

A STUDY ON DIGITAL DINING EXPERIENCE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AMONG GEN Z CONSUMERS IN RESTAURANTS AND CAFES IN CHENNAI CITY.

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Abstract:

The world is upgrading itself in all dimensions from conventional practices to technology enabled approaches as the technology is advancing day by day. With no exception the restaurants and cafes are also slowly upgrading their shops to digital forms to attract the customers and satisfy them to visit and revisit the same place for the digital dining experiences. The main objective of this study is to determine the key factors of digital dining experience that influence the Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers. Unlike the old format the study emphasizes on the digital dining experience which makes the customer engage with the food and experience its nature through Digital menu, Digital ordering, Digital payment, Digital recommendations, Digital displays and so on. Currently there are few restaurants who have initiated maximum digital dining experience in Chennai city. The target audience is Generation Z who comes under the age category of 14 – 29 years (1997 – 2012) of age. The study uses primary data by circulating the structured questionnaire to Gen Z citizens by using a convenience sampling method. The reason to study this generation is because they are more well connected and updated to digital technology and advancements. For the purpose of analysis of data, percentage analysis is used to measure the demographics profile and the data was analyzed using the SPSS version 23.0. The findings explored that Gen Z are more familiar with digital dining and have up-to-date information with the change in the trends. The study suggests that Gen Z prefers easy and accessible digital dining experiences in restaurants and cafes. The study also concludes that future research can be done with specific digital dining and can be attempted with other generations to find out different results.

Keywords: Gen Z, Restaurant, Digital Dining, Customer Experience, Customer Satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

Restaurants and Cafes have transformed major changes with the change in trends of digital technology. For the past few years, digitalization is being a major part of dining experience which influences the customer to search for the restaurants or cafes, make reservations, place their orders, make their payments and providing their feedbacks.

Technologies like QR-code menus, food ordering online applications, digital payment applications, self-service kiosks, order tracking and other applications and technology have transformed old traditional way of dining into technology driven dining experience. With the use of digital technologies, the customers can interact with the restaurants and cafes which ultimately becomes digital dining experience. The experiences start when customers begin to search their food or dining place through digital applications, the recommendation of restaurants or cafes through different social media platforms, checking their reviews and ratings and checking for different locations for the ambience, this continues to the next level where customer has visited the place for the digital experience like digital menus, QR-code ordering and contactless payments and their after visit digital experience like online feedback and loyalty programs. This change in digital dining technology makes it convenient, reduces the waiting time, provides personalized services and makes the transaction easier and faster.

The customer satisfaction plays a major role when the restaurant or cafes are successful and if it has competitors. These reflects the expectations of the customers are met with their product, services and finally their overall dining experience. And on the other side quality of the food, the price, the ambience and the service of the employees which continues to influence the satisfaction of the customers. For the satisfaction of the customers a user friendly digital ordering system, accurate online information, convenient payment options, effective digital communication, loyalty programs, personalized digital recommendations and quick service is necessary. There can be also network issue, complicated applications, incorrect information, which will negatively affect the customers overall experience.

The Chennai city is one of the major metropolitan cities in India which is witnessing the adoption of digital technologies among different restaurants and cafes with the growth of online food delivery platform, digital payments, QR code menu, online reservation and social media engagement which builds a relationship between customer satisfaction and digital dining experiences.

FEATURES OF DIGITAL DINING

- **QR-Code Menu:** Physical menu is replaced by QR-Code menu where the customer can scan the QR code with their smartphones and view the menu. But still in some restaurants and cafes physical menu is also present.
- **Digital Ordering:** Through websites or mobile applications customers can now browse their food items, customize their orders, check the ingredients and place their orders.
- **Digital Payments:** Restaurants and cafes allows its customer to make digital payments through UPI, mobile wallets, debit/credit cards and contactless payments which makes it easier to the customers.
- **Self-Service Kiosks:** Customers can now select the items, customize their order and even make payments through self-service kiosks even without the help of any employees or staffs.
- **Digital Table Reservations:** With the help of websites and digital applications from various restaurants or cafes customer can now reserve their tables based on the availability of seats.

