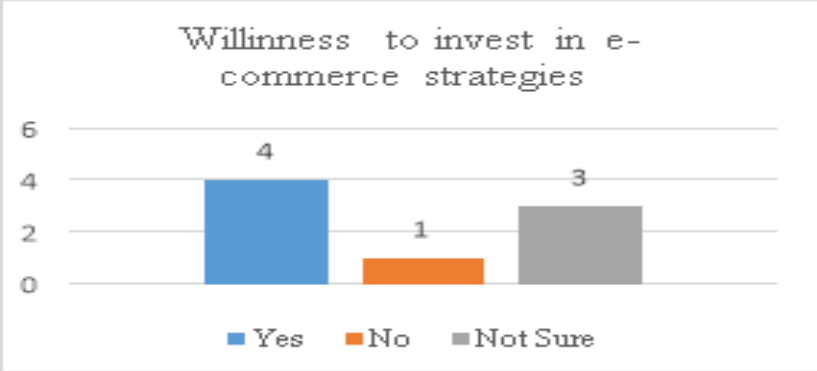
Future Investment & Interest in Direct Channels:



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

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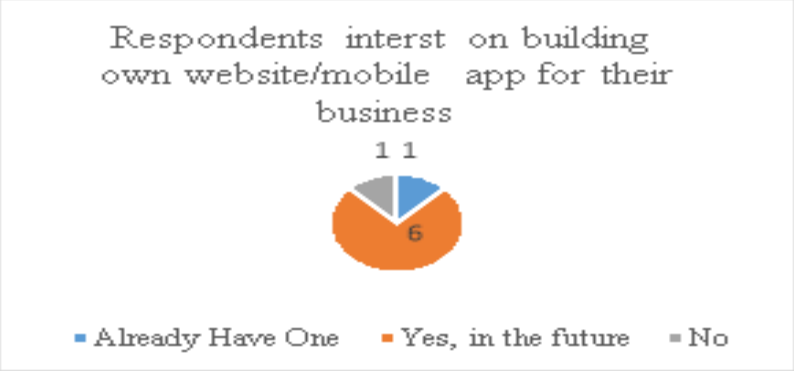
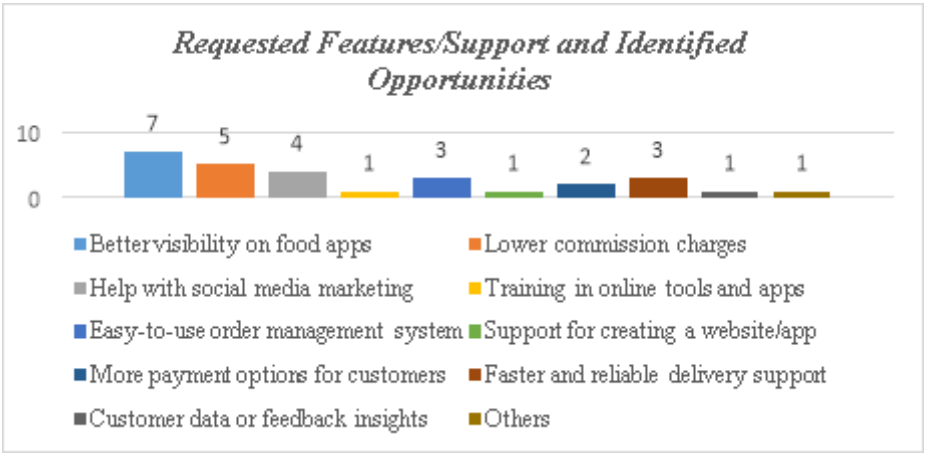


Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

A strong interest in direct-order channels indicates that restaurant owners recognize the potential for higher margins and greater customer control. Phased adoption-starting with low-cost websites or WhatsApp ordering-can minimize risk and gradually reduce dependency on aggregator platforms. Support and guidance on cost-effectiveness, operational integration, and customer engagement strategies will enhance adoption success.

Requested Features/Support and Identified Opportunities:



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Top requests include better visibility on food apps, lower commission charges, and help with social media marketing. Respondents see the biggest opportunity as gaining more customers and online orders. This alignment between needs (visibility, lower costs) and opportunities (reach, orders) points to practical

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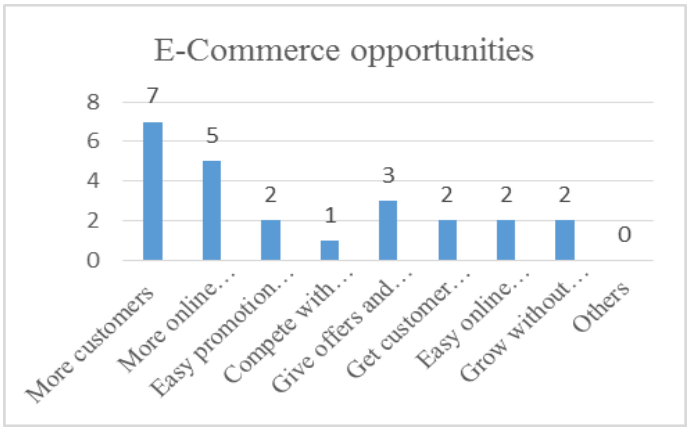
interventions: improving listing quality, small budget ad pilots, and loyalty programs to capture repeat customers.

