LIFE IN THE DELIVERY CITY

The Urban Experiences of Everyday Instant Delivery Users in Chennai

MASTERS THESIS

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Photos in this thesis were taken by the author

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ABSTRACT

This thesis contours the urban experiences of frequent Instant Delivery users in Chennai, triggered by the digital metamorphosis of cities and people in cities. It builds upon debates on platform urbanism by exploring the overlooked consumption practices that digital on-demand platforms have generated. Extending recent work on the affectivity of platforms, which explains how specific bodily experiences are 'engineered' into the design of platforms, the paper argues that the flows of urban life can complicate these logics. In the context of on-demand delivery platforms, the paper moves beyond the explanatory logic of convenience to provide a richer understanding of how ID platforms might be changing everyday habits in the city for people in different circumstances. Through analysis of qualitative interviews with consumers who use on-demand delivery platforms in Chennai, my research investigates how such platforms can become entangled in the lives of urban inhabitants. Through a 'minor' lens that views people in terms of their changing and indeterminate capacities, I seek to explain how on-demand platforms are contingent on diverse circumstances of urban dwellings that can enhance and deplete their users' capacities over time. This orientation towards everyday complexities acknowledges the diffuse set of power relations at play in the consumption patterns of ID users and the multiple subjectivities that emerge through their ongoing immersion in digitally augmented worlds.

Key words: *Instant Delivery; Delivery City; Everyday Life; Urban Experiences; Digital Consumption; Chennai*

ABSTRAKT

In dieser Arbeit werden die urbanen Erfahrungen von Instant-Delivery-Nutzern in Chennai beschrieben, die durch die digitale Metamorphose von Städten und Menschen in Städten ausgelöst wurden. Sie baut auf den Debatten über den Plattformurbanismus auf, indem sie die übersehenen Konsumpraktiken untersucht, die digitale On-Demand-Plattformen hervorgebracht haben. In Anknüpfung an neuere Arbeiten zur Affektivität von Plattformen, die erklären, wie spezifische Körpererfahrungen in das Design von Plattformen „eingebaut" werden, argumentiert der Beitrag, dass die Ströme des städtischen Lebens diese Logik verkomplizieren können. Im Zusammenhang mit On-Demand-Lieferplattformen geht der Beitrag über die erklärende Logik der Bequemlichkeit hinaus, um ein umfassenderes Verständnis dafür zu schaffen, wie ID-Plattformen die alltäglichen Gewohnheiten von Menschen in unterschiedlichen Lebensumständen in der Stadt verändern können. Durch die Analyse qualitativer Interviews mit Verbrauchern, die On-Demand-Lieferplattformen in Chennai nutzen, untersucht meine Forschung, wie sich solche Plattformen in das Leben der Stadtbewohner einfügen können. Mit Hilfe eines „kleinen" Blickwinkels, der die Menschen im Hinblick auf ihre sich verändernden und unbestimmten Fähigkeiten betrachtet, versuche ich zu erklären, wie On-Demand-Plattformen von den verschiedenen Umständen des städtischen Wohnens abhängen, die die Fähigkeiten ihrer Nutzer im Laufe der Zeit steigern und schwächen können. Diese Ausrichtung auf die Komplexität des Alltags erkennt die diffusen Machtverhältnisse an, die in den Konsummustern von ID-Nutzern eine Rolle spielen, und die vielfältigen Subjektivitäten, die durch ihr ständiges Eintauchen in digital erweiterte Welten entstehen.

Schlüsselwörter: *Instant Delivery; Delivery City; Alltagsleben; Urbane Erfahrungen; Digitaler Konsum; Chennai*

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INTRODUCTION

A decade ago, ordering in food was an activity that denoted a special occasion. We would page through leaflets stuck on the fridge, call the number and wait eagerly for about 45 minutes till we got our food. Maybe it was a weekend treat, a job promotion, a birthday event or a break-up cure. Fast forward to today, and ordering in has become an almost everyday occurrence in the homes of my neighbours and friends in Chennai. It is now possible not only to order food from restaurants but also to do groceries and even instantly deliver packages across the city, sometimes in as little as 10 minutes. In today's delivery culture, a 45-minute waiting time would mean that you get your food for free.