- **Order Tracking:** Once the order is placed in a particular digital application the customers can monitor it through their smartphones from the confirmation of the order to preparing it and delivery of the food.
- **Personalized Digital Recommendations:** Digital applications can now recommend and suggest food and beverages based on the customer's previous orders and browsing history.
- **Digital Reviews and Ratings:** With the help of digital reviews and ratings customers can now check and evaluate the restaurants and cafes before dining in.
- **Digital Loyalty Programs:** Restaurants and cafe are now using rewards, digital points, discounts and special offers to encourage the customers to make repeated visits.
- **Social Media Integration:** Social Media Platforms like Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp helps the restaurant and cafes to promote foods and beverages, communicate with the customers and therefore building customer and brand engagement.
- **Faster and Convenient Service:** Reduced waiting time, minimizing of ordering errors, and the overall dining experience are now possible with digital technologies as it provides a faster and convenient services of the food and beverages from the restaurants and cafes.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Yang Yang et al (2025) have studied digital mediated concepts by exploring the spatial-temporal experience in the restaurants and food in wanhong. There was a fieldwork conducted in Xiamen, China with 27 restaurants. 304 survey data has been collected along with 10588 online reviews through structural equation modeling. The findings of this study says there is an interaction between virtual and physical realms which shapes tourist's consumption, reinforcing engagement and digital consumption rhythms. The result emphasizes on the role of stimulus-driven bundling and it constrains digital mediated spaces both on-site and spiritual engagement as a key for food tourism. Therefore, this will give practical implications for managing service, highlights interactive technology and customer mapping to improve digital tourism and advance sustainable engagement with local food cultures.

Olivia petit et al (2022) have investigated consumers' purpose to purchase food change relying on the visualization mode and product format. There are three studies in this paper where study 1 shows compared to 3D visualization, Augmented Reality offers an advanced simulation to the dining experience. Whereas study 2 revealed 3D visualization improves purchase intention more effectively for packaged items compared to served products and study 3 shows that 3D increases the purchase intention by simulation of eating outcome. This study emphasizes the promotion of food using different types of visualization modes.

Qiushi Gu et al (2022) have explored how restaurants are using modern technology as a new trend. The study attempts to find the role of technological applications by aiming to conceptualize and operationalize technology assisted dining experience. To serve the above purpose, primary data was used with 71 consumers using in-depth interviews in Nanjing and Wuhan Restaurants in China. The findings highlighted that 26 attributes of technology assisted during dining experience and an analysis were identified with four aspects with 21 items which

consist of novelty and fashion, convenience, high efficiency and restrictions and finally possible risks. The research has practical implications where the managers can provide suggestive measures for the dining service design and technology which improves the customers experience.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To study the awareness and understanding of digital dining experiences in Chennai city among Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers in restaurants and cafes in Chennai city.
2. To determine the key factors of digital dining experience that influence the Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers in Chennai city.
3. To examine the relationship between digital dining experience and customer satisfaction among Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers in Chennai city.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

- **SOURCE OF DATA:** The study uses primary source to collect the data from the respondents (Gen Z) through structured questionnaire method. The survey was circulated and collected using google form. This study also uses secondary data collected from various sources of journals and research papers.
- **SAMPLE SIZE:** Due to time constrain, the response was collected from 100 respondents who belong to Gen Z category aged between 14-29 years who were students, employed, self-employed, unemployed and homemakers.
- **DATA COLLECTION:** Through structured questionnaire method the primary data was collected using google form through convenience sampling method.
- **STATISTICAL TOOLS:** For the demographic study simple percentage analysis were used and for the main analysis the data was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 23.0.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The research data was collected from 100 respondents who belong to Gen Z category aged between 14-29 years of age within the time period of 15 days.
- The research was undertaken by the respondents who have experienced digital dining in restaurants and cafes from Chennai city.
- The research depends on respondent's opinion and experience which may be influenced by their personal experience and social desirability.
- The response was collected during August 2026, Due to changes in technology and advancements the study may produce different results in the future.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE STUDY

TABLE:1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS.

ON THE BASIS OF	CLASSIFICATION	PERCENTAGE
AGE	14 – 17	18

	18 – 21	28
	22 – 25	28
	26 – 29	26
GENDER	MALE	46
	FEMALE	54
OCCUPATION	STUDENT	44
	EMPLOYED	25
	SELF-EMPLOYED	12
	HOMEMAKER	8
	UNEMPLOYED	11
MONTHLY FAMILY INCOME	BELOW Rs. 25,000	25
	Rs. 25,001 – Rs. 50,000	35
	Rs. 50,001 – Rs. 75,000	16
	Rs. 75,001 – Rs. 1,00,000	16
	ABOVE Rs. 1,00,001	8

Source: Primary data

- From the above table majority of 28% of the respondents is shared between 18 – 21 years of age and 22 – 25 years of age, followed by 26% of the respondents between 26 – 29 years of age and 18% of the respondents between 14-17 years of age.
- Majority of the respondents are female with 54% and male with 46%.
- Majority of the respondent's occupation falls under the category of students with 44%, followed by employed with 25%, whereas 12% of the respondents are self-employed, 11% comes under the category of unemployed, 8% of the respondents are homemakers.
- The table shows majority of the respondent's monthly income category falls under Rs. 25,001 – Rs. 50,000 with 35%, 25% of the respondents have monthly income level below Rs. 25,000, 16% of the monthly income is shared between income level of the respondents between Rs. 50,001 – Rs. 75,000 and Rs. 75,001 – Rs. 1,00,000 and 8% of the respondent's monthly income is Above Rs. 1,00,001.

