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From consuming food away from home to on-the-go consumption: a multi-study exploration using focus groups and fsQCA

Weng Marc Lim^{a,b,c,d}, Manish Das^e and Victor Saha^f

^aSunway Business School, Sunway University, Sunway City, Selangor, Malaysia; ^bASU-Cintana Alliance Global Partner Affiliate Faculty, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, USA; ^cSchool of Business, Law and Entrepreneurship, Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn, Victoria, Australia; ^dFaculty of Business, Design and Arts, Swinburne University of Technology, Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia; ^eDepartment of Business Management, Tripura University, Agartala, Tripura, India; ^fJindal Global Business School, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat, India

ABSTRACT

In contemporary fast-paced lifestyles, on-the-go (OTG) consumption, a distinct form of consumption involving food away from home (FAFH), has become widespread globally. However, the factors driving OTG consumption remain underexplored. This research employs a two-phase methodology, beginning with phenomenological focus group discussions (7 groups, $n = 40$), followed by fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) of survey data ($n = 324$). The exploration identifies key factors influencing OTG consumption and configurations that best describe this behaviour. Demographically, OTG consumers tend to be younger, employed full-time, and residing in urban areas. Psychographically, they seek enjoyment in their fast-paced lives, display materialistic tendencies aligned with consumption habits, have lower culinary skills, show a strong orientation towards sensory pleasure, and experience significant time pressure. Socially, these consumers are susceptible to interpersonal influence, are less concerned with body image, and tend to live in households with fewer female members. Marketing-mix elements such as targeted advertising, competitive pricing, product variety, and attractive special deals also play a crucial role in shaping their consumption. Thus, this exploration illuminates the multifaceted nature of OTG consumption and offers valuable insights for stakeholders interested in engaging this dynamic and fast-growing consumer segment.

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on-the-go consumption; food away from home; phenomenology; focus group; fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis; fsQCA; consumer behaviour; market segmentation; demographic; psychographic; social; marketing mix

Introduction

The landscape of food consumption has evolved dramatically, marked by a pronounced shift towards food away from home (FAFH), a trend underscored by escalating global statistics (Sands et al., 2019). FAFH, defined as food intake occurring outside the confines of one's residence (Benoit et al., 2016), encapsulates a broad

CONTACT Weng Marc Lim  lim@wengmarc.com  Sunway Business School, Sunway University, Sunway City, Selangor, Malaysia

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spectrum of eating behaviours, including the increasingly prevalent phenomenon of on-the-go (OTG) consumption. This specific subset of FAFH, characterised by the immediate procurement and intake of food items during transit, such as grabbing a sandwich en route to work (Benoit et al., 2016), has woven itself into the fabric of modern lifestyles. Notably, the US witnessed a substantial uptick in average annual household expenditure on FAFH, climbing from \$2505 in 2010 to \$3526 in 2019 (Statista, 2021).

The significance of OTG consumption extends beyond mere convenience, reflecting deeper economic and societal shifts. In Australia, for instance, OTG offerings propelled a 13.3% increase in convenience store revenues, amounting to an approximate \$63 million in 2017 (Elmas, 2018). Similarly, in India, the OTG trend has spurred a notable rise in the consumption of small-pack fast moving consumer goods (FMCGs) and milk, by 10% and 50% respectively, underscoring its impact on consumer goods markets (Times of India, 2020). These trends not only illuminate the growing acceptance of OTG consumption but also hint at underlying drivers, such as changing consumer values, increased urbanisation, and time scarcity, which merit in-depth exploration (Lim et al., 2023).

OTG consumption distinguishes itself from conventional FAFH patterns through its intrinsic link to simultaneous activities, notably transit, introducing a layer of complexity absent in other eating behaviours. This form of consumption is often driven by a 'perceived urgency', with individuals opting for OTG options primarily due to time constraints (Jebarajakirthy et al., 2021). Sands et al. (2019) encapsulate this distinction by highlighting OTG's *ad libitum* nature—meaning 'at one's pleasure' or 'as desired'—which prioritises convenience and immediacy over the planned, temporal, and structured nature of traditional food consumption. Such specificity underscores the need for a dedicated exploration of OTG, a domain that remains relatively underexplored despite its growing prevalence.

While existing research has examined OTG consumption from various perspectives, it predominantly frames OTG as a low-involvement, urgency-driven behaviour focused on convenience and utility (e.g. Benoit et al., 2016, 2019; Heider & Moeller, 2012; Jebarajakirthy et al., 2021, 2023; Sands et al., 2019). However, such a narrow view may overlook deeper drivers of OTG consumption. This research argues that the motivations for OTG consumption extend beyond immediate convenience or economic practicality, intertwining with societal shifts, such as evolving materialistic ideals of success shaped by marketing narratives (S. Gupta et al., 2023; Lim et al., 2020). For instance, the symbolism of owning a car, coupled with the pressure to maximise productivity, often leads consumers to sacrifice time for meal preparation in favour of OTG options, reallocating time towards work and other pursuits. Adopting this perspective on OTG consumption can therefore unveil a more comprehensive set of determinants beyond conventional utility and value frameworks.

Building on the foundational understanding of OTG consumption's distinct nature and its underrepresentation in existing literature, this research seeks to illuminate the multi-faceted drivers behind this modern food consumption trend. Recognising the limitations of extant research, which predominantly situates OTG within immediate, utility-driven contexts, our research aims to broaden the investigative lens, capturing a more comprehensive array of influences that transcend mere convenience or economic considerations. Therefore, in pursuit of an in-depth understanding of OTG consumption dynamics, this research is guided by two pivotal research questions (RQs):

RQ1. What are the factors that drive OTG consumption?

RQ2. Which configurations of factors influence OTG consumption most profoundly?

In addressing these RQs, our methodological approach employs a two-study design that integrates qualitative depth (Lim, 2025a) with quantitative precision (Lim, 2025b). Study 1 utilises phenomenological focus groups to uncover the diverse range of factors influencing OTG consumption. This qualitative exploration not only identifies the determinants of OTG consumption but also provides insight into the contextual and experiential factors underlying these behaviours. The findings from this phase inform the development of a conceptual model that captures the key drivers of OTG consumption. Subsequently, Study 2 conducts a quantitative analysis of survey data to validate the factors identified in Study 1. Specifically, by employing fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA), Study 2 examines the interplay among these factors (Kumar et al., 2022) to determine the most influential configuration—a combination of factors that most strongly promotes OTG consumption. This analytical approach captures the complexity of OTG consumption behaviours, recognising that these behaviours are shaped by the interaction of multiple influences rather than any single factor.

The contributions of this research are manifold. Firstly, through an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of frequent OTG consumers (those consuming on the go at least four times a week for the last three years) and identifying the factors that drive OTG consumption, this research enriches the body of knowledge with insights from a contemporary consumption context. Secondly, the application of fsQCA to model the configurations of influencing factors represents a methodological advancement, offering a finer-grained understanding of how these factors collectively shape OTG consumption patterns. This dual-phase exploration not only adds depth to our comprehension of OTG consumption but also pioneers the use of fsQCA in this domain. Thirdly, from a practical standpoint, the insights gleaned from this research hold significant implications for food retailers and marketers. With an informed understanding of the drivers of OTG consumption and the most potent configurations of these factors, practitioners can devise more targeted and effective strategies to cater to the evolving needs and preferences of consumers. This research thus offers valuable guidance for shaping marketing and communication strategies to leverage the growing trend of OTG consumption effectively.

Literature review

Conceptual background of on-the-go consumption

On-the-go (OTG) consumption, a subset of food away from home (FAFH) consumption, is characterised by its occurrence during transit or alongside daily activities (Benoit et al., 2016; Heider & Moeller, 2012). This shift reflects changes in consumer behaviour driven by urbanisation, evolving work patterns, and increasingly fast-paced lifestyles. Unlike traditional FAFH, which typically involves planned meals, OTG consumption prioritises convenience and immediacy, often occurring spontaneously (Benoit et al., 2016; Price, 2016).

A broad range of factors influence OTG consumption, including attitudinal, behavioural, socio-demographic, and retail-mix elements. Attitudinal factors, such as health consciousness, price sensitivity, and time pressure, are significantly linked to OTG behaviours (Benoit et al., 2016). Behavioural influences include habits and previous consumption patterns (Sands et al., 2019) while socio-demographic factors such as age, education, and income also play a role (Benoit et al., 2016). Within the retail mix, product assortment, convenience, perceived value for money, and store format significantly influence OTG choices (Benoit et al., 2019; Heider & Moeller, 2012; Jebarajakirthy et al., 2021).

Several studies have indicated the unique implications of OTG consumption. For example, Trinh and Dawes (2020) found that consumers exhibit significantly stronger brand loyalty during OTG consumption compared to home-based contexts, suggesting that the convenience-oriented nature of OTG creates distinct brand dynamics, deepening consumer loyalty in ways not typically seen in traditional settings. Eičaitė et al. (2022) highlighted the environmental consequences of OTG consumption, particularly its role in generating food waste from perishable items. Their study revealed that the transient and on-demand nature of OTG consumption leads to higher waste levels, directly linking consumption patterns to sustainability concerns. While OTG consumption is often viewed as impulsive, Jebarajakirthy et al. (2023) demonstrated that external factors, such as gain-framed messaging, can effectively steer OTG consumers towards healthier choices. This finding highlights the potential for targeted interventions to influence OTG behaviour, underscoring the complexity of OTG consumption and its responsiveness to well-designed marketing strategies.

Nevertheless, further research on OTG consumption is essential due to its multifaceted impact on personal health, social structures, environmental sustainability, and economic dynamics. With OTG consumption increasingly becoming a global trend, its association with health risks—such as the preference for ‘vice’ foods—raises critical concerns about long-term public health outcomes (Sands et al., 2019). Additionally, OTG’s disruption of traditional social eating practices signals a cultural shift that could affect family dynamics and societal norms around food (Skelton et al., 2020). Furthermore, the environmental consequences, particularly the significant contribution to plastic waste, make OTG consumption a pressing issue for sustainability initiatives (Dilkes-Hoffman et al., 2019). Moreover, from an economic perspective, the rise of OTG consumption presents both lucrative opportunities and intense competition, requiring businesses to innovate in product offerings, marketing, and packaging (Jebarajakirthy et al., 2021). Thus, understanding the drivers, behaviours, and larger effects of OTG consumption is vital for businesses, policymakers, and society at large, as it holds the potential to shape future consumer behaviour, industry practices, and regulatory frameworks.

Theoretical background of on-the-go consumption

The exploration of OTG consumption has been significantly enriched by various theoretical frameworks, particularly consumption values theory, multi-attribute utility theory, and shopping patronage theory. These frameworks have provided valuable insights into the motivations and preferences underlying OTG consumption, yet a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon is still required to capture its full complexity.

Consumption values theory has been instrumental in revealing how utilitarian and hedonic values influence OTG consumption decisions. Benoit et al. (2016) highlighted the roles of these values in shaping consumer choices, emphasising that OTG consumption is not only driven by convenience but also by the sensory and emotional benefits consumers derive from it. This perspective was expanded further by Benoit et al. (2019) and Jebarajakirthy et al. (2021), who identified a combination of functional, economic, epistemic, and conditional values that guide OTG consumption preferences. These insights are crucial in understanding why consumers are attracted to OTG consumption, but they still fall short of explaining the sociocultural and psychological dimensions that may also play a role.

Similarly, multi-attribute utility theory has shed light on the complex decision-making processes involved in OTG consumption. Sands et al. (2019) categorised OTG consumers into three groups: frequent vice consumers, occasional OTG consumers, and conflicted health-conscious consumers. This classification demonstrated the diverse motivations behind OTG consumption, from indulgence in unhealthy options to attempts at balancing health-conscious choices. However, while this segmentation provides a useful lens for understanding OTG behaviour, it does not fully account for the external social and lifestyle factors that might drive these choices.

Shopping patronage theory, as applied by Heider and Moeller (2012), underscores the significance of store assortments and format in facilitating OTG consumption. Their research suggests that consumers seeking OTG options are more likely to frequent stores offering a wide range of products that prioritise convenience and efficiency. Benoit et al. (2019) extended this perspective by showing how product type influences store format choice, with consumers favouring different store attributes depending on whether they are purchasing easily evaluated goods, like a can of Coke, or experience-based goods, such as a salad. While shopping patronage theory helps explain the interaction between retail environments and OTG consumption, it does not delve into the evolving lifestyle demands and external pressures that are reshaping consumer behaviour.