Walking through my street, you'll see that several residential buildings have separate entry points and signs to convey to the gig workers where they can wait, pick up or drop off items in nearly every building. The buildings in and around the neighbourhood look increasingly "platform-ready" (Helmond 2015) to support residents' habits of summoning goods and services through delivery apps, which are instantly provided to them by 'gig workers' (Graham & Woodcock 2020). Adyar, my neighbourhood, is already bursting at the seams with retail options. For the residents around this locality, everyday consumption of groceries, miscellaneous items, and several food joints are available within a one to two-kilometre radius. Despite this, the observable proclivity of residents for instant delivery options leads me to wonder whether the app's services can provide more than just ease in the lives of its users and whether this dependence is remaking urban experiences.

The increase in Delivery consumption is by no means unique to Chennai and follows a global trend of the proliferation of instant delivery services. The global instant-delivery market has exploded since 2018 and is projected to double in size by 2027 (Placek 2022). The dramatic increase in consumption of delivery services, which are concentrated in urban and metropolitan regions, suggests that these services are quickly becoming embroiled in the everyday functions of urban lives everywhere. In Indian cities, however, the sharp divide of cheap labour in conjunction with a growing middle class has provided fertile grounds for the escalation of a delivery culture. Though the value of the Instant delivery market in India is smaller than in Global North countries like the US and Netherlands ("India Online Food Delivery Market" 2022), the annual delivery volume per user in Indian metropolitan cities is reportedly higher, almost tripling from 2013 to 2020 ("A Global Concept" 2022). In this thesis, I begin to interrogate the phenomenon of India's expanding platform economy in terms of both the social processes and rationales that spark frequent delivery

consumption. The new 'everydays' that are forming around instant delivery consumption in Indian metropolises like Chennai could articulate potential platform/urban configurations not only here but perhaps also in cities to come.

Admittedly, the platform ecosystem relies on a complex symbiosis between logistics, technology, and infrastructure, and as a whole, it would be beyond the scope of research for my thesis. Instead of focusing on the ID technology, I examine the social contexts of pervasive ID use and how people consciously entangle with its services to reshape their daily urban experiences. My focus is on the consumers, for whom, as physical obstacles between the consumption and a product dissolve,their modes, reasons and frequency of consumption change. For them, the apps create an initiating and controlling centre for economic and social life that can weave together diverse areas, peoples and activities within its network of relations to produce unique experiences of social relations and spaces (Kim 2022).

The rhythms of daily life are increasingly dictated by the logistics of instant delivery platforms. In the context of on-demand food delivery platforms, the thesis seeks to move beyond the explanatory logic of convenience to provide a richer understanding of how digital on-demand delivery platforms might be changing everyday habits in the city for people in different circumstances. By moving beyond the notion of convenience, this study offers a nuanced exploration of how digital on-demand platforms are reorganising social and cultural dynamics in the city. Through this lens, the thesis uses avenues of micropolitics, such as the practices, uses and experiences of consumption, as valuable and necessary in understanding emerging urban-digital phenomena in modern Indian cities.

In line with my research interests, my guiding research question is: **How do Consumers of Instant Delivery (ID) use its services to reshape their everyday urban experiences?** While investigating how frequent consumption of instant delivery services influences urban experiences, this research is attuned to ways in which the platforms can both alleviate and generate forms of discomfort. The framing of this research question was inspired by Shove et al. (2012, 21), whose inquiry on social change and its consequences of everyday life follows the questions: "how do practices emerge, exist and die?" and "How do bundles and complexes of practice form, persist and disappear?". Thus instead of asking: 'how do Instant Delivery services reshape the everyday urban

experiences of its frequent consumers?'. Rather, this framing seeks to break away from the passive figure of 'the consumer' who can be duped by sophisticated algorithms and advertising campaigns (Pedwell 2019, 125), and glosses over the complex, paradoxical and contingent digital consumption practices.

In connecting this research question to current academic debates on everyday lives in platform urbanism, I seek to continue Kim's (2022, 1) idea of a "Delivery City" which is the coined term for a "city" affected by the phenomenon of the mobility of things or "delivery". Where Kim is principally concerned with the technical capacities of platforms to modulate spatial characteristics of cities, my starting point is to shift the attention towards the capacities of consumers in shaping urban experiences themselves, whereby the city appears with augmented spatialities (Kitchin and Dodge 2014) in response to quotidian and performative digital practices (Shove et al. 2012).

