Zomato UX Case Study: Making the Experience Human

I. The Big Picture: Why We Need to Fix This Now

1.1. What This Study is All About

This case study is a deep dive into the Zomato app, looking beyond the flashy features to the moments when users stumble, hesitate, or even abandon their orders. We're focusing on the three critical stages of ordering food—Finding it, Paying for it, and Managing it afterward—to pinpoint what exactly kills a user's momentum and trust.
Zomato's audience is savvy. They are urban professionals, typically aged 18 to 35, who are comfortable with technology and expect things to be fast, reliable, and convenient . They prioritize variety, speed, and reliability . Zomato does a great job of getting people in the door—the onboarding is smooth, and about 40% of new users stick around right away. They also build loyalty through programs like Zomato Gold .
But here's the problem: The core experience—the part where you actually order food every day—is surprisingly frustrating. While they keep you informed once the order is cooking ("Preparing," "Out for Delivery") , the initial process of selecting and paying is marred by confusion and anxiety. This inconsistency undermines the entire idea of "convenience" , and if the ordering process is a headache, users will simply leave for a competitor who makes life easier . Our goal is to propose simple, strategic design changes that remove these everyday irritations, restore confidence, and make ordering feel effortless again.

1.2. The Business Case: Happy Users Mean Better Results

These proposed changes aren't just aesthetic touch-ups; they are designed to directly impact Zomato's bottom line. By solving common user anxieties, we aim to:
1. **Stop Cart Abandonment:** Hidden costs are the number one reason people ditch their carts globally. By being honest about fees, we ensure fewer users get angry and click away at the last moment.
2. **Increase Order Efficiency:** Making the search filters smarter means users find what they want faster, reducing the time it takes to place an order.
3. **Lower Support Costs:** By allowing users to quickly cancel an order themselves right after a mistake, we cut down on the number of expensive, time-consuming calls to customer support .

II. Zomato's Strengths: The Good Foundation

2.1. What Zomato Gets Right

Zomato is a market leader, particularly in India . It has successfully handled massive growth, expanding into smaller cities and integrating quick commerce (Blinkit) . Its core strengths are its

variety of cuisines and its reputation for quick, dependable service .
Crucially, Zomato has built a reliable back-end experience:

- **Smooth Start:** The initial sign-up process is easy, and Zomato is one of the few delivery apps to support multiple local languages.
- **Post-Order Trust:** Once you place an order, Zomato is transparent. You know exactly what's happening, with clear updates like "Preparing" and "Out for Delivery".
- *Ethical Payments:* The app uses careful design during checkout. For instance, if you choose Cash on Delivery (COD), it brings you to a separate review page with a big "Place Order" button. This deliberate step assures you that the system is behaving predictably, which is vital when money is involved.

The Contradiction in Design

Despite these excellent foundational elements—a great start, strong loyalty, and transparent tracking—the actual process of browsing menus and confirming the payment is flawed. It's like having a beautiful car that runs smoothly, but the steering wheel keeps locking up mid-turn. The smooth entry is quickly ruined by a frustrating transactional experience, making the platform feel less "seamless" than it aims to be .

III. The User Journey: Where Things Go Wrong

Our analysis of how users navigate the app reveals friction points that fall into three main areas.

3.1. Finding Food: Lost in the Clutter

The discovery phase—where you choose a restaurant—is needlessly difficult, causing what we call **Information Overload** .

- **Visual Clutter:** Restaurant pages are often jammed with information, making it hard to quickly scan and pick out the important details. The design is so sprawling that users can often only see *one* restaurant card clearly on their phone screen at a time . This means endless, tiring scrolling just to compare options, unlike competitors who fit two or three cards on the screen, allowing for faster comparison .
- **Search Limitations:** The search tools aren't smart enough for the power user . It's hard to find a specific dish or apply detailed filters based on needs like "Vegan," "Jain," or even a specific price range . This forces users into a slow, manual search that wastes time and patience .

3.2. Payment and Checkout: The Moment of Panic

The checkout process introduces anxiety and distrust, leading directly to users quitting their order.

- **The Hidden Fee Shock:** This is the biggest trust killer. Users frequently complain that the final payment screen includes "surprise charges" that weren't clearly shown upfront—like vaguely described delivery fees or surge pricing. This practice, known as a "dark pattern" in e-commerce , makes users feel tricked, causing an immediate, severe loss of confidence right before the final commit . Undisclosed costs are a key driver of cart abandonment everywhere.

- **Checkout Anxiety:** When users reach the final payment screen, Zomato omits a crucial piece of information: **the delivery address** . This is a massive reassurance gap. Unlike some competitors who proudly display the address for confirmation , Zomato forces the user to rely on memory or awkwardly backtrack, introducing unnecessary panic and friction during a high-stakes financial moment.

3.3. Post-Order: Losing Control

What happens if you make a mistake? The process is a nightmare.
- **Complex Cancellation:** If a user realizes they ordered the wrong thing and needs to cancel immediately, the system offers no easy, direct button . Instead, users are forced into a multi-step, time-consuming chat with customer support . This turns a simple mistake into a frustrating, negative interaction, violating the basic principle that users should have **Control and Freedom** to correct their errors .

IV. The Three Core Problems That Need Fixing

These friction points boil down to three fundamental design flaws that negatively impact conversion and trust.