Although these theoretical perspectives offer substantial insights into the motivations behind OTG consumption, they may not fully encapsulate the complexity of this phenomenon. The prevailing utility and value-centric discourse, though instrumental, tends to overlook sociocultural and lifestyle dimensions that significantly influence OTG consumption. For instance, shifts in family structures and lifestyle dynamics (Lim et al., 2023) may compel individuals towards OTG consumption, even in the absence of a direct preference for it. Moreover, societal constructs of 'success', often associated with material accumulation (Lim et al., 2020) and demanding work schedules (Lim et al., 2022), may inadvertently promote OTG consumption by prioritising time efficiency over traditional meal settings.

To address these gaps, our research advocates for a more holistic exploration of OTG consumption that moves beyond traditional utility and value frameworks. Employing a multi-study design that integrates phenomenological focus group discussions with fsQCA, we endeavour to capture the lived experiences of frequent OTG consumers and uncover the complex interplay of factors influencing their behaviour. This approach allows us to explore not only the individual motivations but also the external societal and lifestyle pressures that contribute to OTG consumption. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods offers a more comprehensive understanding of OTG

consumption, making a substantial theoretical contribution by bridging the gaps left by existing frameworks and providing insights into this contemporary phenomenon.

Study 1

Approach

To explore the factors that drive OTG consumption, Study 1 adopts a methodological framework that synergises the strengths of focus groups with the depth of a phenomenological approach. The choice of focus groups as a primary data collection method is rooted in their proven efficacy in illuminating the multifaceted perspectives of participants, facilitating a dynamic exploration of both shared and divergent views (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Lim, 2025a) on OTG consumption. This interactive setting not only fosters rich, contextual discussions but also reveals deeper insights into consumer behaviours and preferences, offering a strong foundation for identifying key drivers of OTG consumption. Complementing this, the phenomenological approach is instrumental in capturing the essence of the participants' lived experiences with OTG consumption. Prioritising the subjective experiences and interpretations of individuals (Lim, 2025a; Merriam & Greiner, 2019), phenomenology provides a lens through which the intrinsic meanings and underlying motivations of OTG consumption can be understood and articulated. This dual-method approach, combining phenomenology with focus groups, is designed to unravel the complex tapestry of factors contributing to this distinct consumption pattern. Through this integrative methodological lens, this study seeks to generate profound insights into the lived realities of OTG consumers, shedding light on the interplay of factors that influence or shape this modern consumption phenomenon.

Sampling

The sampling strategy for this study was designed to capture a comprehensive understanding of OTG consumption patterns within an urban Indian context. India's rapidly urbanising population and evolving food consumption landscape make it an ideal setting for studying OTG behaviours. As of 2011, 31% of India's population resided in urban areas, with projections suggesting this figure could rise to 40% by 2030 (World Bank, 2024). Urbanisation has led to notable shifts in food consumption patterns, with the food service industry in India expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.77% from 2025 to 2030, primarily concentrated in urban locations (Statista, 2024). OTG consumption is particularly relevant in these urban settings due to fast-paced lifestyles and high population density (Euromonitor International, 2021). Factors such as perceived time constraints, long commuting and working hours, and busy social lives contribute to a culture of convenience, further encouraging OTG consumption (Smith & Clark, 2019). Indeed, Nielsen (2017) highlighted that FAFH consumption in India is predominantly an urban phenomenon, with a significant portion of the urban population dining out weekly. In light of this, Kolkata was selected as the focal city for exploring OTG consumption behaviours. The city's diverse socio-economic profile, ranging from traditional middle-class families to young professionals, offers a rich mix of consumer segments relevant to this study. As the capital of West Bengal and one of India's major metropolitan areas,

Kolkata's metropolitan population exceeds 14 million (Census of India, 2011). Its unique combination of a rich culinary heritage and rapid modernisation, alongside the growth of the services sector and a rising middle class, creates an environment where traditional food habits intersect with contemporary OTG consumption trends. This made Kolkata an ideal setting for understanding OTG consumption in a rapidly evolving urban Indian context.

To ensure the richness and relevance of the data collected, a pilot survey using purposive sampling was first conducted to identify the characteristics of a 'frequent' OTG consumer. The pilot survey was administered through Google Forms, which was distributed via Facebook and emails to faculty members whose contact information was obtained from various educational institutions' webpages. Individuals were contacted if they (a) listed Kolkata as their residence on Facebook, or (b) were employed at educational institutions in Kolkata. A total of 89 prospects were contacted. The online survey began with a screening question: 'Do you consume food on the go frequently?' Only respondents who answered 'yes' proceeded to the main section of the survey, which included questions on (a) how frequently they consumed food on the go each week, (b) the types of food consumed on the go, and (c) the number of years they had been consuming food on the go. We received 25 complete responses, which were used to define the criteria for 'frequent' OTG consumers. The mean values for weekly consumption and years of consumption were considered. Based on this, frequent OTG consumption was defined as engaging in OTG behaviours for more than three years and at least four times a week. This pilot study ensured that participants had substantial experience with OTG consumption, contributing meaningfully to the discussions.

Participant recruitment for the main study was conducted through a mall intercept method, resulting in a diverse group of 40 respondents across seven focus group discussions. Group sizes generally ranged from three to eight participants, largely adhering to recommendations by Lim (2025a) and Ochieng et al. (2018) for effective group interaction. The demographic composition of participants was intentionally varied, encompassing a range of ages, educational backgrounds, income levels, and occupations. This diversity ensured that perspectives across Kolkata's urban population were represented, enriching the study's findings with insights from different consumer segments. The sample included a balanced gender split, age groups ranging from below 30 to above 45 years, educational qualifications from high school to undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and a range of income brackets and occupational sectors. This demographic heterogeneity allowed for an in-depth exploration of the factors influencing OTG consumption behaviours.

Procedure

The methodology employed for the focus group discussions was designed to foster an environment conducive to an in-depth exploration of OTG consumption behaviours. A single researcher moderated all sessions to maintain consistency across discussions, ensuring that each group followed the same methodological procedure and probing depth. This included a standardised introduction, a common set of core questions, and consistent probing techniques. This approach ensured comparability across groups while allowing flexibility for the emergence of new themes. Conducted in the native Bengali

language to facilitate ease of expression, the focus group discussions ranged from 80 to 95 minutes, striking a balance between thorough coverage and participant engagement. The discussions were conducted in a comfortable and relaxed setting, adhering to the principles of open-ended inquiry (Eeuwijk & Angehrn, 2017; Lim, 2025a). This approach was crucial in eliciting candid and reflective responses from participants, enabling an authentic exploration of the factors influencing OTG consumption. The use of follow-up and probing questions allowed for an in-depth exploration of key points raised, ensuring each factor was thoroughly examined and understood. Table 1 presents the characteristics of participants in the focus group discussions.

At the outset of each session, the moderator clearly outlined the study's objectives, emphasising the commitment to anonymity and confidentiality to build a trustworthy environment (Lim, 2025a). The discussions began with broad, open-ended questions (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994), such as asking participants about the frequency and nature of their OTG food and drink consumption habits. These introductory questions helped to ground the discussion in participants' personal experiences and established their engagement with OTG consumption.

As the discussions progressed, the moderator guided the conversation towards the core inquiry of the study (Leech, 2002): the determinants of OTG consumption. Participants were encouraged to reflect on and articulate the reasons behind their OTG consumption habits, with the moderator using targeted prompts to explore the significance of each factor mentioned. This iterative process was enriched by soliciting input from all group members (Lim, 2025a), fostering a collaborative exploration of how various factors influenced OTG behaviours.

Heterogeneity in focus groups can sometimes result in participation imbalances, which may lead to biased findings (Lim, 2025a). To mitigate this risk, several strategies were employed to ensure balanced participation. First, the moderator actively encouraged input from all participants, particularly quieter individuals, while gently managing more

Table 1. Profile of participants across focus group discussions.

Focus group	Participants	Age range (years)	Gender distribution	Educational qualification	Occupation
1	6	25–45	3 males, 3 females	2 undergraduates, 3 postgraduates, 1 PhD	2 business owners, 2 professionals, 2 students
2	7	30–55	4 males, 3 females	3 undergraduates, 4 postgraduates	3 professionals, 2 homemakers, 2 self-employed
3	5	22–40	2 males, 3 females	1 high school, 3 undergraduates, 1 postgraduate	2 professionals, 2 students, 1 freelancer
4	6	35–60	3 males, 3 females	2 undergraduates, 3 postgraduates, 1 PhD	3 professionals, 2 academics, 1 retiree
5	8	28–50	5 males, 3 females	1 high school, 4 undergraduates, 3 postgraduates	4 professionals, 2 business owners, 2 homemakers
6	5	20–35	2 males, 3 females	2 undergraduates, 3 postgraduates	3 students, 2 professionals
7	3	45–65	2 males, 1 female	1 undergraduate, 2 postgraduates	1 business owner, 1 professional, 1 retiree

dominant voices. A round-robin approach was also used, giving each participant the opportunity to speak before transitioning to open discussion (Ash et al., 2008). In addition, brief individual follow-ups were conducted with participants who were less vocal during the focus group discussion to ensure that all perspectives were adequately captured (Hennink, 2013).

All sessions were audio-recorded with the explicit consent of participants and the recordings were transcribed verbatim in Bengali. The transcripts were then carefully translated into English by a bilingual translator to preserve the authenticity of participants' expressions. No personal information (e.g. contact details) was collected and pseudonyms were used, ensuring anonymity and compliance with ethical standards (Lim, 2025a). The resulting transcripts form a comprehensive dataset, capturing the depth and diversity of insights into OTG consumption.

Analysis

The analytical process followed a thematic analysis, adhering to the guidelines set forth by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved an iterative engagement with the English-translated transcripts, where two researchers embarked on the analysis independently to mitigate bias and enhance the depth of inquiry. The initial phase of analysis commenced with a detailed examination of the transcripts, allowing researchers to identify a preliminary set of relevant keywords and phrases that captured the essence of participants' discussions regarding OTG consumption. Subsequently, these preliminary insights were refined through a process of open coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), where discrete pieces of data were labelled to denote their core content. This granular approach facilitated the emergence of specific insights into the factors driving OTG consumption. The coding process then progressed to axial coding, a stage where the initial codes were organised into categories based on their inherent similarities, differences, and the patterns that emerged across the dataset (Goulding, 1999). This organisational schema served as the foundation for constructing thematic maps, which visually represented the relationships and hierarchies among the identified themes (Spiggle, 1994).

To ensure analytical rigour, each researcher developed an independent thematic map, encapsulating their interpretation of the data. These individual thematic maps were then collectively reviewed in a collaborative session where discrepancies were discussed and resolved, resulting in the construction of a consensus-based final thematic map. This collaborative effort ensured that the analysis was comprehensive and reflective of the collective insights of the research team. Parallel to this empirical analysis, an extensive review of the existing literature on OTG consumption was conducted. This literature review served a dual purpose: it provided a contextual backdrop against which the findings could be interpreted, and it offered a terminological framework that enriched the coding and thematisation process, ensuring that the analysis was grounded in the relevant scholarly discourse (Choudhury et al., 2018).

To further establish the trustworthiness of the analysis (Lim, 2025a), we employed inter-coder reliability (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020) and member checking (Birt et al., 2016). Inter-coder reliability measures the agreement between different coders on how the same data is coded (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020), thereby ensuring the reliability of the results. Inter-coder reliability in this study was quantified using the Kappa

coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.82. The Kappa coefficient measures agreement levels ranging from 0 to 1, with values above 0.8 generally considered to indicate strong agreement (Frey, 2018). To calculate this coefficient, two independent coders analysed the transcripts using the developed coding scheme, and their coding decisions were compared to assess the level of agreement. A value of 0.82 signifies substantial agreement among the researchers, attesting to the consistency of the coding process.

We also used member checking to ensure the trustworthiness of the study's findings. In this process, the data and results were returned to participants to ensure accuracy and resonance with their experiences (Birt et al., 2016). Two participants from each focus group (14 in total) were randomly selected to review a summary of the key themes and interpretations derived from their respective discussions. Participants were asked to assess whether these interpretations accurately reflected their experiences and views. The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with most confirming that our interpretations aligned with their perspectives. In cases where participants suggested additional context or subtle distinctions, we carefully considered their input and made adjustments to our analysis. For instance, one participant provided further insight into the role of social media in shaping OTG consumption habits, which we subsequently incorporated into the theme on interpersonal influences. There were no major disagreements between the researchers and participants regarding the coding or thematic analysis, although some participants placed different emphasis on certain themes. For example, one participant suggested that the influence of workplace culture on OTG consumption was underrepresented in our initial analysis. We addressed this by revisiting the data, refining our coding, and giving greater prominence to this factor in our findings. This iterative process of member checking and refinement was essential in ensuring that our thematic interpretation faithfully represented participants' perspectives while maintaining analytical rigour.

