



International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal Homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Navigating the Digital Grocery Marketplace: An Analysis of Consumer Challenges and Shopping Experiences

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of digital technology and the expansion of e-commerce have significantly reshaped consumer purchasing patterns, particularly in the grocery retail sector. This study investigates the challenges faced by consumers in online grocery shopping with special reference to Coimbatore City. A descriptive research design was adopted, and both primary and secondary data were utilized. Primary data were collected from 100 respondents through structured questionnaires, while secondary data were obtained from academic journals, books, and digital sources. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and Garrett Ranking were applied to analyse the data.

The findings indicate that despite the benefits of convenience, time efficiency, and wide product availability, consumers encounter multiple challenges. Key issues identified include technical problems in applications and websites, poor product quality, and delays in delivery. Additional concerns such as high delivery charges, limited delivery time slots, and order cancellation further influence customer satisfaction. The study also reveals that demographic variables do not significantly affect the perception of these challenges.

The study concludes that enhancing technological efficiency, logistics management, and customer service is essential. From a critical standpoint, strengthening trust and ensuring service reliability are fundamental for sustainable growth in online grocery platforms.

Keywords: Online Grocery Shopping; Consumer Behaviour; Customer Satisfaction; E-commerce Challenges; Delivery Efficiency; Service Quality

Introduction

The emergence of online grocery shopping represents a significant transformation in the retail sector, driven by advancements in digital technology, increased internet penetration, and the widespread use of smartphones. In India, the growth of platforms such as BigBasket and Blinkit has reshaped consumer purchasing behaviour by offering convenience, time efficiency, and access to a wide variety of products. This shift became more pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated digital adoption due to mobility restrictions and health concerns. Despite these advancements, consumers continue to encounter several challenges that affect their overall experience and satisfaction with online grocery services.

A major issue faced by consumers is the inability to physically inspect products before purchase. Grocery items, being perishable and quality-sensitive, require careful evaluation, which online platforms cannot fully replicate. As a result, consumers often experience dissatisfaction due to discrepancies between expected and delivered quality, such as damaged goods, expired items, or incorrect deliveries. This limitation contributes to a lack of trust and reluctance to rely entirely on online platforms for essential purchases.

Pricing transparency is another significant concern. Although online grocery platforms frequently advertise discounts and promotional offers, hidden charges such as delivery fees, surge pricing, and minimum order requirements often increase the final cost. This creates a perception of unfair pricing and reduces consumer confidence. From a behavioural standpoint, such inconsistencies negatively influence repeat purchase intentions and long-term loyalty.

Logistical challenges further complicate the online grocery shopping experience. Timely delivery is critical for groceries due to their immediate consumption needs; however, delays, order cancellations, and limited delivery slots are common issues. While quick-commerce models promise faster delivery, they often struggle with inventory management and operational efficiency. In cities like Coimbatore, infrastructural limitations and last-mile delivery challenges intensify these problems, leading to inconsistent service quality.

Security concerns related to online payments and data privacy also act as barriers to adoption. Many consumers remain cautious about sharing financial and personal information due to the risk of cyber fraud and unauthorized transactions. Although digital payment systems are widely available, a lack of trust and awareness continues to hinder their full acceptance, particularly among less technologically proficient users.

Technological barriers, including complex user interfaces, app navigation difficulties, and connectivity issues, further restrict accessibility. Consumers with limited digital literacy may find it challenging to use online platforms effectively, resulting in exclusion from the benefits of digital commerce. Additionally, language barriers and lack of localized content reduce usability for regional users.

Socio-cultural factors also play a role in shaping consumer behaviour. Traditional shopping practices, such as visiting local markets and physically selecting products, remain deeply rooted. The social interaction and perceived reliability of offline shopping continue to influence consumer preferences, slowing the transition to online platforms.

In conclusion, while online grocery shopping offers substantial benefits, its growth is constrained by operational inefficiencies, technological limitations, trust deficits, and cultural resistance. Addressing these challenges requires improvements in logistics, pricing transparency, user experience, and cybersecurity measures. A coordinated effort from businesses and policymakers is essential to enhance consumer trust and ensure the sustainable development of online grocery retail, particularly in emerging urban markets like Coimbatore.

Review of Literature

Boyer and Hult (2005) examined operational efficiency in online ordering systems within retail environments. The study addressed the problem of logistical complexity and service performance in e-commerce grocery platforms. The objective was to analyze how operational factors influence customer satisfaction. Using quantitative survey methods and performance data analysis, the study found that delivery reliability and system efficiency significantly affect repeat purchases. The findings highlighted that poor logistics coordination reduces service quality. The study concluded that effective supply chain integration is critical for sustaining online grocery operations.

