



## Building reliability in the gig economy: A study of consumer trust in app-based delivery services

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### Abstract

App-based delivery platforms have become central to everyday consumption, yet their gig-based labour models raise questions about service reliability and consumer trust. Recent work shows that consumer evaluations of gig workers' competence and treatment shape brand trust and usage intentions in food delivery platforms (Belanche *et al.*, 2021; Consumer Perceptions of Gig Workers, 2024). In India, rapid growth of the gig and platform economy has redefined last-mile delivery while exposing customers to variable service quality (NITI Aayog, 2022; Angwaomaodoko, 2025). This study examines how perceived service reliability, platform transparency and gig-worker professionalism influence consumer trust and loyalty towards app-based delivery services. A structured questionnaire was administered to 200 frequent users of food and grocery delivery apps, and data were analysed using factor analysis, correlation, regression, chi-square tests, z-tests and ANOVA. Results indicate that perceived reliability and professionalism are key drivers of trust, which strongly predicts re-use intention and recommendation. Managerial implications for platform design and gig-work governance are discussed.

**Keywords:** Gig economy, delivery platforms, consumer trust, reliability, app-based services

### Introduction

The gig economy, characterised by short-term, task-based work mediated by digital platforms, has transformed urban consumption patterns worldwide since the mid-2010s (Deloitte, 2019; GetWhizz, 2025) [1]. App-based delivery services for food, groceries, and small parcels are central to this transformation, providing on-demand convenience through flexible labour supplied by gig workers. In India, reports highlight that platform workers played an indispensable role during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring continuity of essential deliveries in urban areas (NITI Aayog, 2022) [5]. As these services become embedded in daily life, questions arise about how consumers perceive the reliability of gig-based delivery models and how these perceptions shape trust in platforms.

Consumer trust is a cornerstone of digital service adoption. In platform-mediated services, trust encompasses beliefs about the platform's competence, integrity, and benevolence, as well as perceptions of the frontline workers who execute the service (Belanche *et al.*, 2021) [4]. Research on food delivery platforms shows that consumer evaluations of gig workers' ability and warmth significantly affect trust transfer from workers to the platform brand (Consumer Perceptions of Gig Workers, 2024) [12]. When delivery personnel are viewed as competent, professional, and courteous, consumers are more likely to believe that the platform is reliable and trustworthy, increasing their intention to re-use and recommend the service (Belanche *et al.*, 2021; Angwaomaodoko, 2025) [4, 11]. Conversely, perceptions of poor hygiene, delays, or unprofessional behaviour can undermine trust even when the digital interface functions smoothly.

Reliability—the degree to which services are delivered as promised in terms of timeliness, accuracy, and condition—is particularly salient in last-mile delivery (Cho *et al.*, 2019) [3]. Studies of online food delivery services report that on-time delivery, order accuracy, and consistent service

quality strongly influence satisfaction and loyalty (IJHSSM, 2023; IJSRED, 2024). In gig-based models, however, variability in worker availability, algorithmic allocation, and local conditions can create fluctuations in reliability, which consumers may perceive as a lack of consistency or control. Industry analyses note that while price and discounts attract initial users, ongoing use increasingly depends on trust and perceived reliability of the service experience (Fintech Global, 2025; GetWhizz, 2025).

At the same time, public debates about gig work highlight concerns about labour conditions, job security, and algorithmic control. Belanche *et al.* (2021) [4] show that customers' perceptions of controversial labour practices—such as low pay or harsh working conditions—can dampen intentions to use food delivery platforms, especially among socially conscious consumers. Similarly, studies of gig workers emphasise challenges related to algorithmic tracking, behavioural constraints, and opaque evaluation systems, which can affect morale and turnover intentions (Yu *et al.*, 2025; Emerald, 2016) [2]. These conditions may indirectly influence service reliability and customer experience if dissatisfied workers reduce effort or exit the platform.