Results

The analysis revealed 16 factors that influence OTG consumption behaviours, which were identified directly from the data (Figure 1). The thematic map derived from the analysis confirmed these 16 factors, with relevant quotes and comments taken into consideration during the identification process (Lim, 2025a). These factors span across various dimensions, including demographic characteristics, psychographic dispositions, social influences, and marketing-mix elements. Specifically, the identified determinants encompass:

- *Demographic characteristics*: Age, nature of employment, and residential place emerged as key demographic antecedents. These factors underscore the role of personal characteristics in shaping OTG consumption patterns.
- *Psychographic dispositions*: Enjoyment, materialistic tendencies, perceived cooking skills, sensory stimulation, and time pressure were identified as critical psychographic variables. These attributes reflect the motivations and values that drive OTG consumption.
- *Social influences*: Body image perception, interpersonal influence, and female composition of the household constitutes the social dimension, highlighting the impact of societal norms and social influences on OTG consumption decisions.

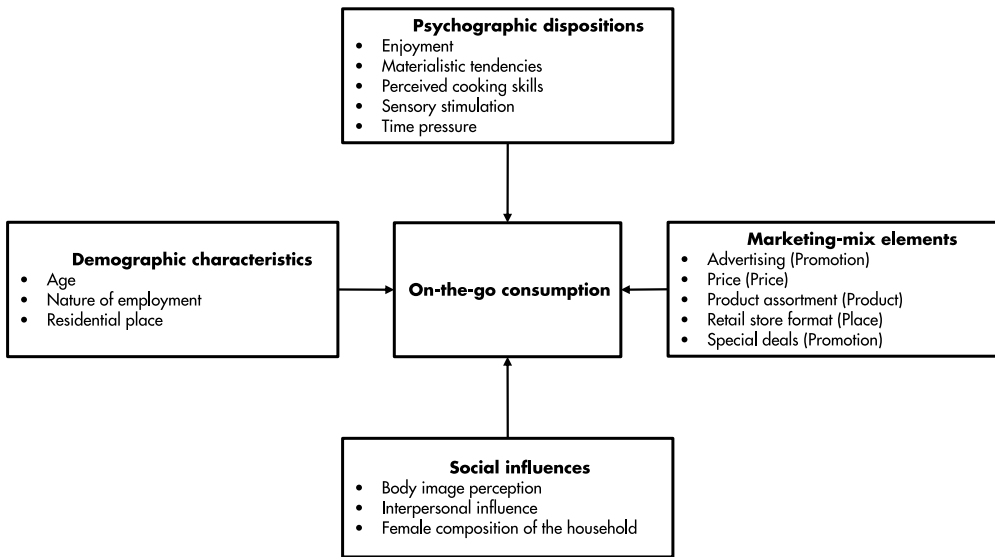


Figure 1. Conceptual model of on-the-go consumption.

- *Marketing-mix elements*: Advertising, price, product assortment, retail store format, and special deals were recognised as part of the marketing mix. These elements underscore the significant role of marketing strategies and retail environments in facilitating OTG consumption.

The categorisation of these antecedents into demographic, psychographic, social, and marketing-mix categories provides a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of OTG consumption. Each category represents a distinct set of influences, collectively painting a detailed picture of the factors that drive OTG consumption behaviours.

After identifying the factors and organising them into their respective categories, a thorough literature review was conducted to determine whether these factors had been previously explored in the OTG consumption context or were novel contributions to the literature. A detailed exploration of these variables, supported by illustrative quotes from the focus group discussions and their connections to existing literature, is presented in Table 2. This evidence-based delineation of OTG consumption determinants offers valuable insights into the complex interplay of factors that shape consumer choices in the context of OTG consumption.

Demographic characteristics

Consistent with prior research (Heider & Moeller, 2012; Sands et al., 2019), our study reaffirms the significance of demographic factors in influencing OTG consumption. However, our findings extend the current understanding by offering finer-grained insights into these factors.

Age. Aligning with Heider and Moeller (2012), participants in our study demonstrated a clear link between age and OTG consumption preferences. Younger individuals, often



Table 2. Focus group insights relating to on-the-go consumption.

Third-order theme	Second-order category	Age	First-order code	Contribution	Quotes
Antecedent	Demographic			Affirms literature Heider and Moeller (2012)	<p>"I find on-the-go consumption as an age related issue. I never find an elderly person eat on the go" (ID29, M, 34, G5)</p> <p>"Age can have an impact on this [on-the-go] consumption. Young people need to travel more compared to elderly, making them more prone to consumption on move" (ID07, M, 48, G2)</p> <p>"Younger generation is more mobile, so they are more open to take food and drinks in transit" (ID01, F, 42, G1)</p> <p>"I don't think age has too much of an influence on eating on the go. The environment has changed tremendously, be it for the young or the old" (ID17, F, 36, G3)</p> <p>"Nature of my job demands extensive travelling from one place to another. Taking food on time is a challenge for me. I am bound to take food on the-go" (ID19, M, 37, G4)</p> <p>"I am in sales. I need to travel extensively to achieve my work target. Sales is an unpredictable job. I need to be flexible for options like food in transit" (ID35, M, 24, G6)</p> <p>"I never feel the urgency to go for food and drinks on the go. My teaching job has fixed work timing. I can enjoy my lunch in between lectures as I have sufficient time for that. I take my home-made lunch to school. My government job gives me certainty of work schedule" (ID02, F, 39, G1)</p> <p>"Meeting clients requires me to eat on the go. It's a professional call" (ID08, M, 28, G2)</p> <p>"Location is an important factor. In the city, I often see people buying food on the move ... but I hardly see this in my native place. It's a rural village indeed" (ID26, M, 42, G5)</p> <p>"I need to travel 5 km to reach home from metro junction, new town. Though it's 5 km, it requires minimum 2 hours to reach home due to traffic. From office, 2 hours by metro train and another 2 hours in congested traffic to reach home, it's just painful. I take evening snacks on the go" (ID14, F, 33, G3)</p> <p>"I never faced a situation to consume on the go except for enjoying family outing or long drive with friends" (ID15, M, 34, G3)</p> <p>"We eat and drink on the go a lot when we enjoy family trip" (ID27, M, 29, G5)</p>
			Nature of employment	Affirms literature Heider and Moeller (2012); Sands et al. (2019)	
			Residential place	Affirms literature Sands et al. (2019)	
	Psychographic	Enjoyment		Affirms literature Benoit et al. (2016); Heider and Moeller (2012)	

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

Third-order theme	Second-order category	First-order code	Contribution	Quotes				
Materialistic tendencies			Adds to literature (our study)	<p>"Unprecedented desire for cars, house, branded items, lavish life-styles as success symbols leading individuals to eat along the way" (ID09, F, 31, G2)</p> <p>"What [another participant] said is true. Desire for materialistic success is creating a sense of time pressure leading to on-the-go consumption" (ID17, F, 36, G3)</p> <p>"Life is short. I want to lead a luxurious life. This is the time for me to work and go the extra mile. I am comfortable with on-the-go consumption now" (ID34, 25, M, G6)</p> <p>"Our ideation of materials as symbols of success and running for costly materials to exhibit success can be a reason for exponential increase in on-the-go consumption" (ID16, F, 39, G3)</p> <p>"Money is everything. You need to earn more money for a comfortable life. To earn more, you have to sacrifice your comfort and be adaptable to eating along the way" (ID38, M, 41, G1)</p> <p>"Chasing after money is creating such kind of food habits" (ID33, F, 35, G6)</p> <p>"People's lethargic and lack of cooking skills seem to be responsible for food on the go" (ID10, F, 33, G2)</p> <p>"Pressure to perform in the job hinders people to develop necessary skills to cook at home resulting in the habits like food on the go" (ID28, F, 44, G5)</p> <p>"What [the other participant said about cooking skills] is right" (ID25, M, 34, G5)</p> <p>"While driving, I just can't resist myself from stopping and eating if I see those fried chickens displayed" (ID29, M, 30, G5)</p> <p>"The smell coming from those food at the roadside is simply irresistible" (ID11, F, 39, G2)</p> <p>"The taste of food at roadside is just amazing. Every day, I take some bites to satisfy my taste buds" (ID34, M, 25, G6)</p>				
				Perceived cooking skill			Adds to literature (our study)	
								Sensory stimulation

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

Third-order theme	Second-order category	First-order code	Contribution	Quotes
		Time pressure	Affirms literature Benoit et al. (2016); Heider and Moeller (2012)	<p>"Taking food on time is a challenge for me due to enormous pressure on me. I am bound to take food on the go whether I like it or not" (ID19, M, 37, G4)</p> <p>"I don't have any fixed schedule. I need to deliver results in a timely manner. I have no other option but to eat on my way" (ID35, M, 24 G6)</p> <p>"What [the other participant] said is fine. But, to me, I am always under time pressure, which causes me to eat my breakfast on my way" (ID17, F, 36, G2)</p> <p>"I guess feeling of being time pressed results in food on transit" (ID39, F, 49, G7)</p>
Social		Body image perception	Adds to literature (our study)	<p>"I cannot compromise with my body shape. I never consume junk items on the go. I prefer to consume only those items that are fresh" (ID15, M, 34, G3)</p> <p>"Physical attractiveness is everything. I don't eat on my way. If I want to eat on the go, I only consume items high on fiber" (ID29, M, 30, G5)</p> <p>"Body attractiveness matters a lot to me. I am highly body conscious. I try to avoid junk foods on the go, they contain a lot of fat contents" (ID03, F, 25, G1)</p> <p>"I hardly consume along the way when I am alone. Most of the time, I consume on the go with friends" (ID21, F, 28, G4)</p>
		Interpersonal influence	Adds to literature (our study)	<p>"My colleague's role is instrumental in my on-the-go consumption. We often eat together while coming from office" (ID04, M, 45, G1)</p> <p>"Every weekend, I along with my fiancée go out for a drive. For me, consuming on the go is a complimentary to creating bond amongst ourselves prior marriage" (ID05, M, 30, G1)</p>
		Female composition of the household	Adds to literature (our study)	<p>"In my house, we have four female adults. All of them can cook. I never faced a situation to consume on the go except for family outing or long drive with friends" (ID15, M, 34, G3)</p> <p>"When our family became nuclear from the joint, the number of female members in our household declined. Once I had my mother and younger sister staying with me. Now after separation, only me and my wife stay together. Since both of us work, we frequently take food on the go" (ID27, M, 29, G5)</p> <p>"In the past decade, a significant number of females have joined the workforce in India, which will further increase in coming years. The more female household members in the workforce, the more will be the increase in on-the-go consumption" (ID04, M, 40, G1)</p>

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

Third-order theme	Second-order category	First-order code	Contribution	Quotes
Marketing mix	Advertising (Promotion)		Adds to literature (our study)	<p>"Taking food on the go is becoming popular due to advertisements. I can still recall an advertisement featuring [an Indian actor] where he consumes a soft drink while driving" (ID29, M, 30, G5)</p> <p>"Fully agree with [the other participant]" (ID27, M, 29, G5)</p> <p>"Marketers convince us to consume things along the way through advertising" (ID04, M, 45, G1)</p>
			Price (Price)	Affirms literature Benoit et al. (2016); Heider and Moeller (2012)
		Product assortment (Product)	Affirms literature Benoit et al. (2016); Heider and Moeller (2012)	<p>"Type of item also matters. I prefer to take food-to-go from stores having the most ready-to-eat assortments" (ID11, F, 39, G2)</p> <p>"What [the other participant] said is correct. I also prefer to see a lot of consumable items available to consume on the go" (ID09, F, 31, G2)</p> <p>"I mostly took chips, muffins, samosa. . . . all light snacks to eat along the way" (ID05, M, 30, G1)</p> <p>"For me, availability of ready-to-eat packaged items is an issue if I want to eat something on the go" (ID20, M, 43, G4)</p>
		Retail store format (Place)	Affirms literature Benoit et al. (2019)	<p>"I prefer to buy from supermarkets as I can get the most variety of ready-to-eat packaged items there" (ID20, M, 43, G4)</p> <p>"I choose roadside Kirana stores [mom-and-pop neighborhood grocery stores] for on-the-go items for convenience" (ID06, M, 37, G1)</p>
		Special deals (Promotion)	Adds to literature (our study)	<p>"I mostly buy from kiosks and automated vending machines as they are hassle-free" (ID29, M, 30, G5)</p> <p>"I don't miss food-to-go if I come across a combo pack" (ID35, M, 24, G6)</p> <p>"I often see special offers like discounted price, buy one and get one free and half-price deals, etc. while looking at roadside store displays. I can't resist myself for food-to-go when I see those deals" (ID19, M, 37, G4)</p> <p>"I normally eat food-to-go, so I'd search for items on special offers and deals" (ID08, M, 28, G2)</p>

more mobile and engaged in hectic lifestyles, were more inclined towards OTG consumption. This observation was supported by remarks highlighting the increased mobility of the younger generation, making them more receptive to consuming food and drinks in transit. However, some participants also noted a growing trend of OTG consumption across all age groups, suggesting a societal shift towards convenience-driven eating habits.