Ramanathan (2014) investigated the relationship between logistics performance and customer loyalty in e-commerce. The problem identified was inefficiency in demand forecasting and inventory management in online grocery systems. The objective was to understand how logistics capability influences customer retention. Using statistical modeling and empirical data analysis, the study found that both efficiency and risk management moderate customer satisfaction. The findings suggested that inaccurate forecasting leads to stockouts and financial losses. The study concluded that advanced analytics and risk mitigation strategies are essential.

Mortimer et al. (2016) explored consumer perceptions of risk in online grocery shopping. The study addressed the problem of lack of trust and concerns about product freshness. The objective was to determine how perceived risk affects shopping frequency. Using survey-based research methods, the findings revealed that higher perceived risk reduces purchase intention and repeat buying behavior. Consumers were particularly concerned about quality and delivery accuracy. The study concluded that building trust through quality assurance and transparent policies is vital.

Chiu et al. (2014) studied customer repeat purchase intention in B2C e-commerce platforms. The problem focused on technological issues such as website quality and payment security. The objective was to examine the impact of perceived usefulness, trust, and risk on online buying behavior. Using structural equation modeling, the study found that system reliability and data security significantly influence customer loyalty.

The findings emphasized the importance of userfriendly interfaces. The study concluded that technological infrastructure plays a major role in online grocery success.

Melacini et al. (2018) conducted a systematic review of e-fulfillment and distribution in omni-channel retailing. The problem identified was inefficiency in last-mile delivery systems. The objective was to evaluate distribution models used in online retail. Using literature review methodology, the findings showed that last-mile delivery represents the highest operational cost in online grocery. Inefficient routing and urban congestion further increase expenses. The study concluded that micro-fulfillment centers and optimized logistics networks are necessary for sustainability.

Kämäräinen et al. (2001) analyzed home delivery efficiency in e-grocery business models. The study addressed the problem of high delivery costs and cold chain management. The objective was to evaluate alternative delivery systems such as reception boxes. Using case study methods, the findings indicated that innovative delivery solutions can reduce operational costs. However, infrastructure investment remains high. The study concluded that efficient cold chain and delivery innovations are crucial for perishable product management.

Venkatesh et al. (2012) developed the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) to explain technology adoption. The problem examined was low digital adoption in certain populations. The objective was to identify factors influencing user acceptance of online systems. Using large-scale survey analysis, the findings showed that performance expectancy and facilitating conditions significantly affect technology use. The study concluded that digital literacy and infrastructure support are necessary for expanding online grocery adoption.

Ramanathan (2010) investigated supply chain collaboration in retail performance. The problem addressed was poor coordination between suppliers and retailers in ecommerce grocery. The objective was to measure the impact of collaboration on operational performance. Using empirical analysis, the study found that strong supplier relationships improve inventory availability and reduce disruptions. The conclusion emphasized that collaboration enhances overall efficiency and customer satisfaction.

Boyer et al. (2009) studied customer satisfaction in online retail service operations. The problem focused on service failures such as delayed delivery and incorrect items. The objective was to assess how service quality dimensions influence satisfaction. Using survey-based research, the findings indicated that timeliness and accuracy significantly affect customer loyalty. The study concluded that effective service recovery strategies are essential for maintaining competitive advantage in online grocery markets.

Mortimer and Fazal e Hasan (2020) examined consumer behavior changes during the COVID-19 pandemic in online grocery shopping. The problem identified was sudden demand surge and supply disruption. The objective was to understand how crisis situations affect online grocery adoption. Using empirical consumer surveys, the findings revealed increased usage but also dissatisfaction due to stock shortages. The study concluded that flexible supply chain systems are necessary to handle demand fluctuations.

Verhoef et al. (2015) examined the transformation of retailing through omnichannel strategies. The problem addressed was the integration difficulty between online and offline grocery systems. The objective was to understand how multichannel operations influence customer experience. Using conceptual and empirical analysis, the study found that channel integration improves convenience but increases operational complexity. The findings highlighted coordination challenges in inventory and fulfillment. The study concluded that seamless channel integration is essential for competitive advantage.

Hübner et al. (2016) investigated last-mile fulfillment in omni-channel grocery retailing. The problem focused on inefficient store-based picking systems. The objective was to evaluate alternative fulfillment models. Using case study methodology, the findings showed that centralized warehouses improve efficiency but require high capital investment. The study concluded that selecting the right fulfillment strategy is crucial for cost control.

