

Digital visibility and consumer choice in online food delivery: A case study of Heshel, a community-based food enterprise

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Abstract

Online food-delivery platforms have changed how customers discover restaurants and decide what to order. Customers can compare several restaurants and decide using photographs, menu items, descriptions, prices, ratings and reviews, often without previous experience of the restaurant. This makes a food business's online presentation an important part of the customer experience. For smaller community-based enterprises, digital platforms can create access to customers beyond their immediate neighbourhood, but they also create competition for attention. This paper examines the issue through the case of Heshel, a women-led food enterprise supported by Project Concern International (PCI) India. Heshel is part of PCI India's cloud-kitchen initiative, which aims to create sustainable food enterprises and livelihood opportunities for women from urban communities. PCI currently reports five Heshel kitchen units in Kolkata involving 75 women participants. It also reports that Heshel generated ₹26.88 lakh in revenue in FY2025-26, compared with ₹3.87 lakh in the previous year. It combines an observation-based review of Heshel's digital listings with secondary research on digital menus, online reviews, food photographs and consumer choice. The study identifies aspects of a restaurant's digital presence that may influence customer decisions, including visual presentation, menu organisation, descriptions, reviews and the communication of value through thalis and combinations. Based on these observations, the paper develops a simple four-stage framework - Notice → Understand → Trust → Choose - to explain how a customer may move from first seeing a restaurant online to deciding whether to place an order. The paper does not claim that any particular digital change will increase sales. Internal data on impressions etc was not available, and there is no evidence available to the author about which recommendations were subsequently implemented. The case study therefore aims to identify practical areas for improvement and suggest questions that could be tested through future research.

The way people order food has changed considerably in recent years. Instead of visiting a restaurant, looking at a physical menu and speaking to staff before making a decision, customers can now search for food on a digital platform, compare several restaurants and place an order within a few minutes. Food-delivery applications have therefore become an important part of the way restaurants reach customers. The customer's first interaction with a restaurant may now take place entirely online.

This has changed the way restaurants compete. In a physical restaurant, the customer can see the surroundings, observe the food being served, speak to the staff and experience the atmosphere before deciding what to order. On an online platform, much of this experience is replaced by a smaller set of digital signals. Photographs, menu items, descriptions, prices, ratings and reviews may all contribute to the customer's judgement. The restaurant therefore has to communicate a considerable amount of information through a relatively small digital space.

The scale of food delivery also makes this important for smaller businesses. Swiggy reported 14.7 million monthly transacting food-delivery users in FY2024-25, while its food-delivery Gross Order Value grew by 16.4% during the year. This indicates the size of the potential customer base available through digital food-delivery platforms, although being present on a platform does not by itself mean that a restaurant will receive orders. For a smaller business, the opportunity is to reach customers beyond its immediate physical location, while the challenge is to stand out among many competing restaurants.

This issue becomes particularly interesting in the case of community-based food enterprises. Such enterprises may have distinctive products and a strong local or social identity, but they may not have the same marketing budgets or brand recognition as large restaurant chains. Their digital listing can therefore play an important role in explaining what they offer and why a customer might consider ordering from them.

Heshel provides an interesting example of this situation. Heshel is part of PCI India's cloud-kitchen initiative, which aims to help women from urban communities develop food enterprises and create sustainable income opportunities. PCI describes the initiative as including areas such as training, business development, branding, digital marketing, market access and continuing enterprise support. Heshel's kitchens are also listed on online food-delivery platforms.

PCI's current information reports five Heshel kitchen units in Kolkata involving 75 women participants. It also reports revenue of ₹26.88 lakh in FY2025-26, compared with ₹3.87 lakh in FY2024-25. These figures show that Heshel is not simply a social project but an operating food enterprise with a developing commercial dimension. At the same time, the customer encountering Heshel online may not know anything about this background. A customer may simply see a restaurant name, a photograph of food, a menu and a list of prices. If the customer is unfamiliar with Bengali food, even the names of some dishes may not immediately communicate what the food is like. This creates an interesting question about digital visibility. It is not enough for a business to be listed online. The customer also needs to understand what is being offered, feel sufficiently confident about the restaurant and identify an option that appears suitable.