Nature of employment. Consistent with Heider and Moeller (2012) and Sands et al. (2019), the nature of one's employment emerged as a critical determinant. Participants with jobs requiring extensive travel or unpredictable schedules, such as sales, reported a higher reliance on OTG consumption. In contrast, individuals with more predictable and stationary job roles, like teaching, exhibited lesser engagement with OTG consumption, emphasising the role of job demands in shaping eating behaviours.

Residential place. Echoing the findings of Sands et al. (2019), participants in our study identified residential location as a key factor. Urban dwellers, especially those in cities with heavy traffic and long commute times, were more likely to engage in OTG consumption compared to their rural counterparts. This distinction underscores the influence of urbanisation and lifestyle pace on consumption habits, with city life often necessitating more flexible and convenient eating options.

These findings not only corroborate existing literature but also expand our understanding of demographic influences on OTG consumption, highlighting the complex interplay between individual characteristics, employment conditions, and urbanisation in shaping consumer behaviour.

Psychographic dispositions

Our study further explores the psychographic factors influencing OTG consumption, including enjoyment, materialistic tendencies, perceived cooking skills, sensory stimulation, and time pressure. These dispositions offer a deeper understanding of the motivations and values driving consumer behaviour towards OTG consumption.

Enjoyment. Consistent with the findings of Benoit et al. (2016) and Heider and Moeller (2012), enjoyment emerges as a significant driver of OTG consumption. Participants frequently associated OTG eating and drinking with positive experiences, such as family outings or long drives, suggesting that the pursuit of pleasure and enjoyment can significantly influence consumption choices. This underscores the hedonic aspects of OTG consumption, where the experience of eating is intertwined with leisure and recreation.

Materialistic tendencies. Our findings introduce materialistic tendencies as a novel psychographic factor affecting OTG consumption. Participants expressed a strong desire to achieve and display life success through material possessions, which often leads to a fast-paced lifestyle and increased OTG consumption. This desire for material success, as articulated by participants, necessitates a trade-off between time spent on meal preparation and consumption and time dedicated to work and achieving material goals. Recent research suggests that materialistic values are associated with behaviours that prioritise

convenience and quick consumption over traditional practices (Shrum et al., 2023). Materialism, linked to the pursuit of social status and self-esteem (Atanasova & Eckhardt, 2021), can therefore drive individuals towards accessible food options like OTG consumption, wherein such a lifestyle prioritises efficiency, often at the expense of personal well-being and traditional meal practices.

Perceived cooking skills. Another novel contribution of our study is the identification of perceived cooking skills as a determinant of OTG consumption. Participants pointed out that a lack of confidence in cooking abilities and the pressure to perform in professional domains hinder the development of cooking skills, leading to a greater reliance on OTG options. This factor reflects a societal trend towards convenience and the diminishing value placed on home cooking, highlighting the need for greater attention to skill development in domestic spheres.

Sensory stimulation. Sensory stimulation, as described by participants, significantly influences OTG consumption decisions. The allure of sight, smell, taste, and texture of food items, especially those encountered unexpectedly in transit, can trigger impromptu consumption behaviours. This finding aligns with McCrickerd and Forde (2015), who discussed the physiological responses to sensory cues, adding depth to the understanding of spontaneous OTG eating driven by sensory appeal.

Time pressure. In line with previous research (Benoit et al., 2016; Heider & Moeller, 2012), time pressure was reaffirmed as a critical psychographic factor. Participants described scenarios where professional and personal commitments created time constraints, making OTG consumption a practical solution. This factor underscores the pervasive influence of fast-paced modern lifestyles, where efficiency and convenience frequently take precedence over traditional meal settings.

These psychographic insights reveal the complex interplay between personal values, lifestyle choices, and societal trends in shaping OTG consumption patterns. Extending the current understanding of these influences, our study provides a finer view of the motivations and values behind OTG eating behaviours.

Social influences

Our study also delves into the social dimensions of OTG consumption, uncovering the significant roles played by body image perceptions and interpersonal influences. These factors, not extensively explored in existing OTG consumption literature, offer fresh insights into the social underpinnings of consumer behaviour.

Body image perceptions. The study participants highlighted body image perceptions as a critical determinant of OTG consumption choices. Concerns about physical appearance and the desire to maintain a certain body shape influenced their decisions regarding what and when to eat in transit. Participants expressed a preference for healthier OTG options, such as items high in fibre, and showed an aversion to consuming what they perceived as 'junk' food that could negatively impact their body image. This finding adds a new dimension to the literature by emphasising the impact of body image on food consumption behaviour, especially in contexts where the traditional meal structure is disrupted.

Interpersonal influence. Interpersonal influence emerged as another pivotal social factor affecting OTG consumption. The study revealed that the presence and preferences of peers, colleagues, and significant others significantly sway individuals' choices to consume food OTG. Participants reported a higher likelihood of engaging in OTG consumption in the company of friends or colleagues, often as a social activity that enhances bonding. This insight extends the understanding of OTG consumption by highlighting the role of social interactions and the influence of peer groups in shaping eating habits outside the home.

Female composition of the household. A novel insight from our study is the impact of the female composition within a household on OTG consumption, a factor not extensively covered in existing literature. Participants noted that households with a higher number of females, particularly those adept at cooking, tended to have lower instances of OTG consumption. Conversely, a decrease in the number of household females, often due to the shift towards nuclear family structures and increased female workforce participation, was associated with a rise in OTG consumption. This highlights a pivotal shift in family dynamics and its direct influence on consumption patterns.

These social factors, particularly body image perceptions and interpersonal influence, underscore the profound impact of societal norms and social relationships (Zaccagni et al., 2020) on OTG consumption. Identifying these influences, our study contributes to a more holistic understanding of the myriad factors that drive OTG consumption beyond the individual and environmental determinants traditionally explored in the literature. The inclusion of social dimensions in analysing OTG consumption patterns reflects the complex interplay between personal beliefs, societal expectations, and family dynamics in shaping consumer food choices.

Marketing-mix elements

The influence of marketing-mix elements on OTG consumption is evident through the interplay of advertising, price, product assortment, retail store format, and special deals. Our findings align with and expand upon previous research, offering a clearer understanding of how marketing strategies shape consumer behaviours.

Advertising. Advertising emerges as a potent driver of OTG consumption, with participants recalling specific advertisements that encouraged eating while in transit. The portrayal of popular figures consuming OTG in advertisements was cited as a significant influence, suggesting that promotional content can effectively shape consumer perceptions and behaviours towards OTG eating. This insight adds to the existing literature by illustrating the direct impact of advertising on consumption patterns, beyond the previously established factors.

Price. Consistent with prior studies (Benoit et al., 2016; Heider & Moeller, 2012), price sensitivity remains a crucial consideration for consumers engaging in OTG consumption. Participants expressed a preference for reasonably priced OTG items, emphasising the role of cost in their decision-making process. However, some participants noted that the convenience and time savings offered by OTG options often outweighed price considerations, indicating a trade-off between cost and convenience.

Product assortment. The availability of a wide range of ready-to-eat products was highlighted as a key factor influencing OTG consumption decisions. Participants favoured stores offering a diverse assortment of consumables, emphasising the role of product variety in satisfying the immediate needs of OTG consumers. This finding supports the literature (Benoit et al., 2016; Heider & Moeller, 2012), underscoring the importance of product assortment in satisfying convenience-oriented preferences of consumers.

Retail store format. The format of retail stores plays a significant role in facilitating OTG consumption, with preferences varying from automated vending machines to roadside kiosks and supermarkets. The choice of retail format was influenced by factors such as convenience, ease of access, and variety, consistent with findings from Benoit et al. (2019). This diversity in preferred retail formats reflects the multifaceted nature of consumer needs and the importance of retail environments in accommodating OTG consumption behaviours.

Special deals. Special promotional deals, such as combo packs and discounted offers, were identified as influential in encouraging OTG consumption. Participants reported being more likely to purchase OTG items when enticed by special offers, indicating that promotional strategies can effectively attract consumers seeking value in their OTG choices. This insight extends the literature by highlighting the impact of promotional deals on consumer behaviour, particularly in the context of OTG consumption.

These findings elucidate the complex ways in which marketing-mix elements interact to influence OTG consumption. Offering a detailed examination of each component's role, our study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of marketing strategies' effectiveness in shaping consumer preferences and behaviours within the context of OTG consumption.

Discussion

The qualitative findings from our focus groups provide insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of OTG consumption, extending existing understanding by highlighting the demographic, psychographic, social, and marketing-mix factors that shape this behaviour. This discussion contextualises our findings within the literature, emphasising areas of convergence, divergence, and novel contributions, while critically evaluating their theoretical and practical implications.

Demographically, our findings align with previous research, particularly regarding the role of age, employment nature, and residential location in influencing OTG consumption. However, this study offers a finer-grained understanding of these demographic drivers, revealing not only their direct influence but also the related factors that deepen or diminish their impact on OTG behaviours. For instance, while previous studies like Heider and Moeller (2012) observed that younger individuals are more inclined towards OTG consumption, our findings expand on this by demonstrating that it is not merely *age* itself but rather the mobility and lifestyle characteristics often associated with younger demographics that drive OTG consumption. As one participant noted, '[The] younger generation is more mobile, so they are more open to take food and drinks in transit' (ID01, F, 42, G1). This highlights that age may be a proxy for factors such as mobility, work-life

demands, and engagement in fast-paced social activities, suggesting a more complex, indirect relationship between age and OTG consumption. Another participant observed, 'I find on-the-go consumption as an age related issue. I never find an elderly person eat on the go' (ID25, M, 34, G5), reinforcing the idea that lifestyle, rather than age alone, is key to understanding this consumption behaviour. This deeper perspective invites further research to explore how the intersection of age and lifestyle factors (e.g. mobility, work demands, social activities) might influence OTG consumption, offering an avenue for future inquiry. Understanding this interplay can also guide marketers in targeting OTG consumers not solely by age, but by lifestyle segmentation that captures the contextual factors influencing behaviour. Similarly, the impact of *employment nature* on OTG consumption reinforces earlier findings (Heider & Moeller, 2012; Sands et al., 2019), but our study elaborates on the mechanisms behind this relationship. Those engaged in jobs requiring high mobility or irregular hours—such as sales professionals or service workers—demonstrated a greater reliance on OTG consumption as a practical response to time pressures. This finding deepens the existing literature by illustrating how the demands of work schedules and travel-related time constraints intersect with convenience-seeking behaviours. In contrast, participants in more stable, location-bound professions, such as teaching, exhibited lower levels of OTG consumption, underscoring the significant role that employment nature plays in shaping food choices. Whereas, our exploration of *residential location* echoes the work of Sands et al. (2019), showing that urban dwellers are far more likely to engage in OTG consumption compared to their rural counterparts. However, our study extends these insights by providing specific context around the role of commuting times, traffic congestion, and urban infrastructure in driving OTG consumption. Noteworthily, participants from urban areas, particularly those facing long commutes and heavy traffic, cited the need for convenience as a major factor in their OTG consumption habits. This finding aligns with the literature on urbanisation and food consumption (Adeosun et al., 2022) but offers fresh evidence of how city-specific challenges, such as traffic, contribute to the rising demand for OTG options. Future research could further investigate the role of urban planning and infrastructure in shaping consumption behaviours, potentially providing insights for businesses and policymakers seeking to address the needs of OTG consumers more effectively.