The Problem (What the User Feels)	The Design Flaw (The Technical Error)	The Business Impact
I'm Lost in the Clutter	**Inefficient Information Architecture:** Too much empty space; restaurant cards are too large, forcing excessive scrolling .	Slower ordering; lower conversion from browsing to placing an item in the cart.
I Feel Cheated by Hidden Fees	**Lack of Financial Transparency:** Vague or concealed charges that only appear at the final payment step.	High cart abandonment (surprise fees are a top reason) ; immediate erosion of customer trust .
I Can't Fix My Mistake	**Impaired User Control:** No direct way to cancel an order immediately , and the address is missing at the crucial final payment step .	Higher support costs; increased post-order anxiety and negative user feedback .

V. Design Interventions: Making the Experience Better

Based on our analysis, we propose three practical, high-impact design improvements.

Improvement 1: Smart Discovery and Efficient Browsing (Fixing "I'm Lost in the Clutter")

We need to make it incredibly fast to find the right restaurant and make it easy to compare choices without endless scrolling.

1A: Optimized Restaurant Card Density (Sketch Concept)

We will adjust the screen layout to efficiently display more options. The card design will be tightened to allow users to see **at least two full restaurant cards** and a glimpse of a third on their mobile screen. Essential information—rating, delivery time, and price—will use clearer visual hierarchy (high-contrast text and simple icons) so users can scan quickly . The card must still feature a beautiful, high-quality photo, as visual appeal is essential for selling food online.

1B: Persistent, Advanced Filtering

We need filters that go beyond the basics. A dedicated, sticky **"Filter" button** (separate from the "Sort" function) will be added to the main listing screen. Tapping it opens a comprehensive menu with logically grouped options :
- **For the Diet-Conscious:** Highly specific toggles like Vegan, Jain, or Gluten-Free.
- **For the Planner:** Filters for shortest delivery time or distance.
- **For the Saver:** Filters for Zomato Gold benefits or percentage discounts.

Once applied, the active filters will appear as small, dismissible "chips" right under the search bar, ensuring the user is always aware of their current settings (Visibility of System Status).

Improvement 2: The Transparent Pricing Modal (Fixing "I Feel Cheated by Hidden Fees")

We must eliminate surprise charges by practicing full financial transparency before the user commits to payment .

2A: Fee Breakdown Call-to-Action (CTA)

On the cart summary screen, right next to the "Final Amount," we will place a highly visible **"See Full Fee Breakdown"** link or icon. This proactive disclosure demonstrates honesty and gives users full control over their financial decision.

2B: Itemized Transparency Modal (Sketch Concept)

When the user taps the breakdown, a non-dismissible modal will pop up, detailing every single penny.

Sketch Description: The modal has a clear, non-negotiable **"Order Cost Breakdown"** title.
1. **Your Items:** Shows the Subtotal and Coupon Deductions (if any).
2. **The Charges (The Trust Section):** This is where honesty is paramount.
   - **Delivery Fee:** Shows the exact amount. If it's a dynamic charge (surge pricing), a small line of text will explicitly explain *why* the fee is high (e.g., "High demand in your area").
   - **Platform Fee/Service Fee:** Clearly state the amount and the percentage (e.g., "15% of Subtotal"). A short tooltip can explain what this fee covers (e.g., "Covers technology, support, and platform operations").
   - **Taxes:** Clearly itemized.
3. **Final Total:** The total amount is displayed large and bold at the very bottom.

This detailed breakdown ensures no fee is vague or bundled, repairing the trust deficit .

Improvement 3: Enhanced Checkout Security and Freedom (Fixing "I Can't Fix My Mistake")

We need to make users feel secure about their destination and give them a quick escape route if they make a mistake.

3A: Mandatory Delivery Address Confirmation

On the final payment confirmation screen, a prominent, **sticky card** must be placed at the top clearly stating: **"Deliver To: [User's Full Address]"**. A highly visible "Edit" button must be next to it. Displaying the address right here is crucial for reassurance and aligns with best practices .

3B: Timed, Direct Order Cancellation Button (Sketch Concept)

Immediately after the order is successfully placed, the tracking screen must feature a prominent, secondary button: **"Cancel Order Now."**
- This button will be active for a short, predetermined window (e.g., 60-90 seconds) before the restaurant begins preparation.
- A clear, visual **countdown timer** must accompany the button. This manages user expectations, showing exactly how much time they have to act .
- Once the timer expires, the button should gracefully change to a less urgent state, such as **"Contact Support for Cancellation,"** to reflect the system's operational reality .

This intervention grants users immediate **Control and Freedom**, turning a stressful event into a simple self-service action .

VI. What Happens Next

These three strategic design improvements are expected to resolve the core user pain points. By making the search fast, the pricing honest, and the control immediate, Zomato can expect to see higher conversion rates and much happier customers.

Focus Area	The Goal in Human Terms	Expected Business Outcome
Discovery (Filters & IA)	Helping people find the *perfect* meal, *faster*.	Estimated 10–15% increase in orders started after browsing .
Checkout (Transparency)	Proving that Zomato is honest about its pricing.	Estimated 5–8% reduction in users quitting their order at the last step.
Post-Order (Control)	Letting users quickly correct their own mistakes.	Less stress for users; reduction in customer support tickets by 15–20% .

Moving Forward

Beyond these immediate fixes, the next step should be to explore truly innovative, game-changing features. The most exciting opportunity is developing a true **multi-order functionality**. Imagine placing a single order that includes a pizza from one place and a dessert from another. Currently, the system forces users to manage separate, concurrent orders. Implementing a consolidated, multi-restaurant order feature would eliminate a huge frustration

and become a major competitive advantage for Zomato.

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