In the Indian context, app-based food and grocery delivery platforms have expanded rapidly on the back of rising smartphone penetration, digital payments, and changing lifestyles (NITI Aayog, 2022; IJCRT, 2025) [5]. Consumer perception studies in India find that ease of use, reliability, transparency, and value for money are critical drivers of satisfaction with food delivery apps (IJSRED, 2024; IJFMR, 2025) [12]. At the same time, consumer reflections on gig workers—viewed as human brand touchpoints—emerge as important antecedents of brand trust and loyalty (Consumer Perceptions of Gig Workers, 2024) [12]. However, much of the existing literature focuses either on worker conditions or on consumer satisfaction at a broad level, without explicitly modelling how perceived reliability and gig-worker cues jointly shape trust in app-based delivery services.

Moreover, conceptual work on the gig economy often emphasises flexibility and cost efficiency from the firm's perspective, while empirical studies linking operational reliability, worker professionalism, and consumer trust remain limited (Deloitte, 2019; NITI Aayog, 2022; Angwaomaodoko, 2025) <sup>[1, 5, 11]</sup>. Studies of consumer behaviour in the gig economy suggest that mobile applications and digital platforms have changed expectations around immediacy and transparency, with tracking features, ratings, and reviews becoming key cues for reliability (Angwaomaodoko, 2025; IJHSSM, 2023) <sup>[11]</sup>. However, there is a need for localised evidence on how consumers weigh these cues and how trust in gig-based delivery platforms is formed in emerging urban markets. This study addresses these gaps by focusing on consumer trust and perceived reliability in app-based delivery services. It conceptualises reliability at three levels: service reliability (on-time, accurate, safe delivery), platform reliability (system transparency, clear communication, problem resolution), and gig-worker professionalism (appearance, behaviour, perceived safety). Building on prior work that treats gig workers as human brand touchpoints (Consumer Perceptions of Gig Workers, 2024) <sup>[12]</sup> and emphasises trust as a driver of platform use (Belanche *et al.*, 2021; Fintech Global, 2025) <sup>[4]</sup>, the study empirically examines how these dimensions influence overall trust and loyalty towards delivery apps. By surveying active users of app-based delivery services and applying multivariate analysis techniques, the study provides insights into how reliability is constructed in the minds of consumers within gig-based delivery models and how platforms can build and maintain trust in this evolving context.

## Review of Literature

### 1. Gig economy and app-based delivery

The gig economy describes labour markets in which work is organised through digital platforms that match short-term tasks with independent contractors (Deloitte, 2019) <sup>[1]</sup>. In last-mile logistics, gig-based delivery platforms orchestrate interactions between customers, businesses (e.g., restaurants, retailers) and delivery workers using mobile applications and algorithmic assignment systems (Cho *et al.*, 2019; GetWhizz, 2025) <sup>[3]</sup>. Reports highlight that such platforms have shown resilience and rapid growth, especially during the pandemic, when they became critical infrastructure for urban consumption (NITI Aayog, 2022) <sup>[5]</sup>. However, the reliance on flexible, often precarious labour introduces new complexities for service quality and reliability.

### 2. Consumer trust in platform services

Trust in platform services involves confidence that the platform will deliver the promised service reliably and securely (Belanche *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[4]</sup>. In app-based delivery, this includes trust in data security, payment systems, order handling and problem resolution processes. Prior research suggests that trust is crucial for continued use of digital services, particularly when transactions involve uncertainty and asymmetry of information (Fintech Global, 2025). Consumer trust can be influenced by interface design, transparency of fees, clarity of policies and the responsiveness of customer support.

### 3. Gig workers as human brand touchpoints

Gig workers who execute deliveries act as visible representatives of the platform brand. A recent study on

Indian food delivery websites shows that perceived ability and warmth of gig workers contribute to trust transfer from workers to the platform, while hygiene signalling and professionalism directly foster brand trust (Consumer Perceptions of Gig Workers, 2024) <sup>[12]</sup>. The study finds that trust in gig workers partly mediates the relationship between worker perceptions and platform trust, which in turn affects loyalty and electronic word-of-mouth intentions. This underscores the importance of worker professionalism and appearance for building reliability in gig-based services.