Psychographically, while our study confirms previously explored drivers of OTG consumption, it also expands upon existing research by introducing new factors that provide a deeper understanding of consumer motivations. The identification of *enjoyment* as a key driver aligns with findings from Benoit et al. (2016) and Heider and Moeller (2012), reinforcing the hedonic nature of OTG consumption. However, the emergence of *materialistic tendencies* as a significant driver offers a novel perspective, suggesting a link between OTG consumption and societal trends towards materialism and the pursuit of success. This connection, not previously explored in OTG literature, points to a behaviour driven not only by convenience but also by lifestyle aspirations tied to the accumulation of wealth and status symbols (Das & Jebarajakirthy, 2020). As consumers prioritise material success, they often shift away from traditional dietary habits, leading to increased OTG consumption. This insight introduces fresh perspectives on OTG consumption's impact on consumer well-being (Lee & Ahn, 2016), positioning OTG as not just a convenience-driven act but a reflection of societal aspirations, thereby inviting further investigation into its implications for overall well-being. Another novel contribution is the

identification of *perceived cooking skills* as a psychographic factor, where a lack of confidence or neglect of domestic skills—particularly cooking—was shown to drive reliance on OTG options. This reflects societal changes, such as the shift towards nuclear family structures and the increased participation of women in the workforce, especially in emerging markets like India, where domestic responsibilities such as cooking are often deprioritized. This insight bridges OTG literature with societal discussions on changing domestic practices and skill sets. Our findings also affirm *sensory stimulation* and *time pressure* as important drivers, consistent with the literature (Benoit et al., 2016; McCrickerd & Forde, 2015). However, our study goes further by highlighting how these factors interact with other psychographic variables, offering a more holistic understanding of the psychological drivers behind OTG consumption. For example, one participant's comment, 'I don't have any fixed schedule. I need to deliver results in a timely manner. I have no other option but to eat on my way' (ID35, M, 24, G6), illustrates how the pressure of variable work schedules exacerbates time constraints, further driving OTG consumption. This multidimensional view of psychographic influences emphasises the complex interplay between personal aspirations, skills, sensory experiences, and time management in shaping OTG behaviours.

Socially, our study introduces new dimensions to the OTG consumption literature by highlighting the influence of body image perceptions, interpersonal influence, and the female composition of households. While social factors have been explored in food consumption at large (Zaccagni et al., 2020), their specific application to OTG consumption is novel and provides fresh insights. Our findings reveal that OTG consumption decisions are not made in isolation but are deeply embedded in social contexts, with *body image perceptions* playing a significant role. This suggests that consumers' OTG choices are often influenced by their desire to align with societal ideals of body image, determining the virtues and vices associated with the food they consume on the go (Jebarajakirthy et al., 2023). This insight positions OTG consumption as a socially mediated behaviour, challenging the notion that it is purely driven by individual convenience or necessity. Moreover, *interpersonal influence* emerged as another key factor, with participants reporting that OTG consumption often occurs in social settings or as a result of peer and family influence, reinforcing the idea that OTG consumption behaviours are shaped by external social relationships. Another significant contribution of our study is the impact of *female household composition* on OTG consumption. As our findings suggest, the shift towards nuclear families and increased female workforce participation has accelerated OTG consumption, with households that have fewer women—especially those traditionally responsible for meal preparation—showing a higher reliance on OTG options. This finding extends beyond traditional demographic factors and introduces a discussion on how evolving family structures and gender roles influence consumption patterns. Bridging these gaps in the literature, which has predominantly focused on individual-level factors, our study underscores the importance of considering household dynamics and social relationships in shaping OTG consumption, thus offering a more comprehensive view of the social drivers behind this behaviour.

Regarding *marketing-mix elements*, our study reaffirms the established roles of *product assortment*, *price*, and *retail store format* in shaping OTG consumption, aligning with previous research (Benoit et al., 2016; Heider & Moeller, 2012). However, our findings extend the current understanding by highlighting the significant impact of *advertising*

and *special deals*, which emerge as potent influences of OTG behaviour. This underscores the persuasive power of targeted advertising and promotional strategies in driving OTG consumption, a dimension not extensively explored in earlier studies. Notably, the role of advertising raises questions about the ethical responsibilities of marketers, particularly given that many OTG items are perceived as ‘vice’ products for health (Jebarajakirthy et al., 2023; Sands et al., 2019). Our findings suggest that OTG consumers are not passive recipients of marketing messages but actively engage with these strategic efforts, responding to tailored promotional campaigns that resonate with their consumption patterns. The identification of retail store format as a significant factor adds depth to the literature by suggesting that the relationship between store format and OTG consumption is more complex than previously understood. While earlier research emphasised the convenience of store selection (Benoit et al., 2019), our findings point to a more complex interplay between retail environments and OTG behaviours, inviting further investigation into how different store formats and layouts may cater to or influence the dynamics of OTG consumption.

These qualitative insights significantly enrich the body of knowledge on OTG consumption while challenging several assumptions found in previous research. Presenting OTG consumption as a multifaceted behaviour shaped by a wide range of interconnected factors—demographic, psychographic, social, and marketing strategies—calls for a more holistic approach to understanding this phenomenon. Instead of viewing OTG consumption primarily as a matter of convenience or time-saving, the findings reveal it to be deeply rooted in societal trends, personal aspirations, evolving gender roles, and complex social contexts. Future research should move beyond convenience-driven models, exploring how these combined influences shape consumer behaviour in more profound ways. More importantly, the groundwork has been laid through this study for further quantitative investigation. The forthcoming survey-based analysis in Study 2 will employ fsQCA to validate and expand upon these qualitative insights, offering a more comprehensive and empirically grounded understanding of the determinants of OTG consumption. This mixed-method approach promises to provide both theoretical advancements and practical insights, guiding more effective marketing strategies and policy decisions.

Study 2

While Study 1 offers qualitative insights into the factors influencing OTG consumption, Study 2 has been designed to complement and extend these findings through a quantitative analysis. The purpose of Study 2 is threefold: (1) to validate the factors identified in Study 1 using a larger and more representative sample; (2) to assess the relative importance of these factors in driving OTG consumption; and (3) to uncover configurations, or combinations of factors, that best explain high OTG consumption—an insight that individual factor analysis alone may overlook. Employing this quantitative approach, Study 2 enables a deeper exploration of how multiple factors interact and contribute to OTG consumption behaviours. Moving beyond the identification of isolated influences, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of OTG consumption patterns. The mixed-method approach adopted across both studies ensures that qualitative insights are rigorously supported and enhanced by quantitative data, yielding a more holistic perspective on the dynamics of OTG consumption.

Approach

This study advances the investigation into OTG consumption through the use of fsQCA, a method rooted in Boolean algebra (Alyahya et al., 2023; Fiss, 2011; Kang & Shao, 2023). fsQCA is an approach to examine how combinations of factors contribute to OTG consumption, bridging qualitative and quantitative analysis. Unlike traditional methods that rely on binary distinctions, fsQCA uses fuzzy sets, allowing for varying degrees of membership within a set (Prentice & Loureiro, 2017). This flexibility provides insights into how multiple factors—rather than isolated variables—interact to produce specific outcomes (Pappas & Woodside, 2021).

In this study, fsQCA is applied to identify configurations of demographic, psychographic, social, and marketing-mix factors that collectively lead to high OTG consumption. Traditional methods, such as covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) and partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM), tend to focus on estimating individual effect sizes. In contrast, fsQCA explores how multiple combinations of factors lead to the same behaviour, making it particularly suited to studying complex consumer patterns like OTG consumption (Ashaduzzaman et al., 2021). This approach offers a richer understanding of how various factors intersect to shape consumer behaviour (Kumar et al., 2022).

One of fsQCA's key advantages is its ability to reveal equifinality—the concept that multiple distinct pathways can lead to the same outcome. This insight is essential for understanding the complex and dynamic nature of OTG consumption. In addition, fsQCA accommodates smaller sample sizes and does not rely on data normality assumptions, making it particularly useful for exploratory research or studies where gathering large samples is challenging (<50 cases) (Greckhamer et al., 2008, 2018; Jebarajakirthy & Das, 2020). This adaptability makes fsQCA especially valuable in behavioural studies, where real-world data often reflect complex, multifactorial relationships.

The use of fsQCA in this study builds directly on the qualitative insights gained from Study 1, offering a structured analysis of the factors driving OTG consumption. This set-theoretic approach aligns with the complexity of consumer behaviour, enabling a clearer understanding of how different elements work together to produce OTG consumption patterns across varying contexts.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation process for this study was designed to ensure the reliability and validity of the measures used to investigate the configurations leading to OTG consumption. The survey's questionnaire was developed using previously validated measurement items, ensuring that each item accurately captures the essence of the constructs of interest. To further enhance the *content validity* of the survey, two marketing professors were consulted in a *pretest*, providing expert insight into the appropriateness and clarity of the items (Lim, 2024). Feedback from a *pilot study* conducted with 25 individuals who frequently engage in OTG consumption was also instrumental in refining the format and wording of the survey items, contributing to *face validity* (Lim, 2024). Participants in the pilot were business students from one of the authors' institutions, selected based on the same frequent OTG consumer criteria used throughout the research (minimum four times

a week for more than three years). Purposive sampling was employed to recruit participants, and the iterative feedback process helped tailor the survey to the specific context of OTG consumption, ensuring its clarity and relevance.

The survey measured key constructs across four main categories: demographic characteristics, psychographic dispositions, social influences, and marketing-mix elements. Demographic variables included age, employment status, and residential location. Psychographic constructs included enjoyment, materialistic tendencies, perceived cooking skills, sensory stimulation, and time pressure. Social influence factors encompassed body image perception, interpersonal influence, and female composition of the household, while marketing-mix elements addressed advertising, price, product assortment, retail store format, and special deals.

The survey was structured into three distinct blocks to facilitate ease of completion and logical flow. The first block served as an introduction, providing respondents with a clear understanding of OTG consumption and outlining the objectives of the study. This contextual foundation was crucial for ensuring that respondents were fully informed and engaged with the subject matter. The second block comprised screening questions designed to identify and confirm the participants' eligibility based on their OTG consumption habits. This screening ensured that the responses collected were from individuals with relevant experiences and insights into OTG consumption, thereby enhancing the survey's validity. The third and final block contained the core survey items related to the study constructs. A seven-point Likert scale, ranging from '1 = strongly disagree' to '7 = strongly agree', was employed to operationalise all constructs. This scaling provided a good spectrum of responses, allowing for a detailed assessment of participants' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours related to OTG consumption. Overall, the careful design and validation of the survey instrumentation underpin the credibility and rigour of the subsequent data analysis and findings, laying a solid foundation for validating the multifaceted drivers of OTG consumption.

Sampling

The sampling process for this study was designed to gather data from an informed participant pool, ensuring the relevance of the findings. A total of 715 online questionnaires were distributed through a collaboration with a reputable marketing research firm, targeting Indian consumers with previous experience in OTG consumption. Participants were recruited from the research firm's consumer panel database, with email invitations sent to individuals who had previously expressed a willingness to participate in market research studies. This targeted approach ensured that the responses would be grounded in actual consumer behaviour and experiences, enhancing the study's relevance to real-world OTG consumption patterns.

Ethical considerations were integral to the collaboration with the marketing research firm. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time (Lim, 2025a). Institutional approval was obtained from one of the authors' institutions to proceed with data collection using the services of the marketing research firm.

To ensure a diverse and representative sample, quotas were set based on age, gender, and geographic location (Lim, 2025b). The age quotas reflected the demographic

distribution of Indian urban consumers, with a particular focus on the 18–45 age group, which has been identified in previous research as the primary demographic for OTG consumption (Sands et al., 2019). Gender quotas aimed for an approximately equal representation of males and females to ensure balanced perspectives. Geographic quotas included participants from major urban centres across different regions of India, focusing on metropolitan cities where OTG consumption is predominantly observed (Benoit et al., 2016; Ziauddeen et al., 2018).

Of 715 survey invitations sent, 361 were returned, indicating a response rate of 50.5% and reflecting a reasonably robust level of engagement given the specificity of the target demographic. However, to maintain the integrity of the dataset, a rigorous screening process was implemented. This included the exclusion of 37 responses due to incomplete information or failure to pass attention check questions, a strategy recommended by Oppenheimer et al. (2009) to enhance data quality. Such attention checks are critical in online surveys where respondent attentiveness cannot be directly observed, helping to mitigate the risk of careless or inattentive responses that could compromise the study's findings.

The final sample comprised 324 respondents, whose demographic profiles are detailed in Table 3. This sample size is substantial, especially considering the specific consumer segment being studied, and provides a solid foundation for fsQCA.

Results

The results of the analysis unfolds in two stages—i.e. the assessment of the measurement model and the subsequent fsQCA—following the recommended best practices for model

Table 3. Profile of survey respondents.

Demographic	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	135	41.6
Male	189	58.4
Age		
18 to 24 years	63	19.5
25 to 34 years	86	26.7
35 to 44 years	66	20.3
45 to 54 years	39	12.0
55 to 64 years	36	11.0
65 years and above	34	10.5
Occupation		
Full time	109	33.5
Part time	73	22.5
Student	62	19.1
Retired	47	14.5
Unemployed	33	10.4
Locality		
Rural	39	12.1
Sub-urban	66	20.3
Urban	96	29.6
Metropolitan	123	38.0

assessment prior to fsQCA (Pappas & Woodside, 2021). This structured approach ensures the reliability and validity of the findings derived from fsQCA.