MAJOR FINDINGS

TABLE: 2 Chi-Square Test for significant difference between Age group with Awareness and Understanding of Digital Dining Experience.

HYPOTHESIS: I Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant difference among age group with respect to awareness and understanding of Digital Dining Experience.

Cross tabulation between Age and Awareness and Understanding Level of Digital Dining Experience						
			Awareness Level			Total
			Low Awareness	Moderate Awareness	High Awareness	
Age	14 – 17	Count	11	7	0	18
		Expected Count	7.7	9.9	.4	18.0
	18 – 21	Count	8	19	1	28
		Expected Count	12.0	15.4	.6	28.0
	22 – 25	Count	17	11	0	28
		Expected Count	12.0	15.4	.6	28.0
	26 – 29	Count	7	18	1	26
		Expected Count	11.2	14.3	.5	26.0
Total		Count	43	55	2	100
		Expected Count	43.0	55.0	2.0	100.0
Chi-Square Value		11.949 ^a				
Asymptotic Significance		.063				

INTERPRETATION:

Since the p-value (0.063) is more than 0.05 the null hypothesis is accepted at 5% level of significance. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the age group and awareness and understanding of digital dining experience. Even though the cross tabulation shows some difference between age groups and awareness and understanding these differences are not significant based on chi-square test.

TABLE: 3 – ANOVA for significant difference among age group with respect to key factors of Digital Dining Experience.

HYPOTHESIS: II Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant difference among age group with respect to key factors of Digital Dining Experience.

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.

Digital menus are making the process of selecting the food and beverages easier.	Between Groups	.242	3	.081	.096	.962
	Within Groups	80.668	96	.840		
	Total	80.910	99			
Digital ordering makes food and beverages ordering more convenient.	Between Groups	.513	3	.171	.277	.842
	Within Groups	59.277	96	.617		
	Total	59.790	99			
Digital payments simplify the process of payment easier during/after dining.	Between Groups	.231	3	.077	.104	.958
	Within Groups	71.209	96	.742		
	Total	71.440	99			
Digital recommendations help me to choose the food and beverages based on my personal preference.	Between Groups	3.242	3	1.081	1.634	.187
	Within Groups	63.508	96	.662		
	Total	66.750	99			
Personalized digital offers make restaurants and cafes more appealing to me.	Between Groups	.738	3	.246	.398	.755
	Within Groups	59.372	96	.618		
	Total	60.110	99			
Digital Services makes my dining experience matched to my preferences.	Between Groups	4.301	3	1.434	2.104	.105
	Within Groups	65.409	96	.681		
	Total	69.710	99			
Digital displays improve the visual appeal to the dining environment.	Between Groups	2.290	3	.763	.926	.431
	Within Groups	79.100	96	.824		
	Total	81.390	99			
Interactive digital features engage my involvement during the dining experience.	Between Groups	1.505	3	.502	.595	.620
	Within Groups	81.005	96	.844		
	Total	82.510	99			

Innovative digital content adds a unique element to my dining experience.	Between Groups	6.610	3	2.203	2.289	.083
	Within Groups	92.390	96	.962		
	Total	99.000	99			
The use of creative digital technologies makes a restaurant or cafe stand out from competitors.	Between Groups	7.161	3	2.387	4.840	.004
	Within Groups	47.349	96	.493		
	Total	54.510	99			

Technology-enabled dining features create excitement during the visit of restaurants and cafes.	Between Groups	.755	3	.252	.317	.813
	Within Groups	76.245	96	.794		
	Total	77.000	99			
Creative digital features influence my choice of a restaurant or cafe.	Between Groups	2.797	3	.932	1.783	.156
	Within Groups	50.203	96	.523		
	Total	53.000	99			

INTERPRETATION:

The above table suggests that the p value of the use of creative digital technologies makes a restaurant or cafes stand out from competitors is less than the probability value of (0.05). hence the null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of significance and therefore there is significant difference with respect to age group with respect to creative digital technologies.

The above table suggests that the p value of digital menus is making the process of selecting the food and beverages easier, digital ordering makes food and beverages ordering more convenient, digital payments simplify the process of payment easier during/after dining, digital recommendations help me to choose the food and beverages based on my personal preference, personalized digital offers make restaurants and cafes more appealing to me, digital services makes my dining experience matched to my preferences, digital displays improve the visual appeal to the dining environment, interactive digital features engage my involvement during the dining experience, innovative digital content adds a unique element to my dining experience, technology-enabled dining features create excitement during the visit of restaurants and cafes and creative digital features influence my choice of a restaurant or café are more than the probability value (0.05). Hence the null hypothesis is accepted at 5% level of significance and therefore there is no significant difference with respect to age group and key factors of digital dining experience.

