

An Evaluation of Marketing Strategies in the Food Delivery Industry: Understanding Consumer Preferences and Service Quality in Nueva Ecija

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Abstract: This study evaluated the marketing strategies in the food delivery industry in Nueva Ecija, with emphasis on consumer preferences and perceptions of service quality. Using a descriptive–quantitative design, data were gathered from 320 respondents who were active users of food delivery platforms such as GrabFood, Foodpanda, and ShopeeFood. Stratified–purposive sampling ensured representation across municipalities and user profiles. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire covering demographic profile, consumer preferences (price and affordability, convenience and accessibility, variety of choices, promotional strategies, and delivery speed and reliability), and service quality dimensions based on SERVQUAL (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles). Results revealed that affordability, convenience, promotions, and reliable service delivery were the most influential factors shaping consumer preferences.

Furthermore, service quality dimensions were rated positively overall, though respondents emphasized the need for improvements in timeliness, personalization, and digital updates. Correlation analysis indicated significant relationships between demographic characteristics—particularly age, sex, education, and income—and consumer preferences as well as perceptions of service quality, leading to the rejection of several null hypotheses. The findings highlight that marketing strategies and service quality are strongly shaped by demographic variations, emphasizing the importance of targeted promotions, improved delivery reliability, and continuous innovation in digital platforms.

Keywords: Consumer Preferences, Service Quality, Food Delivery, Marketing Strategies, SERVQUAL

I. Introduction

The food delivery industry has experienced rapid growth in recent years, driven by technological advancements, changing consumer lifestyles, and the increasing demand for convenience. Online platforms such as GrabFood, Foodpanda, and ShopeeFood have transformed how consumers access food services, offering accessibility, speed, and variety (Ray et al., 2019). In the Philippines, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas like Nueva Ecija, food delivery services have expanded rapidly, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated digital adoption in food consumption (Manallos, 2022).

Despite this growth, several issues continue to challenge the industry. Consumer preferences in provincial areas may differ significantly from those in highly urbanized cities. While convenience and timeliness are valued, affordability, trust in service quality, and localized marketing strategies strongly influence consumer decisions (Cho et al., 2019). Furthermore, service quality problems such as delays, inaccurate orders, and poor customer service remain barriers to sustaining customer satisfaction and loyalty (Prasetyo et al., 2021).

Existing studies have examined consumer behavior in food delivery primarily in urban contexts, with an emphasis on technology adoption, ease of use, and user experience (Alalwan, 2020). However, there is limited empirical research on provincial regions such as Nueva Ecija, where consumer expectations, purchasing power, and service accessibility present unique dynamics. This gap highlights the need for a deeper evaluation of marketing strategies in food delivery services beyond metropolitan areas.

Therefore, this study seeks to evaluate the marketing strategies in the food delivery industry in Nueva Ecija, with a focus on consumer preferences and service quality. By addressing this research gap, the study aims to provide insights that will help food delivery platforms and local businesses enhance their marketing approaches, improve service quality, and strengthen competitiveness in the provincial retail landscape.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to evaluate the marketing strategies in the food delivery industry in Nueva Ecija, focusing on consumer preferences and perceptions of service quality. Specifically, it sought:

1. to determine the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and average monthly income
2. to identify consumer preferences in the food delivery industry in relation to price and affordability, convenience and accessibility, variety of choices, promotional strategies, and delivery speed and reliability;

3. to assess the service quality of food delivery platforms in terms of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles;
4. to determine whether there is a significant relationship between profile of the respondents with consumer preferences and service quality.
5. to propose recommendations that will enhance the marketing strategies and service quality of food delivery platforms in the province.

II. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive–quantitative design to evaluate marketing strategies in the food delivery industry in Nueva Ecija, focusing on consumer preferences and service quality. A total of 320 respondents, consisting of adult users of food delivery platforms such as GrabFood, Foodpanda, and ShopeeFood, were selected using a stratified–purposive sampling technique to ensure representation across municipalities and user frequency. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire divided into three parts: respondents’ profile, consumer preferences (price, convenience, variety, promotions, delivery reliability), and service quality using the SERVQUAL dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles). Responses were rated on a 4-point Likert scale, and the instrument was validated by experts and pilot-tested, yielding a Cronbach’s alpha of 89%. After securing permission, surveys were administered both online and face-to-face, with incomplete responses excluded. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation for descriptive results, while t-test, and Pearson r were used to test significant differences and relationships at a 0.05 level of significance. Ethical standards were observed, ensuring informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and academic use of data only.

III. Results and Discussions

Part 1. Profile of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent
Below 18	11	3.4
19 - 29	69	21.6
30 - 39	71	22.2
40 - 49	138	43.1
Above 50	31	9.7
Total	320	100
Sex	Frequency	Percent
Male	147	45.9
Female	173	54.1
Total	320	100
Civil Status	Frequency	Percent
Single	106	33.1
married	183	57.2
Separated	18	5.6
Widow	13	4.1
Total	320	100
Educational Attainment	Frequency	Percent
Elementary Level / Graduate	4	1.3
High School Level / Graduate	97	30.3
College Level	203	63.4
Postgraduate (Master’s/Doctorate	16	5
Total	320	100

Average Monthly Income	Frequency	Percent
Below ₱10,000	9	2.8
10,001 – ₱20,000	146	45.6
₱20,001 – ₱30,000	134	41.9
₱30,001 – ₱40,000	19	5.9
₱40,001 – ₱50,000	9	2.8
Above ₱50,000	3	0.9
Total	320	100

The study involved 320 respondents from Nueva Ecija to evaluate marketing strategies in the food delivery industry, with emphasis on consumer preferences and service quality.

In terms of age, the majority of respondents belonged to the 40–49 age group (138 or 43.1%), followed by those aged 30–39 (71 or 22.2%) and 19–29 (69 or 21.6%). A smaller proportion came from the above 50 age group (31 or 9.7%), while the least represented were respondents below 18 years old (11 or 3.4%). This distribution indicates that middle-aged adults are the dominant users of food delivery services in the province.

With respect to sex, there were slightly more female respondents (173 or 54.1%) compared to male respondents (147 or 45.9%), suggesting that women are more engaged in using or managing food delivery services.

As to civil status, the largest portion of respondents were married (183 or 57.2%), followed by those who were single (106 or 33.1%). A small number reported being separated (18 or 5.6%) and widowed (13 or 4.1%). This shows that food delivery is used across different family conditions but is most prevalent among married individuals.

For educational attainment, the majority of respondents were college level/graduate (203 or 63.4%), while high school level/graduate accounted for 97 (30.3%). A few respondents had postgraduate degrees (16 or 5%), and only 4 (1.3%) reported being at the elementary level/graduate. This suggests that food delivery customers are predominantly educated, with many having attained at least a college-level education.

Regarding average monthly income, most respondents fell within the ₱10,001–₱20,000 bracket (146 or 45.6%), followed closely by those earning ₱20,001–₱30,000 (134 or 41.9%). Smaller percentages earned ₱30,001–₱40,000 (19 or 5.9%), below ₱10,000 (9 or 2.8%), and ₱40,001–₱50,000 (9 or 2.8%). Only 3 respondents (0.9%) reported an income above ₱50,000. This profile highlights that the majority of users come from the lower-middle to middle-income brackets, which may influence their consumer preferences and sensitivity to price and promotions.