The central question explored in this paper is therefore – *How can a community-based food enterprise such as Heshel improve its digital presentation and make it easier for customers to discover, understand, trust and choose its products?*

The paper approaches this question through an observation-based case study of Heshel's digital presence, supported by secondary research on digital menus, food photographs, online reviews and consumer behaviour.

The Heshel Case

Heshel is a women-led food enterprise serving Bengali food and is part of PCI India's cloud-kitchen initiative. PCI describes the food as authentic and home-style and explains that the initiative works with women from self-help groups. The cloud-kitchen model allows participating women to be involved in food preparation as well as the wider operation of the enterprise. The model is interesting because it combines food entrepreneurship with livelihood development. The participating women are not only being trained to prepare food but are also being supported in areas such as business development, branding, digital marketing and market access. The enterprise therefore has both a product proposition and a wider story behind it.

According to PCI's current information, Heshel has five active kitchen units in Kolkata and 75 women participants. The organisation reports revenue of ₹26.88 lakh in FY2025–26, compared with ₹3.87 lakh in FY2024–25. While these figures do not establish the contribution of digital platforms to the growth, they indicate that the enterprise has developed beyond a very small pilot and make it a useful case for examining how a community-based food business presents itself to customers.

Heshel's presence on food-delivery platforms is particularly relevant because a cloud kitchen does not have the same physical visibility as a traditional restaurant. A restaurant located on a busy road may be discovered through its signboard, location and passing customers. A cloud kitchen depends much more on digital channels to reach people who may not otherwise know that it exists. The digital listing consequently becomes an important point of contact between the enterprise and a potential customer. The customer may have no prior relationship with Heshel and may not know the women behind the enterprise or the role of PCI. The customer's first impression may instead come from a photograph of food or a particular item on the menu.

This makes the presentation of the food important. Bengali cuisine itself can be an advantage because it gives Heshel a clear identity. At the same time, some dishes may be unfamiliar to customers who have not previously eaten Bengali food. A customer who recognises a dish may need very little information, whereas a first-time customer may need a short explanation before feeling comfortable ordering it. The case study therefore focuses on how Heshel's existing products and story are communicated through the digital listing. It does not assess the quality of the food itself, nor does it attempt to measure the performance of the business against competitors.

These observations raise several questions about how customers interpret a digital food listing. The following section considers the case through the study method and the existing research.

The main research question was: *How can a community-based food enterprise such as Heshel improve its digital presentation and make it easier for customers to discover, understand, trust and choose its products?*

The case study originated from a project undertaken during the author's internship with PCI, New Delhi, between 7 and 28 November 2025. As part of the internship, PCI assigned the author a project examining the digital presence of Heshel. The observations made during this project subsequently formed the basis for this case study.

The study used two main sources of information. The first was an observation-based review of Heshel's digital listings on online food-delivery platforms, particularly Swiggy and Zomato. The second was a review of published research relating to digital menus, food photographs, online reviews, trust and consumer purchase intentions.

The digital review considered the different elements that a potential customer would encounter before placing an order. These included the restaurant's photographs and overall visual presentation, the organisation of menu categories, descriptions of individual dishes, the presentation of thalis and combinations, bestsellers or recommended products, ratings and reviews, and the extent to which value-oriented options were communicated clearly. The review was carried out from the perspective of a customer rather than from the perspective of the enterprise. This distinction was important because the purpose was to understand what information is immediately available to someone who may be considering Heshel for the first time.

As part of the preparation of the revised manuscript, a supplementary review of publicly available customer-generated content was also undertaken. This included publicly visible reviews and ratings associated with Heshel on food and restaurant platforms. The purpose was not to conduct a customer survey or claim primary evidence, but to examine whether some themes identified through the original digital observation were also visible in customer-generated feedback. Because these reviews were accessed retrospectively and were not collected through controlled sampling, they are treated as secondary and illustrative evidence rather than representative customer data. The supplementary review is therefore kept separate from the original internship observation period.

The observations were then compared with findings from existing research. The purpose of the secondary research was not to conduct a systematic review of the entire literature on online food delivery. Instead, it was used to examine whether the factors observed in the Heshel case; such as visual appeal, menu information, reviews and trust, have also been identified as relevant in previous research.

An important limitation is that internal business data were not available for the study. The analysis therefore does not include the number of people who viewed Heshel's listings, the number who clicked on individual dishes, conversion rates, customer-acquisition costs, repeat orders or sales attributable to individual digital elements. There was also no customer survey or interview conducted as part of this study. The paper therefore reflects an observation of the digital customer journey rather than a measurement of

actual customer behaviour.