Fernie and Sparks (2019) analyzed logistics and supply chain management in grocery retail. The problem identified was supply chain vulnerability in perishable goods distribution. The objective was to assess logistics risk factors. Through analytical review methods, the findings indicated that transportation delays significantly affect product quality. The study concluded that strong logistics planning enhances operational stability.

Brynolfsson et al. (2013) explored the impact of digital technology on retail performance. The problem examined was adapting traditional grocery businesses to online platforms. The objective was to measure digital transformation effects. Using empirical data analysis, the findings revealed that digital investments improve market reach but increase technological dependency. The study concluded that innovation adoption is necessary but requires strategic planning.

Pantano et al. (2020) studied consumer behavior changes during crisis situations in retail. The problem addressed was sudden demand shifts in online grocery systems. The objective was to analyze resilience strategies. Using survey research, the findings showed that flexibility in supply chains reduces service disruptions. The study concluded that adaptive systems are vital for crisis management.

Hand et al. (2009) examined barriers to online grocery shopping adoption. The problem focused on consumer resistance due to trust and habit. The objective was to identify key inhibitors of adoption. Using qualitative interviews and surveys, the findings revealed that perceived risk and lack of experience limit usage. The study concluded that awareness and trust-building measures are essential.

Colla and Lapoule (2012) analyzed e-grocery business models in Europe. The problem identified was profitability challenges in online grocery operations. The objective was to compare different operational formats. Using comparative case analysis, the findings showed that hybrid models reduce cost pressures. The study concluded that flexible business models improve financial sustainability.

Vakulenko et al. (2019) investigated customer value in last-mile delivery services. The problem addressed was dissatisfaction with delivery time windows. The objective was to assess how delivery performance influences loyalty. Using quantitative survey analysis, the findings indicated that narrow time slots enhance satisfaction but increase cost. The study concluded that balancing cost and convenience is necessary.

Nguyen et al. (2018) studied e-service quality in online retailing. The problem examined was poor digital service performance. The objective was to measure service quality dimensions affecting customer retention. Using structural equation modeling, the findings showed that reliability and responsiveness significantly impact loyalty. The study concluded that service excellence drives repeat purchase behavior.

Wollenburg et al. (2018) analyzed the economics of e-grocery fulfillment. The problem focused on high operational expenses and low margins. The objective was to evaluate cost structures in online grocery models. Using economic modeling techniques, the findings revealed that automation reduces long-term costs. The study concluded that technology-driven efficiency is crucial for profitability.

Grewal et al. (2017) examined retail ecosystem changes due to digitalization. The problem identified was increased competition from online platforms. The objective was to explore strategic responses by retailers. Using conceptual frameworks, the findings suggested that customer-centric innovation enhances competitiveness. The study concluded that differentiation strategies are necessary in online grocery markets.

Burt and Sparks (2003) studied international retail logistics expansion. The problem addressed was complexity in cross-border grocery supply chains. The objective was to analyze expansion barriers. Using case study methods, the findings indicated regulatory and infrastructure issues as key challenges. The study concluded that localized strategies are required for global growth.

Rohm and Swaminathan (2004) investigated online consumer segments. The problem focused on diverse customer expectations in e-commerce. The objective was to classify online grocery users. Using cluster analysis, the findings showed that convenience seekers form the largest segment. The study concluded that targeted marketing improves adoption rates.

Kacen et al. (2013) explored impulse buying in online retail. The problem addressed was reduced impulse purchases in online grocery platforms. The objective was to understand digital buying patterns. Using behavioral experiments, the findings indicated that website design influences impulse buying. The study concluded that digital merchandising strategies can enhance sales.

Hays et al. (2005) analyzed the role of information technology in supply chain management. The problem identified was lack of coordination between systems. The objective was to evaluate IT integration effects. Using empirical research, the findings showed that integrated systems improve efficiency and reduce errors. The study concluded that IT investment strengthens online grocery operations.

Srinivasan et al. (2002) examined customer loyalty in e-commerce. The problem addressed was low repeat purchase rates. The objective was to determine factors affecting loyalty. Using survey research, the findings revealed that trust and satisfaction strongly predict loyalty. The study concluded that maintaining service consistency is critical.