Part 2. Consumer preferences in the food delivery industry in relation to price and affordability, convenience and accessibility, variety of choices, promotional strategies, and delivery speed and reliability

	Price and Affordability	W.M.	S.D.	V.D.
1.	The prices of food offered in delivery platforms are reasonable for my budget.	2.91	0.28	A.
2.	I consider delivery charges affordable when deciding to place an order.	3.07	0.26	A.
3.	I prefer ordering from platforms that provide budget-friendly meal options.	3.12	0.50	A.
4.	The overall cost (including delivery fee) influences my decision to order food online.	3.23	0.42	A.
5.	Discounts and affordable bundles make me more likely to use food delivery services.	2.99	0.18	A.
	A.W.M.	3.06	0.27	A.
	Convenience and Accessibility	W.M.	S.D.	V.D.
1.	I find food delivery services easy to use because they save me time and effort.	2.96	0.20	A.
2.	I use food delivery apps because they are accessible anytime I need them.	3.13	0.34	A.
3.	Food delivery services are convenient when I cannot prepare meals at home.	3.17	0.38	A.

4.	The availability of delivery options in my area influences my choice to order food.	3.25	0.43	S.A.
5.	Ordering through mobile apps is more convenient than dining out.	3.14	0.14	A.
	A.W.M.	3.13	0.31	A.
	Variety of Choices	W.M.	S.D.	V.D.
1.	I prefer food delivery platforms that offer a wide range of restaurant options.	3.03	0.23	A.
2.	The variety of cuisines available in food delivery apps meets my preferences.	3.17	0.37	A.
3.	Having multiple food categories (e.g., snacks, drinks, full meals) makes delivery apps more appealing.	3.23	0.42	A.
4.	I am more likely to use platforms that regularly add new food options.	3.29	0.45	S.A.
5.	Food delivery platforms provide enough variety to satisfy both personal and family needs.	3.10	0.12	A.
	A.W.M.	3.16	0.31	A.
	Promotional Strategies	W.M.	S.D.	V.D.
1.	I am influenced to order when food delivery apps offer discounts and vouchers.	7	0.38	A.
2.	Free delivery promos encourage me to use food delivery services more frequently.	9	0.28	A.
3.	I tend to try new restaurants if they are promoted in food delivery apps.	7	0.38	A.
4.	Promotional notifications and advertisements affect my decision to order.	4	0.68	A.
5.	Loyalty rewards or points from apps motivate me to continue using their services.	6	0.14	A.
	A.W.M.	1	0.34	A.
	Delivery Speed and Reliability	W.M.	S.D.	V.D.
1.	Fast delivery is an important factor in my decision to use food delivery services.	6	0.20	A.
2.	I am more satisfied with food delivery when orders consistently arrive on time.	3	0.34	A.
3.	Reliable delivery services make me trust a platform more.	7	0.38	A.
4.	Delays in delivery discourage me from ordering again.	5	0.43	S.A.
5.	Accurate delivery (correct items and on-time arrival) affects my overall satisfaction.	4	1.14	A.
	A.W.M.	3	0.31	A.

Legend: Strongly Agree (S.A), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (S.A.)

This table shows the results on consumer preferences in the food delivery industry in terms of price and affordability, convenience and accessibility, variety of choices, promotional strategies, and delivery speed and reliability. It highlights the highest and lowest weighted means, along with the average weighted mean and standard deviation to reflect response consistency and overall agreement.

Price and Affordability

In terms of price and affordability, the highest-rated statement was “*The overall cost (including delivery fee) influences my decision to order food online*” with a weighted mean (WM) of 3.23, interpreted as Agree, while the lowest-rated was “*The prices of food offered in delivery platforms are reasonable for my budget*” with a WM of 2.91, also interpreted as Agree. The overall Average Weighted Mean (AWM) for this variable was 3.06 with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.27. The relatively low SD indicates that respondents’ answers were consistent, showing that affordability plays a moderately important role in shaping consumer preferences.