Measurement model

The measurement model was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) through CB-SEM, revealing a good fit to the collected data. The fit indices, including the chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio ($\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.489$, $p < 0.001$), comparative fit index (CFI = 0.919 > 0.90), goodness-of-fit index (GFI = 0.909 > 0.90), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI = 0.899 \approx 0.90), normed fit index (NFI = 0.897 \approx 0.90), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI = 0.907 > 0.90), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.043 < 0.08), and p-value of close fit (PCLOSE = 0.988 > 0.05), all indicate a well-fitting model that adequately represents the underlying data structure. These metrics surpass the commonly accepted thresholds for a good fit (Marsh et al., 1988).

Further validation of the measurement model was achieved through the evaluation of psychometric properties, including reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, as outlined by Hair et al. (2010). Table 4 shows that the factor loadings and average variance extracted values were above the minimum benchmark of 0.50, thereby affirming convergent validity, whereas the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values were above the minimum threshold of 0.70, thus indicating good reliability. Table 5 reveals that the square root of average variance extracted for each construct is larger than their correlations with other constructs, thereby showing discriminant validity. The construct-to-construct correlations in this table were also less than 0.90, effectively ruling out concerns regarding multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012).

Moreover, common method bias (CMB), a potential concern in survey research, was tested using the latent factor test method (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The comparison between the model without the latent factor ($\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.489$, $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.919 > 0.90, TLI = 0.907 > 0.90, RMSEA = 0.043 < 0.08) and with the latent factor ($\chi^2/\text{df} = 13.24$, $p > 0.05$; CFI = 0.366 < 0.90, TLI = 0.287 < 0.90, RMSEA = 0.195 > 0.08) demonstrated significantly better fit indices for the former than the latter. Notably, the introduction of the latent factor did not significantly alter the factor loadings, with changes remaining below the 0.2 threshold. This finding effectively confirms the absence of CMB in the study, ensuring that the results are not unduly influenced by methodological artefacts.

fsQCA

For fsQCA, a systematic approach was adopted to dissect the complex relationships leading to OTG consumption, utilising fsQCA software v.3.1b. This process unfolded across three steps—i.e. calibration of data, generation of truth tables, and counterfactual analysis—to reveal the necessary and sufficient conditions for OTG consumption.

Calibration of data. The calibration step is pivotal in transforming raw data into a format for fsQCA. Converting data into fuzzy sets with values ranging between '0' (full non-membership) and '1' (full membership), with an intermediate point at '0.5', allows the study to navigate the gradations of membership within the set. To circumvent the

Table 4. Measurement model assessment of convergent validity and reliability.

Construct	Item (Note: * = reverse coded)	Convergent validity		Reliability		Source
		Loading	Average variance extracted	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	
Psychographic dispositions						
Enjoyment	I consume on the go food and drinks since I could have good feelings.	0.848	0.600	0.847	0.851	Babin et al. (1994), Ryu et al. (2010)
	Eating on the go is fun and pleasant.	0.905				
Materialistic tendencies	The experience of eating on the go food is truly a joy.	0.794	0.634	0.831	0.836	Richins (2004)
	I enjoy the excitement of searching for food for on-the-go consumption.	0.511				
	I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothing.	0.639				
	I like to own things that impress others.	0.877				
	The things I own say a lot about how well I am doing in life.	0.853				
Perceived cooking skills	I consider my cooking skills as sufficient.	0.906	0.755	0.923	0.925	Kowalkowska et al. (2018)
	I am able to prepare a hot meal without a recipe.	0.939				
Sensory stimulation	I am able to prepare varieties of menu.	0.886	0.689	0.932	0.937	Haase and Wiedmann (2018)
	I am able to prepare the meals and snacks I like.	0.731				
	Items available for on-the-go consumption are appetizing.	0.870				
	Items available for on-the-go consumption are flavorful.	0.927				
Time pressure	Items available for on-the-go consumption are palatable.	0.906	0.804	0.925	0.925	Heider and Moeller (2012)
	Items available for on-the-go consumption are nice-smelling.	0.847				
	I rarely have enough time to eat my meals in peace.	0.843				
	I always seem to be in a hurry.	0.983				
Social influences	I never seem to have enough time for the things I want to do.	0.858	0.619	0.858	0.865	Tylka and Wood-Barcalow (2015)
	I value the look of my body.	0.684				
Body image perception	I feel good about the look of my body.	0.804	0.588	0.849	0.849	Prasad and Aryasri (2011), Zhang et al. (2014)
	I feel that my body has at least some good qualities.	0.881				
Interpersonal influence	I have positive attitudes toward the look of my body.	0.764	0.588	0.849	0.849	Prasad and Aryasri (2011), Zhang et al. (2014)
	Consuming on-the-go foods and drinks provides me with social experiences outside home.	0.630				
	I like to consume foods and drinks on the go while I travel with my friends and colleagues.	0.818				
	If on-the-go food is good enough for my family and friends, then it is good enough for me.	0.857				
	Consuming foods and drinks on the go provides me with the chance to meet with friends and colleagues more regularly.	0.744				

(Continued)



Table 4. (Continued).

Construct	Item (Note: * = reverse coded)	Convergent validity		Reliability		
		Loading	Average variance extracted	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Source
Marketing-mix elements						
Advertising	When watching TV, I often see advertisements for on-the-go consumption.	0.663	0.748	0.916	0.921	Cleveland and Laroche (2007)
	While reading newspapers, I see many advertisements for on-the-go consumption.	0.930				
	Most of the TV commercials I see encourage on-the-go consumption.	0.910				
	Billboards and advertising signs of on-the-go consumption are plentiful in my locality.	0.926				
Price	On-the go items are mostly expensive.	0.914	0.888	0.955	0.960	Heider and Moeller (2012)
	The prices of on-the go items are high.	0.962				
	The prices of on-the go items are low.*	0.950				
Product assortment	When I recently bought something to eat or drink on the go, there was a wide selection of items to choose from.	0.850	0.696	0.871	0.872	Heider and Moeller (2012)
	There were plenty of options to choose from to eat or drink along the way the last few times I was out and about.	0.873				
Retail store format	The last few times I wanted to buy something to eat and drink along the way, a good range of food and drinks were readily available.	0.776				Benoit et al. (2019)
	I prefer to buy items for on-the-go consumption only from some specific types of stores.	0.678	0.542	0.766	0.777	
	I buy items for on-the-go consumption from whatever stores I find.*	0.879				
	Store formats carry little significance to me while buying items for on-the-go consumption.*	0.628				
Special deals	I purchase items for on-the-go consumption only if I find items on some special deals.	0.843	0.648	0.838	0.846	Ailawadi et al. (2001)
	I hardly wait for special deals to purchase items for on-the-go consumption.*	0.846				
On-the-go consumption	I prefer to search for special offers to purchase items for on-the-go consumption.	0.720				Benoit et al. (2016)
	When I'm out and about, I regularly buy something to eat or to drink along the way.	0.667	0.548	0.826	0.827	
	I often spontaneously decide to buy some food or drinks to go.	0.658				
	I will make an effort to continuously buy something to eat or drink along the way in the future.	0.837				
	In the near future, I will regularly buy something to eat or drink along the way.	0.793				

Table 5. Correlation matrix assessment of discriminant validity.

	Enjoyment	Materialistic tendencies	Perceived cooking skills	Sensory simulation	Time pressure	Body image perception	Interpersonal influence	Advertising	Price	Product assortment	Retail store format	Special deals	On-the-go-consumption
Enjoyment	0.774 ^a												
Materialistic tendencies	-0.132	0.797 ^a											
Perceived cooking skills	0.111	0.430	0.869 ^a										
Sensory simulation	-0.099	-0.010	-0.012	0.888 ^a									
Time pressure	0.295	0.023	0.175	0.067	0.897 ^a								
Body image perception	-0.093	0.044	0.028	-0.388	-0.065	0.786 ^a							
Interpersonal influence	-0.065	0.130	-0.043	-0.180	-0.058	0.081	0.767 ^a						
Advertising	0.114	-0.184	-0.130	0.030	0.259	-0.104	-0.096	0.865 ^a					
Price	-0.108	-0.094	0.122	0.085	0.078	-0.125	-0.115	0.235	0.942 ^a				
Product assortment	-0.201	0.104	0.041	-0.011	0.271	0.067	0.693	0.214	-0.170	0.834 ^a			
Retail store format	-0.244	-0.323	-0.083	0.222	0.076	-0.215	-0.041	-0.034	-0.041	-0.051	0.736 ^a		
Special deals	-0.066	0.011	0.006	-0.031	-0.138	0.122	0.074	0.033	0.024	0.082	-0.101	0.805 ^a	
On-the-go consumption	0.103	-0.036	0.312	-0.053	-0.130	0.176	0.191	0.141	-0.116	0.149	-0.149	0.409	0.740 ^a

^aDiagonal value indicates the square root of average variance extracted of each construct.

limitations posed by the log-odds matrix in traditional calibration, where '0' and '1' in log-odds can imply infinity, threshold values were judiciously selected. Adhering to recommendations by Pappas et al. (2017), threshold values of 0.95 for full membership, 0.50 for the crossover point, and 0.05 for full non-membership were employed. These thresholds were adapted to the study's seven-point Likert scale data, with 6, 4, and 2 serving as the respective breakpoints, drawing on the methodology outlined by Ordanini et al. (2014).

Truth table generation. Following calibration, a truth table was constructed (Jung et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2022; Robin & Dandis, 2021), encapsulating the fuzzy set membership scores of OTG consumption and its influencing factors across demographic, psychographic, social, and marketing-mix dimensions. The truth table, a comprehensive representation of all possible combinations of conditions (2^{16} in this case as we have 16 predictors), was refined based on frequency and consistency criteria to ensure relevance and reliability (Kopplin & Rösch, 2021; Olya & Al-Ansi, 2018; Purohit et al., 2023). This refinement, guided by standards set forth by Ragin (2008), filtered configurations based on a frequency threshold of ≥ 0.20 for medium-to-large samples and a consistency threshold of ≥ 0.80 , yielding a distilled list of configurations indicative of necessary and sufficient conditions for OTG consumption.

Counterfactual analysis. The counterfactual analysis further clarified the conditions integral to OTG consumption, distinguishing between *necessary conditions* (which must be present for the outcome to occur but do not guarantee it on their own) and *sufficient conditions* (wherein configurations of factors, when combined, can reliably produce the outcome, as no single condition typically leads to the outcome independently). This distinction is critical in fsQCA, as it allows for the identification of multiple pathways leading to the same outcome, embodying the principle of equifinality. The assessment of these conditions relied on two key metrics: *coverage*,¹ indicating the proportion of instances the condition accounts for, and *consistency*,² measuring the reliability with which a condition leads to the outcome (Das et al., 2022). Adhering to the rigorous benchmarks, a consistency of >0.90 was sought for necessary conditions while a threshold of >0.80 was maintained for sufficient conditions (Frasquet & Miquel-Romero, 2021; Jebarajakirthy & Das, 2020; Ragin, 2008).

Outcomes. The fsQCA revealed the elements that are essential for OTG consumption. The *necessary conditions* analysis indicated that specific factors must be consistently present for OTG consumption to occur. These factors include young age (0.902), enjoyment (0.919), materialistic tendencies (0.901), sensory stimulation (0.921), interpersonal influence (0.910), advertising (0.960), price (0.949), product assortment (0.920), and special deals (0.979). The high consistency values, close to or exceeding 0.9, highlight the indispensability of these factors in the context of OTG consumption, as seen in Table 6.

In contrast, the *sufficient conditions* analysis revealed particular combinations of factors that lead to high OTG consumption levels. The results, presented in Table 7, identified three configurations with a combined solution coverage of 0.162 and perfect solution consistency of 1. This indicates that each configuration reliably predicts OTG consumption when present. Notably, Configuration 1—which includes age, female household

Table 6. Necessary conditions for on-the-go consumption.

Antecedent condition	Coverage	Consistency
Age	0.953	0.902
Nature of employment	0.951	0.770
Residential place	0.954	0.733
Enjoyment	0.912	0.919
Materialistic tendencies	0.905	0.901
Perceived cooking skills	0.909	0.641
Sensory stimulation	0.948	0.921
Time pressure	0.901	0.647
Body image perception	0.913	0.636
Interpersonal influence	0.919	0.910
Female composition of the household	0.933	0.775
Advertising	0.930	0.960
Price	0.929	0.949
Product assortment	0.907	0.920
Retail store format	0.965	0.395
Special deals	0.966	0.979

Table 7. Sufficient conditions for high on-the-go consumption.