For the same reason, the recommendations presented later in the paper are not treated as proven interventions. There is no evidence available to the author about whether the recommendations were implemented by Heshel or whether they resulted in any change in orders or revenue.

The original observation period was limited to the internship period of 7–28 November 2025. Digital listings and customer-generated content can change over time, so the supplementary online review is used only to triangulate selected observations and not to describe the digital environment during the internship as a permanent condition.

What Existing Research Suggests

Visual presentation and digital menus

A digital menu is different from a traditional restaurant menu because it can become part of the customer's decision to select the restaurant itself. A customer using a food-delivery application may be comparing several restaurants at the same time. The menu therefore has to communicate both the food being offered and the reasons for considering it.

A 2024 study of digital menus in the Indian restaurant industry examined the relationship between menu visual appeal, menu informativeness, convenience and purchase intentions. The researchers collected responses from 280 participants and found positive relationships between visual appeal and informativeness and consumers' desire for food and purchase intentions.

This is relevant to Heshel because photographs may be among the first things a customer notices. A photograph can communicate information that a written description cannot easily provide, particularly for a meal such as a thali where several dishes are presented together. A customer may be able to judge the overall appearance and variety of a meal before deciding whether to read the details.

The practical implication is not necessarily that a small enterprise needs professional photography. Rather, the photographs should give customers a clear and attractive idea of the food they will receive. Consistency in backgrounds, plates, lighting and presentation may also make the overall menu easier to understand.

Information and menu descriptions

Visual appeal is only one part of the decision. A customer also needs to understand what is being offered. This can be particularly important for a cuisine such as Bengali food. Some customers will already be familiar with the dishes, while others may encounter their names for the first time on the platform. A menu that only gives the name of an unfamiliar dish may leave the customer uncertain about what to expect. The same 2024 study of digital menus found that menu informativeness was positively associated with purchase intentions. For Heshel, this suggests that descriptions could play a useful role in making unfamiliar dishes easier to understand.

The descriptions do not need to be long. In fact, very long descriptions could make a digital menu harder to scan. A short explanation of the main ingredient, preparation or contents of a dish may be enough to give

the customer confidence about what is being ordered. This is particularly useful where the original Bengali name is an important part of the identity of the dish. The name can remain unchanged while a simple explanation is added underneath it. In this way, the digital listing can preserve the identity of the cuisine while making it more accessible to someone ordering Bengali food for the first time.

Reviews and trust

Food is an experience product. A customer cannot taste a meal before placing an order and therefore has to rely on other signals when making a first purchase. Online reviews provide one such signal. They allow potential customers to see what previous customers have experienced. Reviews may contain comments about taste, quantity, packaging, pricing, hygiene or delivery, giving a new customer information that the restaurant's own description may not provide.

A study published in the *International Journal of Consumer Studies* analysed 2,530 reviews from 50 restaurants on Zomato. The research identified several themes in customer reviews and ratings, including factors related to pricing and hygiene. This shows that customer-generated information can contain useful signals about how a restaurant is perceived. Another study by Park, Sutherland and Lee examined online restaurant reviews, ratings, prices and pictures and found that these factors could influence purchase intentions and trust. The study also found that pictures associated with reviews contributed to trust.

For Heshel, the implication is that genuine customer feedback can help reduce uncertainty. The objective should not be to manufacture positive reviews, but to make it easy for customers who have genuinely ordered from the enterprise to share their experience.

Communicating value

Customers do not necessarily choose a restaurant only because it has the lowest price. They may also consider portion size, variety, convenience and what they receive for the total amount paid. This is where *thalis* and combinations become interesting. A *thali* can communicate several things at once. It can show variety, provide a complete meal and make it easier for a customer to understand what they will receive.

A combination can perform a similar function when it brings together several individual items. However, the value of a product can only influence the decision if the customer can see and understand it. A customer looking at a combination should be able to understand what is included, what the meal looks like and how much it costs. If these things are not immediately clear, the customer may find it easier to compare individual dishes from another restaurant. The point is not necessarily to reduce prices; it is to make the value of the existing products easier to recognise.

The research discussed above provides a basis for considering the observations from Heshel's digital presence in greater detail.