Convenience and Accessibility

For convenience and accessibility, the statement with the highest mean was *“The availability of delivery options in my area influences my choice to order food”* with a WM of 3.25, interpreted as Strongly Agree. The lowest-rated item was *“I find food delivery services easy to use because they save me time and effort”* with a WM of 2.96, interpreted as Agree. The variable obtained an AWM of 3.13 with an SD of 0.31, indicating that responses were fairly uniform. This means that respondents generally agreed that convenience is a key factor influencing their use of food delivery services.

Variety of Choices

Regarding variety of choices, the highest-rated statement was *“I am more likely to use platforms that regularly add new food options”* with a WM of 3.29, interpreted as Strongly Agree, while the lowest-rated was *“I prefer food delivery platforms that offer a wide range of restaurant options”* with a WM of 3.03, interpreted as Agree. The AWM of 3.16 with an SD of 0.31 suggests low variability in responses, showing that most respondents consistently agreed that variety in food options is an attractive feature of delivery platforms.

Promotional Strategies

For promotional strategies, the highest-rated item was *“I tend to try new restaurants if they are promoted in food delivery apps”* with a WM of 3.17, interpreted as Agree, while the lowest-rated was *“Loyalty rewards or points from apps motivate me to continue using their services”* with a WM of 3.06, also interpreted as Agree. The variable yielded an AWM of 3.11 with an SD of 0.34. The slightly higher SD compared to other variables indicates a modest spread of responses, but overall, respondents agreed that promotions and discounts encourage them to use food delivery platforms more frequently.

Delivery Speed and Reliability

In terms of delivery speed and reliability, the highest-rated statement was *“Delays in delivery discourage me from ordering again”* with a WM of 3.25, interpreted as Strongly Agree, while the lowest-rated was *“Fast delivery is an important factor in my decision to use food delivery services”* with a WM of 2.96, interpreted as Agree. The variable recorded an AWM of 3.13 with an SD of 0.31, showing that responses were consistent. This indicates that respondents agreed on the importance of timely and reliable service as a determinant of satisfaction in using food delivery apps.

Part 3. Service quality of food delivery platforms in terms of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles;

	Reliability	W.M.	S.D.	V.D.
1.	The food delivery platform consistently delivers my orders on time.	3.01	0.30	A.
2.	My orders are usually accurate and complete when delivered.	3.13	0.34	A.
3.	The platform provides services as promised without frequent errors.	3.17	0.38	A.
4.	The quality of food upon delivery is consistent with what was ordered.	3.20	0.52	A.
5.	I can rely on the delivery platform to meet my expectations regularly.	3.17	1.09	A.
	A.W.M.	3.14	0.31	A.
	Responsiveness	W.M.	S.D.	V.D.
1.	Customer service representatives respond quickly to my concerns.	3.02	0.32	A.
2.	The platform resolves complaints or issues within a reasonable time.	3.19	0.39	A.
3.	Delivery riders are prompt and act quickly when problems occur.	3.13	0.45	A.
4.	The app provides timely updates about the status of my order.	2.97	0.82	A.
5.	The platform is always ready to assist me whenever I encounter difficulties.	3.14	0.14	A.
	A.W.M.	3.09	0.33	A.
	Assurance	W.M.	S.D.	V.D.
1.	I feel safe providing personal and payment information in the platform.	3.03	0.21	A.
2.	Delivery riders handle food in a professional and trustworthy manner.	3.17	0.37	A.
3.	The platform ensures that customer transactions are secure.	3.23	0.42	A.