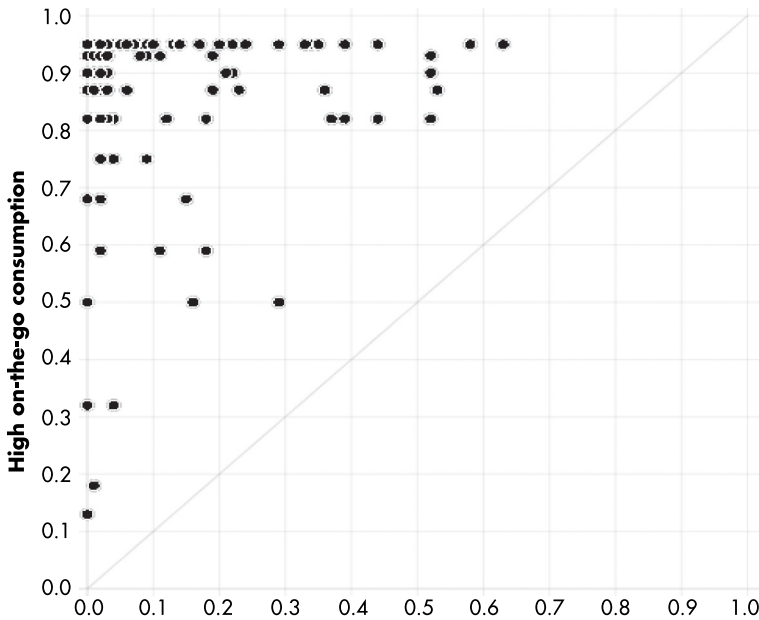
Configural models: Sufficient causal recipes	Raw coverage	Unique coverage	Consistency
Configuration 1: Age * Nature of employment * Residential place * Enjoyment * Materialistic tendencies * Perceived cooking skills * Sensory stimulation * Time pressure * Body image perception * Interpersonal influence * Female composition of the household * Advertising * Price * Product assortment * Special deals	0.103	0.022	1
Configuration 2: Age * Nature of employment * Residential place * Enjoyment * Materialistic tendencies * Perceived cooking skills * Sensory stimulation * Time pressure * Interpersonal influence * Female composition of the household * Advertising * Price * Product assortment * Special deals	0.077	0.036	1
Configuration 3: Age * Nature of employment * Residential place * Enjoyment * Perceived cooking skills * Sensory stimulation * Interpersonal influence * Female composition of the household * Product assortment * Special deals	0.061	0.054	1

High on-the-go consumption = f (Age, Nature of employment, Residential place, Enjoyment, Materialistic tendencies, Perceived cooking skills, Sensory stimulation, Time pressure, Body image perception, Interpersonal influence, Female composition of the household, Advertising, Price, Product assortment, Retail store format, and Special deals). Solution coverage = 0.162. Solution consistency = 1.

composition, nature of employment, residential place, enjoyment, materialistic tendencies, perceived cooking skills, sensory stimulation, time pressure, body image, interpersonal influence, advertising, price, product assortment, and special deals – stands out with the highest raw coverage (0.103). This configuration represents the most common combination of conditions leading to high OTG consumption (Figure 2).

Discussion

The fsQCA has provided a detailed understanding of the factors essential for OTG consumption, identifying both the necessary and sufficient conditions that drive this behaviour. This approach has revealed the complexity of OTG consumer behaviour by showing



Configuration:
Age * Nature of employment * Residential place * Enjoyment * Materialistic tendencies * Perceived cooking skills * Sensory simulation * Time pressure * Body imageperception* Interpersonal influence * Female composition of the household * Advertising * Price * Product assortment * Special deals

Figure 2. Combination of factors predicting high on-the-go consumption.

how different factors interact to influence consumption patterns. While Study 1 qualitatively identified 16 factors contributing to OTG consumption, Study 2 goes further by pinpointing the necessary and sufficient conditions for OTG consumption and uncovering the optimal combination of factors that result in high OTG consumption.

The necessary conditions, such as young age, enjoyment, materialistic tendencies, sensory stimulation, interpersonal influence, advertising, price, product assortment, and special deals, underscore foundational elements that must be present for OTG consumption to occur. These factors, with consistency values close to or exceeding 0.9, suggest that they are nearly always associated with OTG consumption. Their indispensability is evident as they create a conducive environment for the behaviour, implying that food retailers and marketers need to ensure these elements are addressed to capture the OTG market segment.

The sufficient conditions analysis further refines this understanding by revealing specific combinations of factors that, when present together, predict high levels of OTG consumption. *Configuration 1*, with the highest raw coverage, represents the most prevalent pathway to OTG consumption, as evidenced by the data. This configuration portrays the typical high OTG consumer: *Demographically*, they are younger individuals residing in urban areas with full-time employment. *Psychographically*, these consumers are motivated by the pursuit of enjoyment, materialistically driven lifestyles, and sensory indulgence, have lower perceived cooking skills, and experience significant time pressure, all contributing to their inclination towards OTG consumption. *Socially*, peer interactions

and the female composition of the household influence their behaviour. Households with fewer female members, particularly those traditionally involved in cooking, tend to show higher levels of OTG consumption. These consumers adopt a pragmatic view of body image, indicating that societal expectations regarding appearance do not strongly dictate their consumption choices. Instead, their social behaviour revolves around shared experiences and convenience, shaped by household dynamics and peer interactions, rather than adherence to specific body image standards. Through a *marketing-mix* perspective, the findings reveal that advertising, price sensitivity, product assortment, and special deals play a crucial role in driving OTG consumption behaviours. High OTG consumers are highly responsive to marketing strategies that emphasise convenience, value, and instant gratification. The strong influence of advertising and promotions indicates that OTG consumers actively engage with marketing content, particularly when it aligns with their fast-paced, convenience-oriented lifestyles. This suggests that these consumers are not passive recipients but are actively influenced by marketing efforts that resonate with their aspirations and daily demands.

The interaction between *sensory stimulation* and *interpersonal influence* across the configurations sheds light on the multisensory and social dimensions of OTG consumption. Our findings suggest that the sensory appeal of OTG foods, such as their appearance, taste, and texture, is enhanced in social contexts, where peer interactions may amplify the likelihood of engaging in OTG consumption. This reinforces the idea that OTG behaviours are not merely individual decisions driven by convenience or enjoyment but are also deeply embedded in social experiences. The social embeddedness of OTG consumption extends beyond the individual, indicating that sensory stimulation interacts with social dynamics to create a more compelling drive for consumption, which builds on existing research (Benoit et al., 2016).

The consistent identification of both *perceived cooking skills* and the *female composition of the household* across all three sufficient configurations introduces novel insights into the understanding of OTG consumption. Our findings suggest that declining confidence in or neglect of cooking skills – particularly among younger generations— along with the shifting composition of households, where fewer women are traditionally involved in cooking, may significantly contribute to the growing reliance on OTG options. These trends are linked to societal changes, such as the transition towards nuclear family structures and increased workforce participation among women, which further diminish the emphasis on home-cooked meals. This opens up avenues for exploring how changes in domestic skills and household dynamics shape consumption behaviours in the contemporary food landscape (McGowan et al., 2017). Such insights have important implications for public health initiatives and educational programmes that seek to revive cooking skills and promote healthier eating habits (Wolfson et al., 2020), especially in light of these evolving household dynamics.

The consistent presence of *product assortment* across the configurations also highlights its critical role in shaping OTG consumption. This underscores the importance of variety, moving beyond previous research that primarily emphasised *retail store format* (Benoit et al., 2019; Jebarajakirthy et al., 2021). Our study suggests that the effectiveness of diverse product offerings in driving OTG consumption is moderated by individual preferences and social contexts. Retailers and food manufacturers can optimise product variety based on different consumer profiles and consumption occasions, tailoring offerings to the varied needs of OTG consumers.

This insight calls for a strategic approach in product segmentation, aligning product assortments with the expectations and lifestyles of key consumer segments. In addition to product assortment, the presence of advertising, price, and special deals across the configurations, particularly in Configurations 1 and 2, reveals the influence of marketing-mix elements on OTG consumption. The consistent inclusion of *advertising* suggests that OTG consumers are highly responsive to targeted promotional content, particularly when it aligns with their materialistic tendencies and fast-paced lifestyles. Advertising that emphasises convenience, value, and immediate gratification resonates with OTG consumers, indicating that they are not passive recipients of marketing messages but active participants who engage with content that reflects their daily experiences and aspirations. Similarly, *price* sensitivity plays a crucial role in shaping OTG consumption. Consumers are drawn to reasonably priced options that offer value without compromising convenience. However, our findings suggest that *special deals*—which consistently feature across all three configurations—are especially effective in driving OTG consumption, as they amplify the perceived value of OTG products, encouraging impulsive purchases in a way that taps into the desire for immediate rewards. This reflects the significance of value-oriented marketing strategies, where appealing promotional offers and competitive pricing work together to enhance product appeal and motivate consumption. Taken together, these marketing elements—product assortment, advertising, price, and special deals—create a comprehensive marketing mix that significantly influences OTG consumption. Marketers must therefore leverage these elements to craft tailored marketing strategies that appeal to OTG consumers' desire for convenience, variety, and value, ensuring that their products and promotions resonate with the fast-paced, dynamic lifestyles of this consumer segment.

The presence of *body image perception* in Configuration 1 also adds a psychological and social dimension to OTG consumption. This suggests that OTG behaviours are not solely driven by convenience or sensory appeal but are also influenced by complex body image concerns. For instance, individuals with specific body image goals may select OTG options that align with their dietary aspirations, indicating that OTG consumption can reflect deeper psychological motivations related to self-perception. This insight presents opportunities for marketers to position healthier OTG products in ways that appeal to consumers concerned about maintaining a certain body image. Supporting this perspective, Jebarajakirthy et al. (2023) found that gain-framed messages from credible sources were more effective in promoting healthy OTG consumption than loss-framed messages from less credible sources. These findings highlight the potential for strategic message framing and source credibility to intersect with sensory stimulation and body image perceptions, offering new possibilities for shaping healthier OTG choices.

Overall, this study validates the complex relationships between demographic, psychographic, social, and marketing-mix elements in shaping OTG consumption. This reinforces the need for a holistic understanding of consumer behaviour that accounts for the interaction of multiple factors, rather than focusing on isolated influences. To effectively cater to the OTG consumer market, businesses and policymakers should consider these interrelated dynamics in developing more targeted strategies.

Conclusion

This research employed a mixed-method approach to explore the multifaceted phenomenon of OTG consumption, combining qualitative insights from phenomenological focus group discussions (Study 1) with quantitative insights from a survey analysed using fsQCA (Study 2). This exploration has yielded rich, detailed findings that significantly advance our understanding of OTG consumption behaviours.

Beginning with phenomenological focus group discussions, Study 1 provided deep, contextual insights, uncovering key demographic, psychographic, social, and marketing-mix dimensions that influence OTG consumption. These qualitative insights offered a foundational understanding of the individual and social factors driving this behaviour, revealing how urbanisation, time pressure, materialistic values, and sensory stimulation contribute to OTG habits. In particular, this study highlighted how shifting family dynamics, the decline in cooking skills, and social influences such as peer interactions shape these consumption patterns, laying the groundwork for further exploration.

Building on these qualitative findings, Study 2 applied fsQCA to quantitatively validate and extend the insights, revealing specific configurations of conditions that lead to high OTG consumption. The fsQCA illuminated the factors that, when combined in different ways, reliably predict OTG consumption. This set-theoretic approach underscored the importance of equifinality, where multiple distinct pathways can lead to the same outcome, reflecting the diverse profiles and motivations of OTG consumers.

The integration of qualitative and quantitative methodologies has resulted in a more comprehensive (rigorous, robust) understanding of OTG consumption than either method could have achieved independently. Triangulating qualitative insights with quantitative configurations has not only identified the individual factors influencing OTG consumption but has also demonstrated how these factors combine to produce high levels of OTG consumption. This holistic perspective allows for a richer, more granular view of OTG behaviour, shedding light on how demographic, psychographic, social, and marketing-mix elements interact to shape modern consumption patterns. The following sections will delve into the general discussion, including theoretical and managerial implications, as well as the limitations of the research and potential future research directions.

General discussion

This research utilised a mixed-method design to explore and validate the factors influencing OTG consumption in an emerging market, with a particular focus on Kolkata, India. The findings identified a range of key factors shaping OTG consumption, including age, nature of employment, residential place, enjoyment, materialistic tendencies, perceived cooking skills, sensory stimulation, time pressure, body image perception, interpersonal influence, female composition of the household, advertising, price, product assortment, retail store format, and special deals. While many of these factors—such as age, nature of employment, residential place, enjoyment, time pressure, price, product assortment, and retail store format—align with findings from previous studies conducted in Western markets like America and Australia (Sands et al., 2019), the identification of materialistic tendencies, perceived cooking skills, sensory stimulation, body image perception,

interpersonal influence, female composition of the household, advertising, and special deals as significant drivers emerged from the Indian context, particularly in Kolkata.