The review of Heshel's digital presence highlighted several areas where relatively simple changes could make the customer journey clearer. These observations are discussed below in relation to the four stages developed later in the paper.

The first impression could communicate the food more strongly

The first challenge for any restaurant on a food-delivery platform is getting the customer's attention. Heshel already uses photographs of food, but the main visual could potentially communicate the Bengali-food proposition more strongly. A customer scrolling through a platform may see many restaurant listings within a short period of time. The customer may not read the restaurant description before deciding whether to open the listing. The main photograph therefore has to do some of the initial communication.

For Heshel, a strong photograph of a signature dish or a well-presented Bengali meal could provide an immediate sense of what the enterprise offers. Photographs of *thalis* and combinations could also be useful because they allow customers to see the complete meal rather than trying to imagine it from a list of ingredients.

Consistency could also improve the overall appearance of the menu. Using reasonably similar backgrounds, plates and lighting can make photographs appear to belong to the same restaurant and may give the listing a more organised feel.

These observations do not mean that photographs are the only factor affecting customer choice. They simply suggest that visual presentation is an area worth considering because it forms part of the customer's first interaction with the business.

The menu can help guide the customer

Once a customer opens a restaurant listing, the next challenge is to understand what is available. Heshel offers different food items, including *thalis* and combinations, but the customer may not always know where to start. This can be particularly relevant for someone who is unfamiliar with Bengali food. Such a customer may not want to read the entire menu before deciding whether to order. A clear menu structure can reduce the effort involved in making the first choice.

Sections such as "*Thalis* & Combos", "Bestsellers", "Popular" or "Recommended" could potentially help customers navigate the menu, depending on the features supported by the platform. Similarly, simple labels could be useful for identifying vegetarian, spicy or other relevant characteristics where appropriate. The purpose would not be to add more information. It would be to organise the information that is already available so that customers can reach a decision more easily.

Descriptions can make the cuisine more accessible

One of Heshel's strengths is the identity of its food. Bengali cuisine gives the enterprise a clear proposition, but it also creates a possible information gap for customers who are unfamiliar with it. For someone who knows Bengali food, the name of a dish may be enough. For someone trying it for the first time, it may not be. A short description can bridge this gap. For example, a dish name can be retained in its original form

while the description explains its main ingredient or preparation. This would preserve the character of the cuisine without assuming that every customer already understands it.

The same principle can be applied to *thalis* and combinations. Instead of making the customer work out what is included from several individual menu items, the listing can explain the contents directly. This is a small change in communication, but it may make the menu more accessible to a wider range of customers.

The Heshel story can add another layer of trust

Heshel has an aspect that distinguishes it from many conventional restaurants. It is connected to a livelihood initiative that supports women in developing food enterprises. This background can give the business a stronger identity and may help customers remember it. A customer who knows that the food enterprise is connected to a women-led livelihood initiative may see an additional reason to support the business.

At the same time, the social story should complement the food rather than replace it. A customer opening a food-delivery application is usually looking for something to eat. The customer first wants to know whether the food looks appealing, what is available and what it costs. The background of Heshel can then provide another reason to remember the enterprise. The sequence therefore matters. The food proposition should come first, followed by the story behind the enterprise.

A supplementary review of publicly available customer-generated content provides some illustrative support for these observations. Publicly visible Zomato reviews of the Heshel outlet in Behala mention food quality and quantity relative to price, specific Bengali dishes such as *thalis*, mutton and fish preparations, and the women-led background of the enterprise. A Magicpin review dated 15 October 2025, before the internship period, also praised the quality, packaging and promotions. The review stated, “*Loved the quality, packaging, and promotions at this place.*” These observations are not treated as representative customer preferences or as evidence of causation. They are used only to show that some of the themes identified in the digital review are also visible in customer-generated feedback.

Value should be easier to recognise

Thalis and combinations may be particularly useful for customers who are looking for a complete meal. They bring together several items and can make variety and convenience easier to understand. However, the customer needs to be able to see what is included. A clear photograph, a short list of the items included and a visible price can make a combination easier to compare with alternatives. This can help customers judge value without necessarily requiring the enterprise to reduce its prices.