4.	The service provided by the platform makes me feel confident in using it again.	3.15	0.72	A.
5.	I trust that the platform prioritizes customer safety and satisfaction.	3.01	.091	A.
	A.W.M.	3.12	0.30	A.
	Empathy	W.M.	S.D.	V.D.
1.	The platform shows concern for my individual needs as a customer.	3.02	0.28	A.
2.	Customer service staff provide personalized attention when needed.	2.98	0.41	A.
3.	The platform offers flexible options to meet different customer preferences.	3.23	0.42	A.
4.	Riders and staff treat customers with courtesy and respect.	3.25	0.43	S.A.
5.	The platform considers customer feedback in improving its services.	3.10	0.17	A.
	A.W.M.	3.12	0.31	A.
	Tangibles	W.M.	S.D.	V.D.
1.	The mobile app interface is visually appealing and easy to use.	2.99	0.11	A.
2.	Food packaging is neat, secure, and presentable upon delivery.	3.23	0.48	A.
3.	The appearance and professionalism of delivery riders create a positive impression.	3.22	0.41	A.
4.	Promotional materials and advertisements are clear and attractive.	3.21	0.50	A.
5.	The platform's physical and digital features reflect a high standard of service quality.	3.14	0.14	A.
	A.W.M.	3.16	0.31	A.

Legend: Strongly Agree (S.A), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (S.A.)

This section presents the assessment of respondents on the service quality of food delivery platforms in terms of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. The analysis highlights the highest and lowest weighted means under each dimension, as well as the average weighted mean (AWM) with standard deviation (SD), to show both the overall level of agreement and the consistency of responses.

Reliability

The highest-rated statement under reliability was “The quality of food upon delivery is consistent with what was ordered” with a weighted mean (WM) of 3.20, interpreted as Agree, while the lowest-rated was “The food delivery platform consistently delivers my orders on time” with a WM of 3.01, also interpreted as Agree. The Average Weighted Mean (AWM) for reliability was 3.14 with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.31, indicating a consistent level of agreement among respondents that delivery platforms generally provide reliable services.

Responsiveness

For responsiveness, the highest-rated item was “The platform resolves complaints or issues within a reasonable time” with a WM of 3.19, interpreted as Agree, whereas the lowest-rated was “The app provides timely updates about the status of my order” with a WM of 2.97, still interpreted as Agree. The AWM of 3.09 with an SD of 0.33 suggests a uniform perception, showing that respondents generally agreed that platforms are responsive but could further improve on communication and updates.

Assurance

In terms of assurance, the highest-rated statement was “The platform ensures that customer transactions are secure” with a WM of 3.23, interpreted as Agree, while the lowest was “I trust that the platform prioritizes customer safety and satisfaction” with a WM of 3.01, also interpreted as Agree. The AWM was 3.12 with an SD of 0.30, reflecting consistent responses that platforms provide a reasonable sense of safety and trust to their customers.

Empathy

For empathy, the highest-rated item was “Riders and staff treat customers with courtesy and respect” with a WM of 3.25, interpreted as Strongly Agree, while the lowest-rated was “Customer service staff provide personalized attention when needed” with a WM of

2.98, interpreted as Agree. The AWM was 3.12 with an SD of 0.31, suggesting consistent responses and highlighting that respondents value respectful service but feel that personalized attention could still be enhanced.

Tangibles

Under tangibles, the highest-rated item was “Food packaging is neat, secure, and presentable upon delivery” with a WM of 3.23, interpreted as Agree, while the lowest-rated was “The mobile app interface is visually appealing and easy to use” with a WM of 2.99, also interpreted as Agree. The AWM for tangibles was 3.16 with an SD of 0.31, indicating consistent perceptions that physical and digital features of delivery platforms meet acceptable standards of quality.

Part 4. Significant relationships between profile of the respondents with consumer preferences and service quality