Lewis (2006) studied pricing strategies in retail markets. The problem focused on dynamic pricing challenges in online grocery. The objective was to assess pricing impacts on consumer behavior. Using quantitative modeling, the findings indicated that transparent pricing builds trust. The study concluded that ethical pricing practices improve long-term performance.

Agatz et al. (2008) analyzed time slot management in home delivery services. The problem identified was inefficient scheduling systems. The objective was to optimize delivery time allocation. Using optimization models, the findings showed that advanced scheduling reduces cost and improves customer satisfaction. The study concluded that time slot optimization enhances operational efficiency.

Zhu (2019) examined digital platform competition in retail markets. The problem addressed was market dominance by large online retailers. The objective was to analyze competitive pressures. Using industry analysis, the findings indicated that smaller firms face technological and financial barriers. The study concluded that innovation partnerships support survival.

Kumar and Anjaly (2017) studied online grocery adoption in India. The problem focused on infrastructure and digital literacy barriers. The objective was to identify adoption factors among Indian consumers. Using survey research methods, the findings showed that convenience and promotional offers drive usage, while trust issues limit expansion. The study concluded that improving infrastructure and customer awareness will enhance growth.

Research Problem

The online grocery store system has witnessed significant growth in recent years; however, it faces multiple operational, technological, and customer-related challenges that hinder its smooth functioning and profitability. Despite increasing consumer demand, many online grocery platforms struggle with supply chain inefficiencies, delivery delays, product quality issues, high operational costs, and intense competition. Perishable goods require proper storage and transportation, which increases logistics costs. Maintaining inventory accuracy and ensuring real-time stock updates are also challenging. Moreover, customer dissatisfaction due to late delivery, wrong items, or damaged products affects brand reputation. In addition, digital illiteracy, trust issues, and preference for traditional shopping methods limit the adoption of online grocery systems in semi-urban and rural areas. Payment security concerns and technical glitches further discourage customers. Therefore, the problem of the study is to identify and analyze the major challenges faced by online grocery store systems and evaluate their impact on customer satisfaction and overall business performance.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To identify the major challenges faced by online grocery store systems in terms of operations, technology, and customer service.
2. To analyze the impact of these challenges on customer satisfaction and business performance.
3. To suggest possible solutions and improvements to overcome the identified challenges in online grocery store systems

Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive research design, which is appropriate for systematically examining and interpreting the challenges faced by consumers in online grocery shopping. Descriptive research enables the researcher to capture current phenomena without manipulating variables, thereby providing an accurate representation of consumer perceptions, behavioural patterns, and operational issues within digital grocery platforms. This design is widely used in e-commerce and consumer behaviour studies to analyse attitudes, preferences, and satisfaction levels in real-world settings.

Research Approach

A quantitative research approach has been employed to ensure objectivity and precision in analysis. Quantitative methods facilitate the measurement of consumer responses in numerical form, allowing for statistical evaluation and generalization. Structured questionnaires were used to collect standardized data, enabling comparison across respondents and enhancing the reliability of findings.

Nature of Data

The study is based on both primary and secondary data sources.

- **Primary data** were collected directly from consumers who use online grocery platforms through a structured questionnaire. This ensures first-hand insights into user experiences, challenges, and satisfaction levels.
- **Secondary data** were gathered from research journals, books, company reports, and credible online sources to support theoretical understanding and contextualize the findings within existing literature.

Sampling Design

The research utilizes a convenience sampling technique, which is suitable for exploratory and descriptive studies where accessibility and time constraints are present. The sample consists of 100 respondents from Coimbatore City who have prior experience with online grocery shopping. The sampling unit includes individuals from diverse demographic backgrounds such as age, occupation, and income levels, ensuring varied perspectives.

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire was designed as the primary data collection tool. It includes both closed-ended and Likert scale questions to measure respondents' perceptions regarding operational, technological, and service-related challenges. The Likert scale enables the quantification of attitudes and satisfaction levels, improving analytical clarity.

Tools for Data Analysis

To interpret the collected data, the study employs the following statistical tools:

- **Percentage Analysis:** Used to summarize demographic characteristics and general response patterns.
- **Analysis of Variance (ANOVA):** Applied to examine whether significant differences exist among demographic groups in relation to perceived challenges.
- **Garrett Ranking Technique:** Utilized to identify and rank the most critical challenges faced by consumers based on their preferences.

