

Sociological Analysis of Food-delivery Services

The instant the hunger-clock in my body strikes I see myself reaching for my phone, opening multiple instances of such food-delivery applications and drooling over the deceiving images being portrayed in a linear fashion. In the blink of an eye, I then spot myself with my debit card in the other hand, paying for the food I ordered and expecting it to turn up on my door in the next 16 minutes! I hope this whole picture makes one realise the impact of such applications - psychologically, physiologically and even sociologically - on our daily lives. The objective of this article is to emphasise on the sociological influences caused by food-delivery applications like Zomato, Food Panda, Swiggy, UberEats, etc. using tools of Sociological Imagination¹ and Sociological Consciousness².

I, personally, consider the uprise of this digital technology of food-delivery applications³ to be a sociological problem; its something that demands an explanation. Explanation on why so many people are attracted by it⁴, on how the eating habits of us humans have changed substantially, on how our social interactions are altered. Talking about social interactions, I don't even remember the last time I've gone out to a nearby eatery with my friends. The conversations that take place in such a setting are being omitted. Although, on the other hand, we may find ourselves delving in some mild social interaction with people like the delivery staff, but is it significant and does it really matter in our lives? The transformed behaviour of the delivery staff

¹ "Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The sociological imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press."

² "Berger, Peter L. 1963. *Invitation to sociology; a humanistic perspective*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday."

³ "Online Food Delivery - India | Statista Market Forecast."

<https://www.statista.com/outlook/374/119/online-food-delivery/india>.

⁴ "Online Food Delivery - India | Statista Market Forecast."

<https://www.statista.com/outlook/374/119/online-food-delivery/india>.

due to the introduction of incentives on receiving a 5-star rating; is it something to worry about? Is this what the Black Mirror episode “Nosedive”⁵ hints at? Another question to ask is, is this a trouble or an issue⁶? Seeing the data cited above and the crooked array of delivery staff outside the IIIT-B hostel every night points towards the direction of it being an issue.

Moving forward, it’s crucial to raise sociological questions, which I intend to, using the gadgets provided by the Sociological Imagination⁷.

- What are the societal structures that brought this drastic switch to food-delivery options? How has the fabric of society changed from its primitive form?

As summarised in this Forbes’ article, people are turning into “time-starved, convenience-seeking consumers”⁸. We, humans, are always on the run. This fast-paced way of living has crept into all parts of our lives. We need everything to be quick, smooth and convenient. Everything should be just away from the click of a button.

Another thread in the fabric of the society that has changed is the rise in women workforce⁹ ¹⁰. This raises a Sociological Consciousness¹¹ question as well - why are only women required to cook in the house? Why is it considered “normal”?

A tiny but significant factor could also be brought by, at least in India, is the western influence (according to me). People, inspired by the movies and TV Series, tend to order “western” food which usually won’t be cooked in their own kitchen.

⁵ "Black Mirror" Nosedive (TV Episode 2016) - IMDb." <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5497778/>.

⁶ "Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The sociological imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press." (Pg. 8)

⁷ "Mills, C. Wright. 1959. *The sociological imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press."

⁸ "Millennials Are Ordering More Food Delivery, But Are They Killing The" 26 Jun. 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andriacheng/2018/06/26/millennials-are-ordering-food-for-delivery-more-but-are-they-killing-the-kitchen-too/>.

⁹ "Key facts and trends in female labor force participation." 16 Oct. 2017, <https://ourworldindata.org/female-labor-force-participation-key-facts>.

¹⁰ "Online Food Service in India: An Analysis | AIMS Institutes, Bangalore." <https://theaims.ac.in/resources/online-food-service-in-india-an-analysis.html>. Accessed 2 Feb. 2019.

¹¹ "Berger, Peter L. 1963. *Invitation to sociology; a humanistic perspective*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday." (Pg. 25)

- What are the factors which contributed to popularising this digital technology in this timeline? What are the characteristics of such sociological factors which weren't present in history?

With the surge in real estate prices¹², people are more inclined towards investing in the food-delivery industry^{13 14} as you don't need as much space to dine as before.

The growth in the production of smartphones to cater to demanding consumers is yet another factor paving the way to success for this digital technology.

With more people now connected to the internet and the whole technology being easily accessible¹⁵, it's quite apparent as to why food-delivery services have achieved so much success in this timeline of our history.

- Who are the people who're ordering food? Who are the delivery staff? Where do they locate themselves in the map of the society?

According to this Forbes' article¹⁶ and this article by AIMS¹⁷, "the millennials are most likely to order than their parents"¹⁸. Taking into account my limited knowledge (including what I see daily in my hostel), the number of hostellers ordering in daily is also a substantial amount. Couples where both the individuals work, points in the same direction as well. The delivery staff, to the extent I see on their Zomato bio, are usually 12th graduates or even underqualified. With no data to back me up (limited to my extensive search

¹² "IMF Global Housing Watch." <https://www.imf.org/external/research/housing/>.

¹³ "The popularity of India's food-delivery apps is making India's ... - Scroll.in." 28 Nov. 2018, <https://scroll.in/article/903509/the-popularity-of-indias-food-delivery-apps-is-making-indias-restaurants-think-differently>.

¹⁴ "Online Food Service in India: An Analysis | AIMS Institutes, Bangalore." <https://theaims.ac.in/resources/online-food-service-in-india-an-analysis.html>.

¹⁵ "Individuals using the Internet (% of" <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS>.

¹⁶ "Millennials Are Ordering More Food Delivery, But Are They Killing The" 26 Jun. 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andriacheng/2018/06/26/millennials-are-ordering-food-for-delivery-more-but-are-they-killing-the-kitchen-too/>.

¹⁷ "Online Food Service in India: An Analysis | AIMS Institutes, Bangalore." <https://theaims.ac.in/resources/online-food-service-in-india-an-analysis.html>.

¹⁸ "Millennials Are Ordering More Food Delivery, But Are They Killing The" 26 Jun. 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andriacheng/2018/06/26/millennials-are-ordering-food-for-delivery-more-but-are-they-killing-the-kitchen-too/>.

results) on identifying the social location of such people, I wasn't able to lay any concrete analysis.

One who possesses the sociological conscious mind¹⁹ would also question the state of the delivery staff which is male-dominated²⁰. Is this also a case of 'Social Relativism'²¹? A lady staff delivering my food would be completely normal to me but on the other hand, it might raise the eyebrows of numerous people.

¹⁹ "Berger, Peter L. 1963. *Invitation to sociology; a humanistic perspective*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday." (Pg. 25)

²⁰ "Chart: The percentage of women and men in each profession - The" 7 Mar. 2017, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/03/06/chart-the-percentage-women-and-men-each-profession/GBX22YsWI0XaeHghwXfE4H/story.html>.

²¹ "Social relativism - Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy." <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/social-relativism/v-1>.