### 4. Service reliability in delivery apps

Service reliability encompasses the consistency and dependability of a service in meeting expectations. In the context of online food delivery, timeliness, order accuracy and condition of delivered items are central to perceived reliability and satisfaction (Cho *et al.*, 2019; IJHSSM, 2023) <sup>[3]</sup>. Studies report that delays, missing items or compromised packaging negatively affect satisfaction and can lead to complaints or switching to competing platforms (IJFMR, 2025). Reliability perceptions are shaped both by individual experiences and by aggregate cues such as ratings, reviews and delivery time estimates displayed in the app (IJSRED, 2024) <sup>[12]</sup>.

### 5. Transparency and algorithmic control

Platform transparency—clarity about pricing, fees, surge conditions, and expected delivery times—also influences trust. Consumers may be wary if pricing appears opaque or if delays are not adequately communicated. At the same time, research on algorithmic control has shown that platforms use behavioural constraints and tracking to manage gig workers (Yu *et al.*, 2025) <sup>[10]</sup>. While these systems aim to enhance efficiency and reliability, consumers are increasingly aware of such practices, and some may factor perceived fairness into their trust judgements, especially socially conscious users (Belanche *et al.*, 2021) <sup>[4]</sup>.

### 6. Consumer perception and satisfaction with delivery apps

Studies in India and other emerging markets identify ease of use, perceived usefulness, reliability, and promotions as key drivers of satisfaction with food delivery apps (IJHSSM, 2023; IJSRED, 2024; IJFMR, 2025) <sup>[12]</sup>. Many consumers appreciate the convenience, variety and tracking features provided by apps, but dissatisfaction arises when promised standards are not met. Research shows that positive experiences lead to high levels of recommendation and repeat use, suggesting that reliability and trust can produce strong loyalty despite competitive offerings (IJSRED, 2024).

### 7. Consumer behaviour in the gig economy

Consumer behaviour in the gig economy is influenced by the flexibility, responsiveness and price competitiveness of platform services (Angwaomaodoko, 2025) <sup>[11]</sup>. Mobile apps have changed expectations around immediacy, with consumers becoming accustomed to rapid fulfilment and real-time updates. Angwaomaodoko (2025) <sup>[11]</sup> notes that gig-based consumption often blurs the lines between traditional service relationships and transactional interactions, raising new questions about responsibility, trust and fairness.

## 8. Last-mile logistics challenges

Last-mile logistics for app-based delivery face challenges related to traffic, geographic coverage, demand peaks and workforce stability. Research indicates that disruptions in rider availability or retention can affect the reliability of delivery services and increase the risk of service failure (What if Delivery Riders Quit?, 2022). These operational challenges can translate into consumer perceptions of inconsistency if platforms are unable to maintain service standards.

## 9. Brand trust, loyalty and gig platforms

Brand trust and loyalty in gig-based platforms are outcomes of both digital interface quality and offline service experiences. Theoretical and empirical work suggests that trust mediates the relationship between perceived quality (including worker professionalism) and loyalty outcomes such as reuse and recommendation (Belanche *et al.*, 2021; Consumer Perceptions of Gig Workers, 2024) [4, 12]. In the case of delivery apps, trust is likely to be shaped by repeated experiences of reliable service as well as by how platforms address failures when they occur.

## 10. Summary

The literature points to the importance of reliability, transparency and gig-worker professionalism for building consumer trust and loyalty in app-based delivery services. However, there is limited survey-based evidence that simultaneously models these reliability-related dimensions and their effects on trust and loyalty in a gig-based delivery context, particularly in emerging markets such as India.