For Heshel, this is potentially important because Bengali food can be unfamiliar to some customers. A complete meal shown visually may be easier to understand than several unfamiliar individual dishes. The key point is that value is not only a matter of price. It is also about how clearly the customer understands what he or she is receiving for that price.

The observations from the Heshel review, together with the secondary research, suggest a simple way of looking at the online customer journey.

The first stage is **Notice**. Before a customer can consider ordering, the restaurant has to attract some attention. Photographs and overall visual presentation can play a role at this point. The customer's basic question is whether the restaurant looks interesting enough to explore further.

The second stage is **Understand**. Once the customer has opened the listing, the customer needs to understand what the restaurant actually offers. Menu organisation, dish names, descriptions, photographs and clear information about thalis or combinations can help at this stage. The customer is essentially asking what is available and what each option means.

The third stage is **Trust**. Even after understanding the menu, a customer may still hesitate to order from a restaurant that is unfamiliar. Ratings, reviews, photographs and clear information can provide some confidence. Previous customers' experiences can be particularly useful because they provide information that comes from outside the restaurant itself.

The fourth stage is **Choose**. At this point, the customer compares the available options and decides what to order. Price, portion, variety, combinations, popular items and perceived value may influence this decision.

The framework can therefore be represented as:

NOTICE

Does this look interesting?

↓

UNDERSTAND

What exactly do they offer?

↓

TRUST

Can I feel confident ordering from them?

↓

CHOOSE

Which option offers the value I want?

Stage	Customer question	What matters digitally
Notice	Does this look interesting?	Photographs and visual presentation
Understand	What exactly do they offer?	Menu organisation, descriptions and food information
Trust	Can I feel confident ordering from them?	Ratings, reviews and clear information
Choose	Which option offers the value I want?	Price, portion, variety, thalis and combinations

The usefulness of this framework is that it shows why digital visibility is not simply about attracting attention. A restaurant may succeed in getting a customer to open its listing but still lose the customer if the menu is difficult to understand. Similarly, an attractive menu may not be enough if the customer does not feel confident about ordering. The different parts of the digital listing therefore work together. A photograph can create the first impression, but the menu has to continue the communication. A clear menu can explain the products, but reviews and ratings may be needed to create confidence. Once the customer is comfortable with the restaurant, combinations and clearly presented value can help with the final choice.

In the case of Heshel, this framework is particularly useful because the enterprise has both a distinctive food identity and a wider social story. The customer first needs to understand the food before the social story can become an additional reason to choose the enterprise. The framework is presented as an analytical way of looking at the case, rather than as a validated consumer behaviour model.

Observation and their Customer Implication and Possible Improvement

Observation from digital review	Possible customer implication	Possible improvement
Food photographs are available, but the main visual could communicate the Bengali-food proposition more strongly	A new customer may not immediately understand what makes Heshel different	Use a strong photograph that clearly represents the food being offered
<i>Thalis</i> and combinations are available	A customer may not immediately understand what is included in a complete meal	Use photographs and concise descriptions showing the contents clearly
Some Bengali dishes may be unfamiliar to first-time customers	The customer may hesitate because the name alone does not explain the dish	Add short descriptions explaining the main ingredients or preparation
There are multiple menu choices	A customer may not know where to start	Use clear categories such as <i>Thalis</i> & Combos, Popular or Bestsellers where supported
Ratings and reviews provide information from previous customers	They can reduce uncertainty for someone ordering for the first time	Encourage genuine customers to leave reviews after actual orders
Heshel has a women-led livelihood background	The story can give the enterprise additional meaning and differentiation	Include a short explanation of the background without allowing it to dominate the food proposition
Value-oriented meals are available	Customers may not recognise the value if the contents are unclear	Present the contents, photograph and price of combinations clearly

Recommendations

Based on the case review and the secondary research, five practical areas could be considered for Heshel.

i. The first is to strengthen the main visual presentation. One or two photographs could be selected that best communicate the identity of Heshel and Bengali food. A signature meal or thali may be particularly effective because it can show variety in a single image. The aim would be to make the food immediately understandable rather than simply making the listing look more attractive.

ii. The second is to give *thalis* and combinations greater visibility. Complete meals can be useful for first-time customers because they reduce the need to decide between several individual dishes. Making these options easy to find and showing exactly what they contain could make the decision process simpler.