TABLE: 4 – Karl Pearson Correlation Coefficient between digital dining experience and customer satisfaction among Gen Z.

HYPOTHESIS: III Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no relationship between digital dining experience and customer satisfaction among Gen Z.

Correlations					
	DC	DP	VI	DI	CS
Digital Convenience	1	.726**	.551**	.607**	.689**
Digital Personalization	-	1	.688**	.618**	.803**
Digital Visual & Interactive Experience	-	-	1	.392**	.636**
Digital Innovation	-	-	-	1	.721**
Customer Satisfaction	-	-	-	-	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

INTERPRETATION:

The Correlation Coefficient analysis indicates that all the factors of digital dining experience has a positive significant relationship with customer satisfaction at 0.01 significance level. Digital Convenience has a positive correlation with customer satisfaction ($r = 0.689$, $p < 0.01$), while Digital Personalization has a highly positive correlation with customer satisfaction ($r = 0.803$, $p < 0.01$), while Digital Visual & Interactive Experience has a positive correlation with customer satisfaction ($r = 0.636$, $p < 0.01$) and Digital Innovation has a moderate positive correlation with customer satisfaction ($r = 0.721$, $p < 0.01$).

OTHER FINDINGS

- **How often do you usually visit Digital Dining Restaurants/Cafes?**

No. of Visits	Percentage
Daily	6
Weekly	4
Monthly	12
Occasionally	28
Rarely	50

Digital Dining Restaurants/Cafes are rarely visited by majority (50%) of the Generation Z (Gen Z) respondents due to limited availability of digital dining restaurants and cafes nearby in Chennai city.

- **Your purpose of visit to a Digital Dining Restaurants/Cafes**

Purpose	Percentage
Dining (Food)	49
Socializing with Friends/Family	28
Work/Study	6
Relaxation	13
Business/Professional Meetings	4

The primary purpose of visit to a Digital Dining Restaurants and cafes by the Generation Z (Gen Z) is Dining (Food) with 49%.

- **Preferred type of Digital Dining**

Types	Percentage
Premium Cafes	2
Casual Dining	57

Quick Service Restaurants	14
Themed Cafes	13
Local/Independent Cafes	14

Generation Z (Gen Z) prefers Casual Dining Restaurants with 57% as it has Instagrammable surroundings when compared to other dining's.

- **Average spending per visit in Digital Dining Restaurants/Cafes**

Average Spending	Percentage
Below Rs. 500	40
Rs. 501 – Rs. 1,000	28
Rs. 1,001 – Rs. 1,500	15
Rs. 1,501 – Rs. 2,000	13
Above Rs. 2,001	4

Majority (40%) of the Generation Z (Gen Z) respondents spends an average of Rs. 500 and below when visiting the digital dining restaurants/cafes.

- **Revisit the same Digital Dining Restaurants/Cafes**

Revisit	Percentage
Yes	27
No	14
Sometimes	59

Generation Z (Gen Z) sometimes revisits the same Digital Dining Restaurants/Cafes as they are comfortable visiting the same place.

- **Preferred location of Digital Dining Restaurants/Cafes**

Location	Percentage
Near Home	24
Near Workplace/Educational Institutions	10
Based on Price	23
Based on Ambience/Experience	32
Easy Accessibility (Parking/Transport Convenience)	11

Majority of the Generation Z (Gen Z) respondents preferred location of digital dining Restaurants/Cafes is based on Ambience/Experience of restaurants/cafes.

SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

- ❖ Restaurants and cafes should have clear, simple and attractive digital menus for the customers to navigate it.
- ❖ Technical difficulties can be minimized in digital ordering system to avoid delay and frustration of the customers in the restaurants and cafes.
- ❖ Restaurants and cafes should mainly focus on overall dining experience when compared to technology alone.
- ❖ Feedbacks to be collected on regular basis by the restaurants and cafes in order to find out the digital services.
- ❖ Restaurants and cafes should focus on data privacy and payment security of the customers to be handled securely and transparently.

CONCLUSION

Based on the needs of the customer, digital technologies should be adopted by the restaurants and cafes. This study has explored Gen Z Consumers by understanding the role of digital dining technologies. Gen Z is the generation where they are adopted to the digital world from the very beginning till up to date so mostly they are aware of the digital adoption. For the owners of the restaurants and cafes it is recommended to have user friendly digital dining experience so that other generation people can also make use of it. This adoption of digital technologies might lead to sensory digital dining experience where the customers can feel real life experience through 3D, Virtual Reality and upcoming sensory digital technologies.

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