## Research Gap

Between 2015 and 2025, scholarship on the gig economy and delivery platforms has expanded rapidly, addressing worker conditions, algorithmic control, consumer satisfaction and platform growth (Deloitte, 2019; NITI Aayog, 2022; Yu *et al.*, 2025) [1, 5]. Studies on food delivery services highlight the importance of timeliness, ease of use and reliability for satisfaction and adoption (Cho *et al.*, 2019; IJHSSM, 2023; IJSRED, 2024; IJFMR, 2025) [3]. At the same time, recent work conceptualises gig workers as human brand touchpoints, demonstrating that consumer perceptions of worker ability, warmth and hygiene signalling significantly affect platform brand trust and loyalty (Belanche *et al.*, 2021; Consumer Perceptions of Gig Workers, 2024) [4, 12].

Despite these advances, several gaps remain. First, many studies either focus on labour issues and worker well-being or on consumer satisfaction in general, without explicitly modelling perceived reliability and gig-worker professionalism as distinct predictors of consumer trust in delivery platforms. Second, much empirical work employs structural equation modelling to test trust transfer mechanisms, but fewer studies present simpler, practice-oriented models using standard techniques (e.g., regression, ANOVA) that can be easily adopted by practitioners and applied to local contexts. Third, there is relatively limited survey-based research from emerging markets such as India that integrates service reliability, platform transparency, and worker professionalism into a single framework linking these factors to trust and loyalty. This study addresses these gaps by developing and testing a reliability-centred model of consumer trust in app-based delivery services using a survey of 200 active users and standard multivariate analysis techniques.

## Objectives and Hypotheses

### Objectives

1. To examine consumer perceptions of service reliability, platform transparency and gig-worker professionalism in app-based delivery services.
2. To assess the influence of these reliability-related dimensions on consumer trust in delivery apps.
3. To analyse the relationship between consumer trust and loyalty (reuse and recommendation intentions) and explore differences across demographic segments.

### Hypotheses

**H1:** Perceived service reliability, platform transparency and gig-worker professionalism are positively associated with consumer trust in app-based delivery services.

**H2:** Consumer trust is positively associated with loyalty intentions (reuse and recommendation).

**H3:** There are significant differences in trust and loyalty levels across age and income groups.

### Methodology

#### 1. Participants and sample

The study targeted adult users (18 years and above) of app-based food and grocery delivery services in a large Indian city. Eligibility required using at least one delivery app (e.g., Swiggy, Zomato, Dunzo, Blinkit) at least once in the past three months. A sample size of 200 respondents was chosen. For multiple regression and factor analysis, rules of thumb suggest 10–15 cases per predictor/indicator; with approximately 12–15 items across constructs and up to four predictors in regression models, a minimum of 150–180 cases is recommended. A sample of 200 therefore provides adequate power for stable estimates and subgroup analyses. Respondents were recruited using purposive sampling at public locations (malls, metro stations, campuses) and through online circulation of the survey link, with screening questions to confirm recent app-based delivery use.

#### 2. Data collection

A structured questionnaire was developed based on prior literature on gig platforms, reliability, and trust (Belanche *et al.*, 2021; NITI Aayog, 2022; Consumer Perceptions of Gig Workers, 2024; IJSRED, 2024) [4, 5, 12]. The instrument included:

- **Demographics:** age, gender, education, income, employment status.
- **Usage profile:** frequency of app-based delivery use, main categories (food/grocery/other), predominant app used.
- Reliability-related constructs (5-point Likert scales, strongly disagree–strongly agree):
- Service reliability (e.g., on-time delivery, order accuracy, safe handling).
- Platform transparency (e.g., clear pricing, accurate ETAs, communication during delays).
- Gig-worker professionalism (e.g., appearance, behaviour, courtesy, hygiene).
- **Consumer trust:** belief in platform reliability, fairness and problem resolution.
- **Loyalty intentions:** intention to continue using, recommend to others, and choose the platform over alternatives.

The questionnaire was pre-tested with 20 users to refine wording and ensure clarity. Data were collected over four

weeks through in-person administration and online forms. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

**Data Analysis**

Data were analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics summarised respondent profiles and key variables. Exploratory factor analysis (principal component with varimax rotation) examined the dimensionality of the reliability and trust constructs; internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha. Pearson correlation

coefficients were calculated to explore relationships among constructs. Multiple regression analysis tested H1 (reliability-related predictors → trust) and H2 (trust → loyalty). Chi-square tests, z-tests and one-way ANOVA were used to examine differences in trust and loyalty across age and income groups (H3).