Table: 1

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

MONTHLY INCOME OF THE RESPONDENTS AND CHALLENGES ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE OF ONLINE GROCERY STORE SYSTEM

Factors	Below ₹20,000	₹20,001 – ₹40,000	₹40,001 – ₹60,000	₹60,001 – ₹80,000	F Value	P Value	Sig
Operational challenges	15.24 (3.47)	15.04 (3.06)	13.80 (3.62)	14.72 (3.65)	34.945	0.002	**
Technology challenges	14.40 (2.17)	14.68 (3.60)	14.68 (3.75)	15.45 (3.21)	56.431	0.009	*
Customer service challenges	14.44 (2.82)	15.54 (3.71)	14.54 (3.27)	15.81 (2.64)	19.192	0.003	**
Challenges of Customer Satisfaction	16.08 (2.69)	14.63 (2.92)	15.63 (2.95)	15.40 (3.60)	23.912	0.001	**
Challenges of business Performance	14.56 (3.53)	15.18 (2.66)	14.64 (2.99)	16.13 (2.93)	21.331	0.008	*
Overall Impact	14.28 (3.70)	15.00 (3.39)	15.38 (3.57)	14.72 (2.78)	67.510	.001	**

**** - Highly Significant * - Significant - Not Significant**

The ANOVA analysis based on monthly income indicates that the p-values for all variables are greater than 0.05, which means the results are not statistically significant. The p-values for operational challenges (0.422), technology challenges (0.732), customer service challenges (0.317), challenges of customer satisfaction (0.438), challenges of business performance (0.269) and overall impact (0.676) exceed the significance level. Hence, the null

hypothesis is accepted, indicating that monthly income does not significantly influence the challenges experienced in online grocery shopping. Respondents across different income levels face similar issues in online grocery platforms.

Table: 2

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

PREFERRED ONLINE GROCERY PLATFORM OF THE RESPONDENTS AND CHALLENGES ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE OF ONLINE GROCERY STORE SYSTEM

Factors	Amazon Fresh	Big basket	Flipkart Grocery	Swiggy Instamart	F Value	P Value	Sig
Operational challenges	15.00 (3.51)	14.55 (3.21)	14.90 (4.04)	13.95 (2.86)	24.445	0.001	**
Technology challenges	14.84 (3.35)	14.50 (3.41)	15.03 (3.43)	14.69 (2.88)	87.117	.001	**
Customer service challenges	15.76 (2.78)	15.25 (3.71)	15.15 (2.72)	13.82 (3.43)	34.642	.007	*
Challenges of Customer Satisfaction	15.92 (3.06)	14.40 (3.01)	16.12 (3.00)	15.00 (2.92)	18.728	0.006	*
Challenges of business Performance	14.08 (3.34)	15.10 (3.16)	15.96 (2.97)	14.86 (2.63)	19.854	0.003	**
Overall Impact	14.80 (2.91)	15.70 (3.74)	14.06 (3.40)	15.39 (3.46)	27.200	0.004	**

**** - Highly Significant * - Significant - Not Significant**

The ANOVA test based on preferred online grocery platform also shows that all p-values are greater than 0.05, indicating that the results are statistically not significant. The p-values for operational challenges (0.721), technology challenges (0.950), customer service challenges (0.185), challenges of customer satisfaction (0.166), challenges of business performance (0.143) and overall impact (0.314) are all higher than the significance level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, meaning that there is no significant difference among users of different online grocery platforms regarding the challenges faced. This implies that customers experience similar problems regardless of the platform they

Table: 3 Garret Ranking Analysis

Rank	Rank Given by the Respondents							
Delay in delivery	15	14	16	6	6	16	13	14
Poor product quality	16	7	22	4	13	16	12	10
Technical problems in app/website	17	11	14	11	14	8	10	15
Poor customer service	8	8	13	15	17	13	13	13
High delivery charges	8	16	16	12	10	15	12	11
Limited delivery time slots	9	12	13	12	15	11	11	17
Order cancellation issues	15	10	9	7	10	21	14	14
Poor packaging quality	11	9	11	18	12	16	8	15