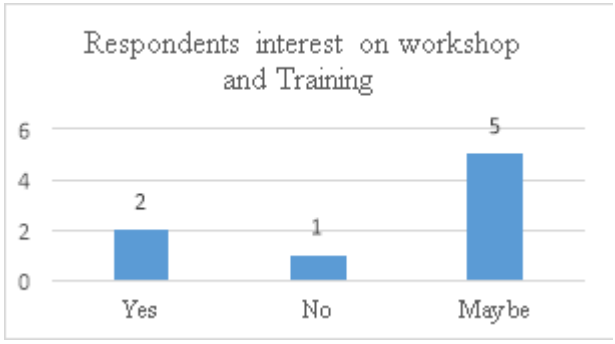
Biggest opportunities that e-commerce provides:



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Respondents see the biggest opportunity as gaining more customers and online orders. This alignment between needs (visibility, lower costs) and opportunities (reach, orders) points to practical interventions: improving listing quality, small budget ad pilots, and loyalty programs to capture repeat customers.

Workshop Interest:



Source: Primary data collected through questionnaire.

Conditional interest suggests that workshops must be designed to be concise, practical, and hands-on. Recommendations include 2-3 hour sessions focused on creating websites, running small social campaigns, and improving delivery management. Scheduling at convenient times and offering live demonstrations can convert tentative interest into active participation, helping owners implement e-commerce strategies effectively.

Limitations of the Study:

While this research aims to provide valuable insights into the impact of e-commerce adoption on restaurant businesses in Jalpaiguri, several limitations must be acknowledged, as they may influence the scope, interpretation, and generalizability of the findings:

Geographical Limitation:

The study is restricted to Jalpaiguri, a semi-urban town in West Bengal. Consequently, the findings may not fully reflect the dynamics of larger metropolitan cities, other semi-urban towns, or rural areas where customer behaviour, digital infrastructure, internet penetration, and market access differ substantially.

Limited Sample Size:

This research is based on responses from only 8 restaurants. While the sample provides meaningful insights, it may not comprehensively represent the wide spectrum of eateries in the region, including small family-run outlets, mid-range cafés, and larger chains. This limits the statistical generalizability of the results.

Self-Reported Data:

The study primarily relies on self-reported information from restaurant owners and managers. Such data may be subject to personal bias, selective recall, or reluctance to disclose sensitive operational and financial details. Consequently, some responses may overstate or understate actual performance, revenue impact, or satisfaction with e-commerce platforms.

Reluctance of Respondents to Share Operational Details:

Some participants were cautious about revealing business strategies, marketing practices, or competitive data, limiting opportunities for richer qualitative insights. This affected the depth of data triangulation and analysis.

CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals that casual and fine dining establishments stand to gain significantly from enhancing the visual and experiential quality of their online presence. Investing in high-quality menu photography and clearly defined packaging standards for delivery can substantially improve customer perception and satisfaction. In the case of fine dining, selectively offering signature dishes through limited-delivery menus may help preserve product integrity and uphold brand prestige in the digital marketplace.

Franchise and chain outlets are comparatively better positioned to leverage economies of scale. By engaging in collective negotiation with food aggregator platforms, such outlets can secure more favourable commission rates. Furthermore, joint marketing efforts and brand partnerships can enhance visibility and reduce the financial burden of individual advertising initiatives, thereby optimizing digital outreach.

Across all business categories, the study underscores the importance of marketing and customer retention strategies tailored to the digital environment. Low-cost loyalty mechanisms such as digital punch cards, discounts on direct orders, and proactive collection of customer reviews can foster long-term engagement. Moreover, maintaining active and scheduled social media communication focusing on value-based offerings can reinforce brand loyalty and stimulate repeat patronage.

The role of training and capacity building is also central to sustainable digital transformation. Short, modular workshops covering website creation, targeted social advertising with minimal budgets, efficient delivery packaging, and fundamental performance metrics such as cost-per-order and repeat rate can substantially enhance managerial and operational competence.

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