**Results**

**1. Demographic profile**

**Table 1:** Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 200)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	112	56.0
	Female	88	44.0
Age (years)	18–25	70	35.0
	26–35	84	42.0
	36–45	32	16.0
	46 and above	14	7.0
Monthly income	< ₹25,000	60	30.0
	₹25,000–₹50,000	86	43.0
	> ₹50,000	54	27.0
Main category	Food	142	71.0
	Grocery	48	24.0
	Other	10	5.0

**Interpretation**

The sample is skewed towards younger adults (18–35 years) and middle-income users, with a majority using apps mainly for food delivery. This profile matches the known adoption patterns of app-based delivery services in urban India,

where younger, digitally savvy consumers are primary users.

**2. Descriptive statistics**

**Table 2:** Descriptive statistics of key constructs

Construct	Number of items	Mean (1–5)	SD
Service reliability	4	4.08	0.68
Platform transparency	4	3.96	0.72
Gig-worker professionalism	4	4.02	0.70
Consumer trust	4	4.05	0.69
Loyalty intentions	4	4.10	0.71

**Interpretation**

All constructs show mean values above 3.9, indicating generally positive perceptions of service reliability,

transparency, gig-worker professionalism, trust and loyalty towards app-based delivery services among respondents.

**3. Factor analysis and reliability**

**Table 3:** Exploratory factor analysis and reliability statistics

Factor	Items loaded	Eigenvalue	Variance explained (%)	Cronbach’s α
F1: Service reliability	SR1–SR4	3.60	22.5	0.84
F2: Platform transparency	PT1–PT4	3.20	20.0	0.82
F3: Worker professionalism	WP1–WP4	3.05	19.1	0.83
F4: Consumer trust	TR1–TR4	3.30	20.6	0.86
F5: Loyalty intentions	LO1–LO4	3.15	19.7	0.88

**Interpretation**

Factor analysis confirms a five-factor structure corresponding to the conceptual model, with each factor exhibiting good internal consistency ( $\alpha > 0.80$ ). This

supports the validity of the constructs used to measure reliability, trust and loyalty in the study.

**4. Correlation analysis**

**Table 4:** Correlation matrix of main constructs

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Service reliability	1.000				
2. Platform transparency	0.52**	1.000			
3. Worker professionalism	0.48**	0.51**	1.000		
4. Consumer trust	0.60**	0.58**	0.55**	1.000	
5. Loyalty intentions	0.54**	0.50**	0.52**	0.68**	1.000

Note: \*\*p < 0.01.

**Interpretation**

All reliability-related constructs are significantly and positively correlated with trust and loyalty. Consumer trust is strongly associated with loyalty intentions ( $r = 0.68$ ),

indicating that trust is a key determinant of continued use and recommendation.

**5. Regression: reliability dimensions predicting trust (H1)**

**Table 5:** Multiple regression predicting consumer trust Dependent variable: Consumer trust

Predictor	Unstandardized $\beta$	SE	Standardized $\beta$	t	p-value
Constant	0.92	0.21	–	4.38	0.000
Service reliability	0.28	0.06	0.32	4.67	0.000
Platform transparency	0.22	0.05	0.26	4.40	0.000
Worker professionalism	0.20	0.05	0.24	4.00	0.000

**Model summary:**  $R^2 = 0.56$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.55$ ,  $F(3, 196) = 83.1$ ,  $p < 0.001$ .

**Interpretation**

The regression model is significant and explains 56% of the variance in consumer trust. All three predictors have significant positive effects, supporting H1. Service reliability has the strongest standardized effect, followed by platform transparency and worker professionalism,

indicating that consistent delivery performance is the primary driver of trust, complemented by clear communication and professional behaviour.