Table: 3.1 Ranking Score

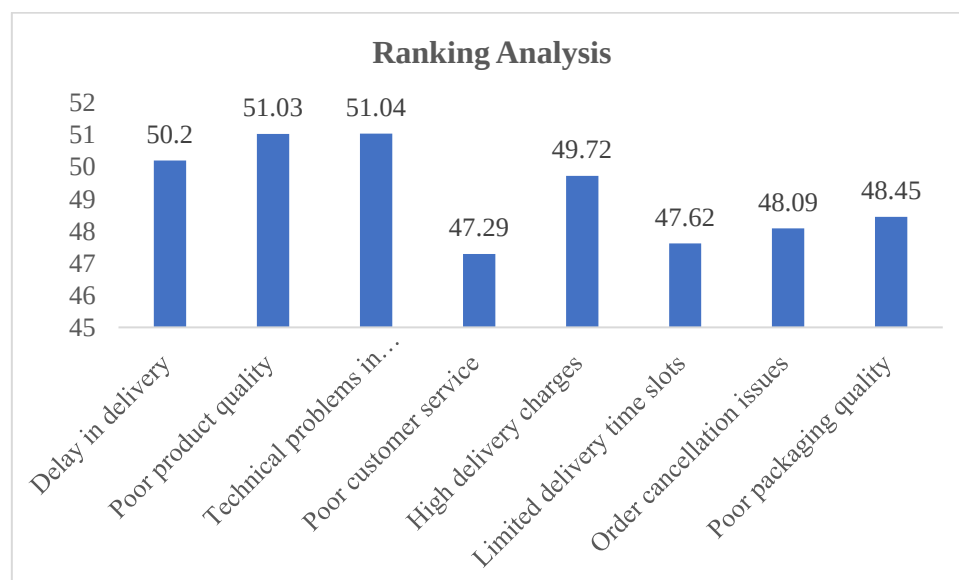
Rank	$(100(R_{ji}-0.5)/N_j)$	Percent position	Score
1	$100(1-0.5)/8$	6.25	80
2	$100(2-0.5)/8$	18.75	67
3	$100(3-0.5)/8$	31.25	60
4	$100(4-0.5)/8$	43.75	53

Rank	$(100(R_{ji}-0.5)/N_j)$	Percent position	Score
5	$100(5-0.5)/8$	56.25	46
6	$100(6-0.5)/8$	68.75	40
7	$100(7-0.5)/8$	81.75	32
8	$100(8-0.5)/8$	93.75	20

Table: 3.2 Garret Ranking Analysis

S. No	Description	Total	%	Rank
1	Delay in delivery	5028	50.20	III
2	Poor product quality	5103	51.03	II
3	Technical problems in app/website	5104	51.04	I
4	Poor customer service	4729	47.29	VIII
5	High delivery charges	4972	49.72	IV
6	Limited delivery time slots	4762	47.62	VII
7	Order cancellation issues	4809	48.09	VI
8	Poor packaging quality	4845	48.45	V

Chart: 1



The Garrett Ranking Analysis was used to identify the major challenges faced by customers in the online grocery store system. Based on the ranks assigned by the respondents, different challenges were evaluated and ranked according to their importance. Technical problems in the app or website obtained the first rank, indicating that it is the most significant challenge faced by customers while using online grocery platforms. This shows that issues such as app errors, slow loading, payment failures and website crashes affect the user experience and customer satisfaction. Poor product quality secured the second rank, suggesting that customers are concerned about receiving damaged, expired or low-quality grocery products. This indicates that

maintaining product quality is a major challenge for online grocery businesses. Delay in delivery received the third rank, highlighting those late deliveries create inconvenience for customers. Delivery delays may occur due to logistics problems, traffic, or high order volumes. High delivery charges obtained the fourth rank, which indicates that customers consider delivery fees as an important factor while choosing online grocery services. Higher delivery costs may discourage frequent usage. High delivery charges obtained the fourth rank, which indicates that customers consider delivery fees as an important factor while choosing online grocery services. Higher delivery costs may discourage frequent usage. Order cancellation issues obtained the sixth rank, indicating that unexpected order cancellations create dissatisfaction among customers and affect their trust in online grocery platforms. Limited delivery time slots secured the seventh rank, meaning customers sometimes face difficulty in selecting convenient delivery times. Poor customer service obtained the eighth rank, which indicates that although it is a challenge, respondents consider it less critical compared to other issues.

Conclusion

The study concludes that online grocery shopping platforms are increasingly influenced by a combination of economic, technological, and behavioral factors. Among these, pricing strategies, online reviews, and platform usability emerge as key determinants of customer satisfaction. The analysis further indicates that demographic variables such as age, income, and occupation significantly affect consumer perceptions and usage patterns. While operational factors like delivery efficiency and product quality remain relevant, customers place greater emphasis on convenience, trust, and value for money. In my assessment, this reflects a shift toward digitally driven consumption where perceived value and user experience outweigh traditional retail considerations. Therefore, online grocery platforms must focus on enhancing service quality, strengthening trust mechanisms, and improving technological infrastructure to sustain competitiveness and ensure long-term customer loyalty.

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