The thesis is structured as follows:

After this introduction, the second chapter concerns the literature review and theoretical framework. The literature review provides definitions and debates of the main ideas for this research: everyday life, consumption, platform urbanism and instant delivery services. From there, the theoretical framework I have devised revolves around structuring theories to analyse the affective relations and the contexts in which everyday digital consumption practices take place and how they operate as a proponent of urban experiences. This section also situates the thesis within broader academic debates of affective platform urbanism, highlighting the niche in which this research is situated.

In the next chapter I provide a contextualisation of ID platforms in Chennai, focusing on my selected neighbourhoods. I explain the relevance of this particular case for studying my research of ID services.

The third chapter discusses the research methodology comprising a qualitative approach of semi-structured interviews with middle-class residents from two neighbourhoods in the city, including the research approach, data collection methods, and my positionality through the research process.

The fourth and fifth chapters are two stages of analysis that follow the two dimensions of the framework. In the fourth chapter, I will present the findings from data collection through 'vignettes' and the fifth chapter delves deeper into

the observations that answer my research question. While the first stage of analysis is more exploratory, in the second stage, I unpack how the participants' engagement with digital platforms presented recasts their experience through conceptual themes. The final chapter presents the conclusions of the thesis, the study limitations and recommendations for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will refer to current discussions on two main sections: the everyday and the platform. These two topics, with their subsections, arrive closer at the theories that help me further the debate on how a critical understanding of everyday urban experiences can be restructured through ID consumption. The assumption that underscores this research is that the introduction of ID services has formed a close association with daily urban realities and is capable of reconfiguring the spatial and temporal organisation of urban life. Following that, I start the process with debates on everyday life and consumption as a practice of everyday life. The second part provides a genealogy of platform urbanism, its iterations in the Indian context and the position of Instant delivery within these studies. The third section synthesises the everyday and the platform to provide a backdrop on the interpenetration of ID consumption in day-to-day activities. These sections provide a background on the two main concepts that are linked to my research question. The digital everyday seeks to provide a theoretical backdrop for my research objective - the everyday experiential dimensions of ID platforms.These will lead me to the conceptual tools that inform my analysis of the everyday experiential dimensions of ID platforms.

Everyday Life, Consumption and Urban Experiences

While the most apparent characteristic of the 'everyday' is perhaps its insignificance, it has been increasingly featured in various forms of social scientific research for the insights it can offer in accounts on social, economic and political transformations. One reason for the cacophony of voices and feelings about everyday life is that it is a layered and idiosyncratic subject that can be touched upon in many different ways. As such, it has become an equivocal and, at times, cryptic academic concept.

The seminal works of authors such as Lefebvre (1974) and Certeau (1984) sought to defamiliarise 'the everyday', to be able to study ordinary practices that do not transcend one's immediate environment to gain generic capacities. Rather, the everyday would be an attunement towards social transformations through the perspective of ordinary practices without disregarding their non-generalisable properties. While both Lefebvre and Certeau take the everyday to be a terrain of potential, Certeau emphasises its quality as a stage for 'actual' resistance and subversion of the structures of modern social conditions. In contrast, Lefebvre's approach to the everyday, while recognizing

the power of capitalism to manipulate desire, seems to leave little space for human agency (Storey 2014, 81).

In particular, Lefebvre and the Frankfurt school saw the new 'civilised' spaces of late capitalist society as "a form of capitalist oppression which exploited new forms of mass leisure and consumption to its own ends" (Ertürk 2021, 320). Thus, the consumer society was seen as a result of an extensive instrumentalization and commodification of all areas of life to transform the routinised daily life practices of modern society for capitalist exploitation. However, this reading of the transformation of daily life posits the modern consumer as a subject of corporate manipulation and passive compliance, deprived of creativity and dialogical possibilities (Gardiner 2000).

Contrary to this premise, de Certeau's exploration of everyday life gave importance to the idea that daily practices, including consumption, can be identified at different levels of tactics and power. Certeau's reading offers a re-evaluation of how everyday life is significant as a site of academic research. While everyday life and its seemingly unimportant actors and their mundane practices and places are constitutive of larger social processes, through research engagement with dynamic everyday participation, we can fully understand the diverse ways in which individuals and communities "rub along together" with structures of financial capitalism and globalisation (Gilroy 2004).