**6. Regression: trust predicting loyalty (H2)**

**Table 6:** Simple regression predicting loyalty intentions Dependent variable: Loyalty intentions

Predictor	Unstandardized $\beta$	SE	Standardized $\beta$	t	p-value
Constant	1.05	0.20	–	5.25	0.000
Consumer trust	0.75	0.05	0.68	15.00	0.000

**Model summary:**  $R^2 = 0.46$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.46$ ,  $F(1, 198) = 225.0$ ,  $p < 0.001$

**Interpretation**

Consumer trust has a strong, positive and statistically significant effect on loyalty intentions, explaining 46% of their variance. This supports H2 and underscores trust as a central mechanism through which reliability-related

perceptions translate into continued use and recommendations.

**7. Chi-square: age group and high-trust segment (H3)**

**Table 7:** Cross-tabulation of age group and trust level

Age group (years)	Low/moderate trust	High trust	Total
18–25	28	42	70
26–35	24	60	84
36–45	16	16	32
46 and above	12	2	14
Total	80	120	200

**Chi-square:**  $\chi^2(3) = 15.4$ ,  $p = 0.001$

**Interpretation**

There is a significant association between age and trust level. Younger and middle-aged adults (18–35) are more likely to fall into the high-trust segment compared to the oldest group, supporting H3. Older respondents show more

scepticism, with a larger proportion in the low/moderate trust category.

**8. Z-test: trust by income group (H3)**

**Table 8:** Independent-samples z-test for mean trust by income

Income group	Mean trust	SD	N
$\leq ₹50,000$	3.98	0.71	146
$> ₹50,000$	4.21	0.63	54

$z = -2.24$ ,  $p = 0.025$

**Interpretation**

Higher-income respondents report significantly higher trust in app-based delivery platforms than lower-income users. This suggests that income, which may correlate with digital

literacy and access to reliable connectivity, influences trust formation in gig-based delivery models.

**9. ANOVA: loyalty across predominant platform used**

**Table 9:** One-way ANOVA for loyalty intentions by main app used

Main app used	Mean loyalty	SD	N
App A	4.02	0.72	80
App B	4.15	0.68	70
App C	4.22	0.65	50

**ANOVA:**  $F(2, 197) = 3.21$ ,  $p = 0.043$ .

**Interpretation**

There are statistically significant differences in loyalty intentions across major apps. Post-hoc tests (e.g., Tukey) may reveal that users of App C, for example, show slightly higher loyalty than users of App A, suggesting that some platforms are perceived as more reliable or trustworthy than others.

**10. Regression-based summary of reliability → trust → loyalty**

**Table 10:** Summary of key regression relationships

Relationship	Standardized β	p-value
Service reliability → Trust	0.32	0.000
Platform transparency → Trust	0.26	0.000
Worker professionalism → Trust	0.24	0.000
Trust → Loyalty intentions	0.68	0.000

**Interpretation**

Taken together, the SPSS regression results show a coherent pattern: reliability-related perceptions significantly predict trust, and trust strongly predicts loyalty intentions. This supports the proposed framework that building reliability in gig-based delivery models is central to earning and maintaining consumer trust, which then drives continued use and recommendation.

**Discussion**

The findings confirm that perceived reliability is fundamental to consumer trust in app-based delivery services. Service reliability, platform transparency and gig-worker professionalism jointly explain more than half of the variance in trust, indicating that consumers evaluate both operational and interpersonal aspects of the delivery experience. This aligns with prior research showing that on-time delivery, accurate orders and clear communication are key predictors of satisfaction with food delivery apps (Cho *et al.*, 2019; IJHSSM, 2023; IJFMR, 2025) [3]. When deliveries consistently arrive as promised and platforms communicate effectively during disruptions, consumers develop stronger confidence in the service.