India's rapid economic growth, urbanisation, and shifting social structures have contributed to a rise in OTG consumption, influenced by factors such as increased disposable income, changing work patterns, and the growing prominence of nuclear families (World Economic Forum, 2019). In contrast to Western countries, where OTG consumption often centres around fast-food chains and pre-packaged meals (Benoit et al., 2016), OTG consumption in India remains deeply rooted in its rich culinary heritage. The unique blend of traditional and modern food options, including street food stalls offering freshly prepared, flavourful meals, caters to both the local palate and the convenience needs of a busy, urban population (Chakraborty & Ji, 2022). The choice of Kolkata as the research context adds further depth to the findings. The city's vibrant street food culture, known for offering affordable, accessible, and culturally rich food options, serves the needs of its diverse population on the go (Dhar et al., 2023). Unlike Western cities, where convenience often translates to pre-packaged fast foods (Sands et al., 2019), Kolkata's OTG options include freshly prepared foods deeply embedded in local culinary traditions (G. Gupta & Köhlin, 2006). As such, OTG consumption in Kolkata is particularly influenced by sensory stimulation and body image perceptions—factors that are prominent in emerging markets but less prevalent in Western contexts. Moreover, cultural dimensions, particularly collectivism versus individualism, may explain some of the differences in OTG consumption drivers between Eastern and Western markets. Western countries such as America and Australia, which are predominantly individualistic, often see OTG consumption driven by individual necessity (Sands et al., 2019). In contrast, in collectivist cultures like India's, social influences play a significant role in shaping consumption behaviours. This may account for the prominence of factors such as enjoyment and interpersonal influence in the Indian context, where shared experiences and social interactions frequently influence food consumption choices. These findings reveal how OTG consumption in Eastern markets such as India is shaped by a more complex interplay of individual preferences and social influences, in contrast to the more individualistic, necessity-driven consumption observed in Western markets.

Theoretical contributions

This research's exploration of OTG consumption through qualitative phenomenological focus groups and quantitative fsQCA offers substantial theoretical contributions to the literature on consumer behaviour, particularly in fast-paced consumption contexts. Addressing the research questions regarding the driving factors of OTG consumption and the configurations of these factors, this research enriches our understanding of consumer decision-making processes in dynamic environments.

The qualitative phase illuminated the multifaceted nature of OTG consumption, traversing demographic, psychographic, social, and marketing-mix dimensions. This comprehensive view challenges and extends existing theories that often consider these dimensions in isolation. The novel insight into the female composition within households, for instance, underscores a shift impacting OTG consumption, suggesting that family dynamics and gender roles are pivotal in shaping consumption patterns. This insight

contributes to the literature on family and gender studies in marketing, proposing that shifts towards nuclear family structures and increased female workforce participation significantly influence consumption trends.

The psychographic findings, particularly the roles of materialistic tendencies and perceived cooking skills, offer a fresh perspective on consumer values and lifestyle choices. This research theoretically contributes to the understanding of how contemporary societal values and skill sets, beyond traditional demographic markers, influence consumption patterns. The emphasis on materialistic pursuits and convenience highlights a societal trend that has implications for theories related to lifestyle marketing and consumer value systems.

The impact of body image perceptions and interpersonal influence on OTG consumption introduces new dimensions to the social aspects of eating behaviours. These insights enrich the social identity theory by illustrating how individual and collective identities, mediated through body image concerns and social interactions, shape consumption behaviours. This contribution is significant, considering the limited exploration of these aspects in the OTG consumption literature.

The introduction of advertising and special deals as potent influences in the OTG context extends the theory of marketing-mix effects on consumer behaviour. The persuasive power of targeted advertising and the allure of special deals highlight the profound ways marketing strategies cater to and influence consumer preferences, offering theoretical implications for promotional strategies in fast-paced consumption environments.

The fsQCA contributes methodologically by illustrating the applicability of set-theoretic approaches in uncovering complex consumer behaviours. Identifying both necessary and sufficient conditions for OTG consumption, this research underscores the complexity of consumer decision-making, challenging the notion of linear association and causality predominant in consumer behaviour research. This approach highlights the importance of considering the interrelated nature of various factors, advocating for a holistic understanding of consumer behaviour.

Overall, this research's theoretical contributions lie in its holistic examination of OTG consumption, integrating demographic, psychographic, social, and marketing-mix elements. Revealing how these dimensions interact to influence consumer behaviour, this research calls for an interdisciplinary approach in consumer research, urging scholars to consider the multifaceted and interconnected nature of consumer decisions in dynamic consumption contexts. This comprehensive perspective is crucial for developing more comprehensive and effective marketing strategies, product development initiatives, and policies targeted at catering to the diverse needs and preferences of consumers in fast-paced environments.

Managerial implications

The findings from this comprehensive exploration of OTG consumption, which combines qualitative and quantitative insights, have profound implications for a variety of firms. These include convenience stores, food product manufacturers, grocery retailers offering ready-to-eat sections, mobile food vendors, online food delivery platforms, and quick-service restaurants. Understanding the multifaceted nature of OTG consumption, these entities can tailor their strategies to meet the

needs of this consumer segment more effectively. Each of these firms plays a pivotal role in the OTG consumption ecosystem, catering to the dynamic lifestyles and consumption patterns of consumers seeking convenience, quality, and variety in their food choices. Understanding the multifaceted nature of OTG consumption, firms can tailor their strategies to meet the needs of this consumer segment more effectively.

First and foremost, this research highlights the importance of sensory stimulation, enjoyment, and materialistic tendencies among high OTG consumers. Firms should consider these psychographic traits when developing new products or services. Offering a range of sensory appealing, convenient food options that align with the fast-paced lifestyle and aspirational goals of these consumers should enhance product appeal. Also, incorporating elements of enjoyment into the product experience, such as engaging packaging or innovative flavours, should resonate with this segment's desire for pleasure and novelty.

Besides that, the significant role of advertising and special deals in influencing OTG consumption behaviours underscores the need for compelling marketing campaigns. Firms should leverage targeted advertising that emphasises the convenience, value, and lifestyle alignment of their OTG offerings. Highlighting how these products fit into the dynamic, urban lifestyles of younger consumers should increase engagement. Moreover, capitalising on special deals and promotions, particularly those that are communicated through digital channels, should attract price-sensitive consumers looking for value in their OTG choices.

Given the impact of product assortment on OTG consumption, firms should optimise their environments to cater to the preferences of OTG consumers. This could involve strategic product placements that emphasise grab-and-go options, enhancing the visibility of OTG products within the store, and ensuring a diverse assortment that caters to varying tastes and dietary preferences. For urban locations with a high concentration of younger, full-time employed individuals, creating an efficient, user-friendly shopping experience should further encourage OTG purchases.

Next, the findings also reveal that OTG consumption is influenced by social interactions and lifestyle choices. Firms can leverage this by creating marketing messages that position OTG products as enablers of social connectivity and lifestyle enhancement. This could include promoting OTG food items as ideal for social gatherings, busy workdays, or as solutions for consumers with lower cooking aptitude. Emphasising the role of these products in facilitating a balanced, enjoyable lifestyle can resonate with consumers' social and psychographic profiles.

Last but not least, the importance of interpersonal influence and body image considerations suggests an opportunity for consumer education and engagement. Firms can engage consumers through content that educates them on the nutritional aspects of OTG products, offering healthier options that do not compromise on taste or convenience. Addressing body image concerns through transparent communication about ingredients and health benefits should enable firms to build trust and nurture loyalty among health-conscious OTG consumers.

Limitations and future research directions

The present exploration of OTG consumption provides valuable insights into the factors influencing this behaviour, yet it is not without its limitations, which open avenues for future research.

Firstly, the research's findings are derived from the Indian context, which, given the country's developing status and unique cultural dynamics, may not be universally applicable. The pace of life, work schedules, and industrialisation levels vary significantly across different nations, potentially leading to divergent OTG consumption patterns. Future research should extend this investigation to include both collectivist and individualist societies across a spectrum of developed and developing nations. This extended geographical scope would enhance the generalisability of the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of OTG consumption behaviours globally.

Secondly, employing fsQCA allowed for an exploration of causal configurations rather than mere associations, offering a granular understanding of the factors leading to OTG consumption. However, the reliance on cross-sectional data limits the ability to capture temporal changes in consumption patterns. Longitudinal studies are needed to track how OTG consumption evolves over time, potentially influenced by shifting lifestyle trends, economic factors, and societal changes.

Thirdly, the COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably altered food consumption habits worldwide, with recent scholars showing significant changes in the frequency of consumption during the pandemic (Lim et al., 2024). Investigating how these shifts have specifically impacted OTG consumption preferences, with a focus on category-specific preferences, would provide valuable insights into how crises influence consumer behaviour.

Fourthly, convenience and time pressure are pivotal factors driving OTG consumption. Future research could explore the design of packaging that not only addresses these concerns but also enhances the overall consumer experience. Innovative packaging solutions that are user-friendly, sustainable, and capable of maintaining product quality could significantly appeal to OTG consumers.

Finally, despite a clear preference for less healthy 'vice' products among OTG consumers, there is a growing awareness and demand for healthier options. The significant influence of advertising and promotional deals highlighted in this research suggests that persuasive messaging strategies could be leveraged to promote healthier eating practices among OTG consumers. Future studies could explore how different message framing and persuasion strategies can be employed to encourage healthier choices without compromising the convenience that typifies OTG consumption.

Notes

1. Coverage = $\sum \min(X, Y) \div \sum Y$, where X represents the membership score in the causal condition for each case, Y represents the membership score in the outcome for each case, $\min(X, Y)$ function takes the lower membership score of X or Y for each case and signifies the degree to which a case is explained by the causal condition, and the sum of the minimum scores $\sum \min(X, Y)$ is then divided by the sum of the outcome scores $\sum Y$, yielding the coverage of the proportion of cases in the outcome Y that are explained by the causal condition X.

2. Consistency $(X \leq Y) = \frac{\sum \min(X, Y)}{\sum X}$, where the sum of the minimum scores $\sum \min(X, Y)$ is divided by the sum of the cause scores $\sum X$, yielding the consistency of condition X leading to an outcome Y across all cases.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Weng Marc Lim is a Distinguished Professor and the Dean of Sunway Business School at Sunway University, an ASU-Cintana Alliance Global Partner Affiliate Faculty at Arizona State University, and an Adjunct Professor at Swinburne University of Technology's home campus in Melbourne, Australia, and international branch campus in Sarawak, Malaysia, where he served as Dean and Head of School. He is the Editor in Chief of Global Business and Organizational Excellence; Deputy Editor of Journal of Global Marketing; Associate Editor of Journal of Business Research, Journal of Consumer Behaviour, and Journal of Strategic Marketing; and Regional Editor of The Service Industries Journal. He has authored more than 100 manuscripts in journals ranked 'A*' and 'A' such as Australasian Marketing Journal, European Journal of Marketing, Industrial Marketing Management, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing, Journal of Consumer Behaviour, Journal of Consumer Marketing, International Journal of Consumer Studies, Journal of Brand Management, Journal of Product and Brand Management, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, Journal of International Marketing, Journal of Marketing Management, Journal of Strategic Marketing, Marketing Theory, Marketing Intelligence & Planning, and Psychology & Marketing, among others. He has also led high-level discussions at the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), Association of MBAs (AMBA), Business Graduates Association (BGA), Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), Times Higher Education (THE), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Principles of Responsible Management Education (UNPRME), and World Economic Forum (WEF). Contact: @limwengmarc on Instagram and Twitter (X), LinkedIn, or his personal homepage at <https://www.wengmarc.com>.

Manish Das is an Assistant Professor in Tripura University, Tripura, India. His research interests include consumer behaviour, culture, sustainable consumption, as well as retail and services marketing. His research has been published in journals ranked 'A*' and 'A' such as European Journal of Marketing, Industrial Marketing Management, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing, Journal of Marketing Management, Journal of Product and Brand Management, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, International Journal of Consumer Studies, Journal of Consumer Marketing, Journal of Travel Research, and Tourism Management Perspectives, among others.

Victor Saha is an Assistant Professor in O.P. Jindal Global University, Haryana, India. His research interests include consumer behaviour, services marketing, and value co-creation. His research has been published in journals ranked 'A*' and 'A' such as Industrial Marketing Management, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing, Journal of Product and Brand Management, and Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, among others.

Data availability statement

Data can be made available upon reasonable request.

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