iii. The third is to improve menu navigation. Clear categories and, where available, platform-supported labels such as Popular, Bestsellers or Recommended could help customers find relevant products faster. The exact categories should reflect Heshel's actual menu rather than being added simply to make the listing appear more sophisticated.

iv. The fourth is to make dish descriptions more useful. Descriptions should remain short and easy to read, but they should provide enough information for someone unfamiliar with the dish to understand it. This is particularly relevant for regional foods where the name may not be self-explanatory to every customer.

v. The fifth is to make use of genuine customer feedback and the Heshel story. Reviews can provide confidence to first-time customers, while the story of Heshel's women-led enterprise can provide an additional point of differentiation. Both should be communicated honestly. The purpose is not to create artificial social proof. It is to make existing customer experiences and the background of the enterprise more visible.

These recommendations do not require changing the underlying food proposition. Most of them involve presenting the existing products more clearly to the potential customer.

From Recommendations to Testing

The recommendations in this paper should be treated as hypotheses rather than conclusions. The most useful next step would be to test individual changes using actual business data. For example, if the main photograph were changed for a defined period, the enterprise could compare relevant customer behaviour before and after the change. Similarly, a *thali* could be given greater visibility and the enterprise could examine whether customers interacted with or ordered that product more frequently.

Possible measures could include listing views, menu visits, clicks on individual dishes, number of orders, average order value, repeat orders, customer ratings and review volume. Descriptions could also be tested. A small number of unfamiliar dishes could receive clearer explanations and the results could be compared with similar dishes without the change. This would make it possible to understand whether better information actually affects customer behaviour.

The same approach could be used for photographs and combinations. This creates a simple process:

Observe → Change → Measure → Compare → Learn

Such an approach would be more useful than assuming that a particular digital design will automatically increase sales. It would also allow the enterprise to learn which improvements matter most to its own customers. For a community-based enterprise, this is potentially important because digital improvements do not necessarily require a large advertising budget. Some changes can be made through better presentation and organisation of information that the business already has.

Wider Implications for Community Based Food Enterprises

The Heshel case also raises a broader question about how community-based enterprises compete in digital markets. Such enterprises often have two propositions. The first is the product that the customer buys. The second is the social or community purpose behind the enterprise. In Heshel's case, the food is linked to a livelihood initiative supporting women food entrepreneurs. Both propositions can be valuable, but they may not play the same role in the customer's decision.

A customer using a food-delivery platform is primarily looking for food. The first questions are likely to be about taste, appearance, menu, price and convenience. The social story can then provide another reason to remember the enterprise or feel a connection with it. This suggests that the strongest communication may be food first, story second. This is not because the social purpose is unimportant. In fact, it may be one of Heshel's strongest points of differentiation. But the social purpose is unlikely to substitute for a good food proposition. Customers still need to want the food, understand what they are ordering and feel that the product provides sufficient value.

The same principle may apply to other community-based food enterprises. A regional food business may have a distinctive cuisine but need to explain unfamiliar dishes to new customers. A small enterprise may have a strong story but limited resources for advertising. A women-led business may have an important social purpose but little brand recognition outside its immediate community.

Digital platforms can potentially help address some of these challenges because they allow smaller businesses to reach customers without requiring a large physical network. At the same time, the number of competing restaurants on these platforms means that being listed is only the beginning. This makes clarity particularly important. The enterprise has to make it easy for a customer to understand what it sells, why the food is interesting and what the customer can expect after placing an order.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that need to be considered when interpreting its findings.

i.First, it examines a single enterprise. Heshel operates in Kolkata, focuses on Bengali food and has a specific women-led community-enterprise model. The observations therefore cannot automatically be applied to all restaurants or community-based food businesses.

ii.Second, the study is based mainly on observation of Heshel's digital presence. It does not include a survey or interview with customers. The paper therefore examines what a potential customer can see and understand rather than measuring what customers actually think or do.

iii.Third, internal business information was not available. The study does not know the number of people who viewed Heshel's listing, the number who clicked on menu items, conversion rates, repeat-order rates or sales attributable to particular products or digital features.

iv.Fourth, the study cannot establish causation. Even if a restaurant changes its photographs or menu and sales increase afterwards, the change could coincide with other factors such as pricing, food quality, delivery performance, seasonality, customer reviews or changes in competition.

v.Fifth, there is no information available to the author about whether the recommendations made in this paper were subsequently implemented or what their results, if any, were. For these reasons, the recommendations should be treated as possible areas for improvement and future testing rather than proven solutions.

vi.Finally, the supplementary review of publicly available customer-generated content was also not based on controlled sampling and cannot be treated as representative customer data. It is used only to triangulate selected themes from the case and not to estimate customer preferences or establish causal relationships.