Correlations						
		Age	sex	Civil status	Educational attainment	Average monthly income
Price and Affordability	Pearson Correlation	-.125*	-0.017	-0.01	-0.104	-.197**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.025	0.758	0.859	0.064	0
	N	320	320	320	320	320
convenience and Accessibility	Pearson Correlation	-.465**	-.307**	-.263**	-.476**	-.466**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	320	320	320	320	320
Variety of choices	Pearson Correlation	-.274**	-.212**	-.349**	-.246**	-.180**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.034	0.020	0.030	0.000	0.001
	N	320	320	320	320	320
Promotional Strategies	Pearson Correlation	-.554**	-.345**	-.238**	-.518**	-.578**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	320	320	320	320	320
Delivery speed and reliability	Pearson Correlation	-.465**	-.307**	-.263**	-.476**	-.466**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	320	320	320	320	320
Reliability	Pearson Correlation	-.358**	-.215**	-0.012	-.448**	-.490**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.007	0.001	0.833	0.000	0.000
	N	320	320	320	320	320
Responsiveness	Pearson Correlation	-.226**	-.191**	-.420**	-.191**	-.152**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.006
	N	320	320	320	320	320
Assurance	Pearson Correlation	-.499**	-.346**	-.358**	-.413**	-.427**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.001	0.005	0.009	0.002
	N	320	320	320	320	320
Empathy	Pearson Correlation	-.430**	-.236**	-.166**	-.412**	-.426**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.003	0.000	0.000
	N	320	320	320	320	320
Tangibles	Pearson Correlation	-.462**	-.294**	-.246**	-.501**	-.481**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.009	0.002	0.007	0.006	0.003
	N	320	320	320	320	320
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).						

The correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between the respondents' profile and their assessments of consumer preferences and service quality in food delivery platforms. For price and affordability, age ($r = -.125$, $p = .025$) and income ($r = -.197$, $p = .000$) showed significant negative correlations, indicating that older and higher-income respondents were less concerned with affordability, thus the null hypothesis was rejected for these variables, while it was accepted for sex, civil status, and educational attainment. In terms of convenience and accessibility, variety of choices, promotional strategies, and delivery speed and reliability, all profile variables showed significant negative correlations ($p < .05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Regarding service quality, reliability was significantly associated with age, sex, educational attainment, and income, but not with civil status, resulting in a rejection of the null hypothesis for the first four and acceptance for civil status. Meanwhile, for responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles, all profile variables showed significant correlations at either the 0.01 or 0.05 level, which means the null hypothesis was rejected across these dimensions. Overall, the findings confirm that demographic factors—particularly age, sex, education, and income—play a significant role in shaping consumer preferences and perceptions of service quality in food delivery platforms.

IV. Conclusions

1. Based on the profile of the respondents, the majority were middle-aged, female, married, and college-educated individuals with lower to middle income levels, showing that food delivery services in Nueva Ecija are most commonly patronized by this demographic.
2. In terms of consumer preferences, affordability, convenience, variety, promotions, and delivery speed all registered average weighted means interpreted as "Agree." This indicates that respondents generally view these factors as important considerations when using food delivery platforms.
3. For service quality, the SERVQUAL dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles all yielded positive assessments, although opportunities remain for improvement in areas such as timeliness of delivery and personalized customer service.
4. The correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between most demographic variables (age, sex, education, income) and consumer preferences as well as service quality. This means that perceptions of marketing strategies and service delivery are influenced by respondents' profiles, confirming that marketing efforts must be segmented according to demographic characteristics.
5. The study concludes that effective marketing strategies and improved service quality are critical drivers of customer satisfaction in food delivery services in Nueva Ecija, with particular importance given to affordability, accessibility, promotions, and reliable service.

V. Recommendations

1. Food delivery platforms should strengthen targeted marketing strategies by tailoring promotions and pricing schemes to younger and lower-income consumers, who are more sensitive to affordability and discounts.
2. Enhancements in service reliability, particularly ensuring accurate and timely deliveries, should be prioritized to build greater trust and repeat usage among customers.
3. Continuous improvement of mobile applications, including user-friendly interfaces and more timely updates on order status, should be developed to improve convenience and accessibility.
4. Training programs for riders and customer service staff should be implemented to foster courtesy, professionalism, and responsiveness, addressing gaps in empathy and assurance dimensions of service quality.
5. Local food delivery providers in Nueva Ecija should collaborate with partner restaurants to expand the variety of choices and consistently introduce new offerings to sustain customer interest and loyalty.

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