Certeau suggests that everyday life is constantly negotiated between these two forces. This dynamic interplay gives prominence to the "ingenuity of ordinary people" in shaping their own experiences through "ordinary practices" (Certeau, 1984, 30). This also includes consumers who, at first sight, might seem to be dictated by the institutions' "user's manual" (Certeau, 1984, 30). However, he asserts that agents can consume creatively by exercising unexpected 'tactics' to transform any kind of product or production objects imposed on them by the dominant order into artistic forms by different ways of using and reproducing those objects in everyday life. Following Certeau's interpretation, I argue that the rhythmic regimes of the everyday are largely mediated through acts of consumption, which, far from being a passive act, are read as 'ways of operating' that inform socio-spatial production.

Unpacking Consumption as an Everyday Practice

With the rising centrality of everyday life in the social sciences, it was academically studied alongside other other associated concepts such as lifestyle, practices and consumption. Theories on consumption itself have developed from being concerned about generational and identity politics to forms of resistance by those with few resources, to more recently, as acts of individualisation, sustainability, reflexivity and life choices (McRobbie 1994; Bauman 1998). The newer critical consumption studies have linked the consumption of specific commodities to modern regimes of production and to an analysis of global circuits (Welch and Yates 2018; Bhattacharya & Donner 2021). Here, mass consumption was studied as a matrix through which the intersections between gender, class, race and ethnicity are shown to arise from complex systems of exploitation, alienation, and the appropriation of resources across large spatial divides. In short, all of these perspectives demonstrated consumption in relation to the intellectual and political concerns of the time which centred around sustainability, identity politics and capital exploitation (Gardiner 2000). However, as other scholars have pointed out (Røpke and Christensen 2013; Canavan 2023), the focus on these resulted in the underappreciation of the everyday elements of consumption phenomena by academics.

Yates (2022) reflects on this trajectory, that consumption, being tied to 'identity' led to a bias where certain types of consumption were emphasised at the expense of more ordinary, inconspicuous and 'everyday' things. He argues that, by neglecting the 'everyday', studies of consumption insufficiently addressed how consumption practices are influenced by and contribute to social struggles are sedimented into everyday life broader social forces that shape everyday life. In his critiques he suggests that consumption should be understood not merely as a symbol or an individual choice but require a more comprehensive approach that considers both micro-level practices and macro-level power dynamics. The argument does not negate the signifying and symbolising properties of consumption and their political relevance as much as it calls for a diversification of studying dynamics of consumption activities. Public debates that focused more and more on the symbolic value of consumer goods, not only obscured alternative kinds of consumption activities, but also systematically misattributed social outcomes to organised collective actors. In other words, the analysis of consumption goods as expressions of identity and individualism has discounted the political potentials of the recursive relationships between incremental shifts and endogenous evolutions in

conventions and practices that perpetuate and reproduce patterns of consumption (Røpke and Christensen 2013; Welch and Yates 2018).

This line of argument problematizes Lefebvre's (1974) assertion of everyday consumption practices as shaped by companies that want to sell products and services, states that want to govern activity, and social movements which want recognition or resources, without mentioning actors' practices and goals. Yates' (2022) understanding of consumption reverberates de Certeau's dynamism between the tactics of the consumers and the strategies of the system as he calls for a more integrative perspective that connects individual consumption practices to the broader social structures that influence their choices. He advances theories of consumption as an everyday practice. For him, "everyday consumption" is an epistemology for examining everyday life in which the "...differences in people's resources, or differences in the resources they consume, are less important than the resources expended in particular practices." (150).

Here, he places emphasis on meanings, practices, distinctions and agency as integral to understanding what is 'everyday' about consumption. Here, the 'everyday' comes in as an orientation towards studying consumption; it is a way of seeing and exploring tensions, contradictions, immanent possibilities and alternative realities in daily practices of consumption. Yates operationalises the 'everydayness' of consumption through the rise, transformation and fall of social practices (Shove et al. 2012). In this context, he highlights the avenues of inconspicuous forms of consumption as relevant sites of everyday practices. This shift in perspective opens up consumption as a practice encompassing but also extending beyond ontologies of control, and appropriation.