Scope for Further Research

There are several ways in which the Heshel case could be developed through future research.

One possibility would be to conduct a survey of Heshel customers. Customers could be asked how they discovered the enterprise, whether they had previously eaten Bengali food, what information they looked at before ordering and which factors influenced their decision. It could also be useful to compare customers who were already familiar with Bengali cuisine with customers who were trying it for the first time. This could help establish whether descriptions and photographs are particularly important for new customers.

A second possibility would be to conduct controlled experiments on the digital listing. One element could be changed at a time, such as the main photograph, the presentation of a *thali*, the organisation of the menu or the description of an unfamiliar dish. Customer behaviour could then be compared before and after each change.

A third area could be the relationship between the food proposition and the social story. It would be interesting to understand whether customers who know about Heshel's women-led livelihood model are more likely to become repeat customers than customers who choose the enterprise only because of the food.

Such questions cannot be answered through the current case study, but they provide opportunities for future research. A stronger future study could therefore combine digital observation with customer surveys and actual business data. This would allow researchers to move from identifying possible improvements to measuring whether specific changes affect customer behaviour.

Online food-delivery platforms have changed the relationship between restaurants and customers. A customer can now discover a restaurant, compare it with several alternatives, examine its menu and decide what to order without ever visiting the physical establishment.

As a result, the digital presentation of a restaurant has become an important part of the customer experience. For smaller and community-based food enterprises, this creates both an opportunity and a challenge. Digital platforms can provide access to customers beyond the immediate neighbourhood, but they also place small businesses in direct competition with many other restaurants. Being present on a platform is therefore only the first step. The business also needs to communicate its products clearly.

The Heshel case illustrates this through a number of relatively simple elements. Photographs can shape the first impression. Menu organisation can make it easier for customers to find what they are looking for. Short descriptions can make unfamiliar dishes more accessible. Reviews can provide information and confidence. *Thalis* and combinations can make variety and value easier to understand. These observations led to the four-stage framework developed in this paper:

Notice → Understand → Trust → Choose.

The framework provides a simple way of looking at the digital customer journey. A customer first needs to notice the restaurant, then understand what it offers, develop sufficient confidence to consider ordering and finally choose an item that appears to offer the right combination of food, price and value.

The secondary research reviewed in this paper supports several elements of this framework. Research on digital menus in the Indian restaurant industry has identified relationships between visual appeal, informativeness, convenience and purchase intentions. Research on online restaurant reviews has highlighted the role of ratings, pictures and trust in influencing purchase intentions. Studies of consumer-generated restaurant reviews have also shown the usefulness of online ratings and reviews as sources of information about restaurants. For Heshel, the main opportunity may therefore not be to change what the enterprise sells but to improve how clearly its existing products are communicated. Better photographs, clearer organisation, useful descriptions, greater visibility for complete meals and genuine customer reviews are relatively practical areas that could be considered. The story behind Heshel can provide an additional layer of differentiation because it connects the food enterprise with a wider women-led livelihood initiative. However, the food proposition remains central. A customer needs to find the food appealing and understand the product before the social story can become an additional reason to choose the enterprise.

At the same time, this study does not claim that the suggested changes will necessarily increase sales. The available information does not include customer conversion data, order-level information or evidence of the implementation of the recommendations. The distinction between a useful hypothesis and a proven result is therefore important. The next step should be testing. If changes to photographs, descriptions, menu organisation or product presentation are made, their effects can be measured through views, clicks, orders,

repeat purchases and customer feedback. This would make it possible to understand which changes actually matter to Heshel's customers.

The wider lesson from the case is that digital visibility is not simply about being seen. It is about making a business easier to understand. For a customer seeing Heshel for the first time, the ideal digital experience would therefore be relatively simple – the food should attract attention, the menu should be easy to understand, the available information should create confidence and the value of the available choices should be clear. In this sense, the question is not only whether more people can see Heshel online. It is whether, when they see it, they can quickly understand what it offers and find a reason to choose it.

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