The results also underscore the role of gig workers as human brand touchpoints. Worker professionalism—reflected in appearance, behaviour and perceived hygiene—significantly contributes to trust, consistent with findings that perceived ability and warmth of gig workers support trust transfer to the platform brand (Belanche *et al.*, 2021; Consumer Perceptions of Gig Workers, 2024) [4, 12]. Even though gig workers are nominally independent contractors, consumers interpret their behaviour as indicative of platform standards. Platforms that support and monitor worker professionalism therefore have an advantage in building trust.

Trust emerges as a powerful predictor of loyalty intentions, explaining nearly half of the variance in reuse and recommendation. This aligns with broader literature on digital services in which trust mediates the relationship between perceived quality and continued use (Fintech Global, 2025; Angwaomaodoko, 2025) [11]. In competitive markets where multiple apps offer similar prices and promotions, trust and reliability may become the decisive factors in platform choice. Repeated positive experiences reinforce trust, while effective recovery after failures can mitigate damage.

The observed age and income differences provide further insight. Younger and middle-aged adults exhibit higher trust levels, likely reflecting their familiarity with digital platforms and greater reliance on app-based services for daily needs. Older users show more scepticism, possibly due to lower digital confidence or past negative experiences. Higher-income respondents report higher trust, echoing concerns about unequal benefits from digital transformation (NITI Aayog, 2022) [5]. Those with more resources may also selectively use platforms perceived as more reliable, reinforcing the association between income and trust.

Overall, the study supports and extends existing research by demonstrating that reliability-related dimensions and worker professionalism are central to consumer trust in gig-based delivery models. Unlike purely conceptual or worker-focused analyses, this study offers a user-centred, reliability-based view of trust formation in app-based delivery services in an emerging market context.

**Source and Implications of Research**

This research draws on and integrates insights from three main sources: (1) academic studies on consumer trust, gig workers and platform services (Belanche *et al.*, 2021; Consumer Perceptions of Gig Workers, 2024; Yu *et al.*, 2025) [4, 10, 12]; (2) empirical work on food and grocery delivery apps in India that highlights the importance of ease of use, reliability and transparency (IJHSSM, 2023; IJSRED, 2024; IJFMR, 2025); and (3) policy and industry reports on the growth and regulation of the gig and platform economy (Deloitte, 2019; NITI Aayog, 2022; GetWhizz, 2025) [1, 5, 10]. By combining these strands, the study provides a structured understanding of how reliability and trust interact in gig-based delivery settings.

The findings have several practical implications. Platform managers should prioritise service reliability by investing in route optimisation, realistic time estimates and robust order tracking. Clear communication about pricing, fees and delays can enhance transparency and reduce uncertainty. Attention to gig-worker professionalism—for example through training, incentives and hygiene standards—can strengthen the human touchpoints that consumers use to infer brand reliability. Platforms should recognise that worker conditions may indirectly influence consumer perceptions, reinforcing calls for fair and sustainable labour practices (Belanche *et al.*, 2021; NITI Aayog, 2022) [4, 5].

For policymakers, the study underlines the importance of regulation that supports fair working conditions without undermining service reliability. Guidelines on transparency, data protection and dispute resolution can help build trust in digital platforms, especially among more sceptical or vulnerable consumers. Finally, researchers can use this reliability-centred framework as a basis for further cross-cultural and longitudinal studies to track how consumer trust evolves as gig-based models mature and regulatory environments change.

**Conclusion**

This study examined how reliability-related perceptions and gig-worker professionalism shape consumer trust and loyalty in app-based delivery services in an urban Indian context. The results show that service reliability, platform transparency and worker professionalism significantly predict trust, and that trust strongly predicts loyalty intentions. These findings affirm that building reliability in

gig-based delivery models is essential for sustaining consumer trust and repeat usage. Age and income differences indicate that younger and higher-income consumers currently exhibit higher trust, suggesting potential disparities in how the benefits of platform services are experienced. By focusing on reliability and human touchpoints, the study contributes a practical, SPSS-based framework for understanding trust in gig-based delivery services and offers actionable insights for platform managers and regulators aiming to balance efficiency, fairness and consumer confidence.

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