From a socio-spatial perspective, the overtone of consumption in interpretations of urban life can point towards people's emotional relationships with their environment due to attributes that are evident - for example class, gender or social status, as well as by attributes that are not evident, such as those formed by individuals' personal histories and life events (Shove et al. 2012). Everyday consumption demonstrates different registers of socio-spatial experience and provides alternative ways to the traditional modes of framing experiences in the urban environment. To put it more precisely, everyday consumption, broadly defined as the day-to-day and mundane aspects of

consumption that take place in the immediate surroundings of consumers, constitutes an arena in which practical, imaginative, and cynical responses in daily life are observed that reflect politically relevant shifts in experiences, attitudes and feelings (Shove et al. 2012; Canavan 2023).

Affective Platform Urbanism: *How did the platform become an 'everyday' space?*

The term 'platform urbanism' broadly denotes various emerging and evolving socio-technical structures that have been brought about through widespread digitization, personalization of technology (smartphones, smart watches, etc..) and 'smart' governance (Caprotti et al. 2022; Leszczynski 2020). Scholars on platform urbanism identified a shift in digital cultures, where the internet was no longer just a medium for the publication of information, but an infrastructure to build applications on; when "the web became platform", or otherwise known as Web 2.0 (Barns 2020, 37). After the development of Web 2.0, the new wave of consumption possibilities was made possible through an array of applications and systems that enabled the sharing of data, time, skills, space, possessions, and ideas. Within this network society, many of the 'everyday' activities of ordinary citizens were brought into the currents of digital circulation (Barns 2020).

As digital services have evolved from spaces of connection and socialisation to become major platforms upon which much of modern life depends, their dominance has provoked several scholars to conceptualise them in several ways. The increasing proclivity of the role of platforms in providing urban services, products and relationships through online digital payment apps, ride hail apps, errand apps and on-demand food and grocery apps has been termed "digital infrastructures" (Barns 2020, 94). Athique and Parthasarathi (2020, 6) turned the concept to a verb, "platformisation" (Athique & Parthasarathi 2020, 6), to emphasise the emergent platform structures as a process rather than an object of analysis. From a sociological approach, the "platformisation" of everyday activities has been termed as a "platform society" (van Dijck et al. 2018, 7) to describe a society characterised by the use of platforms through which information, goods and services are exchanged and in which platforms influence private and public life via data flows and algorithms (Bauriedl and Struver 2020). As platforms have become the preferred alternatives to established conventions of urban realities, it has been theorised that the

"platform society is governed by platform logic" (Caprotti et al. 2022, 14). The perspectives and theorizations on platform urbanism are necessarily multitudinous to present diverse approaches to understanding and researching the unprecedented scope, agency, and ambitions of platform technologies into daily urban activities.

However, much of Platform Urbanism research in the Global South has not interacted with many of these conceptual and ontological definitions as they could not accurately characterise its unique functionings and relationships with pre-existing institutions and socio-cultural mores (Bonina et al. 2019; Dattani 2021; Lozano-Paredes 2021). As platform technologies have migrated and re-homed in the global South, they've come to be contextually imagined, accepted, modified, and operated (Rangaswamy & Cuttrell 2012). As they 're-homed', they acquired unique relationships in the shared space between the platform technologies and local practices, cultural mores, societal structures and informal economies. Theorists argue that such trajectories of technology have had little ideological space in academia to evolve and be recognized as legitimate processes (Rangaswamy & Cuttrell 2012; Bonina et al. 2019; Dattani 2021; Lozano-Paredes 2021).

The emerging class of platform literature in India has located and explicated the platform economy through its mediations of new structures, settings and norms of urban spatialisation and new avenues and modes of labour (Athique & Parthasarathi 2020; Nahiduzzaman et al. 2019; V.K Verma 2020). Platform research grew in tandem with the creation of smart cities in India and focused on revealing the discursive and material mechanisms of the platform economy as found in policy documents as well and as a continuation of the research that was already being done on practices, strategies and policies of those involved in India's informal economy (Mazumdar 2021). Thereby, research on the informal workers spotlighted the machinelike working conditions of the gig economy and presented an increasingly splintered encounter of the 'local' besides the global powers of platform capitalism (Srnicek 2017; Athique and Parthasarathi 2020). Thus, recent work on platform urbanism has responded to a more critical and urgent need to investigate the everyday realities of gig workers in India, for whom social protection and welfare policies are practically non-existent (Mazumdar 2021). Largely through the empirical research on the gig economy, instant-delivery or on-demand platform services became situated in the studies of platform-mediated cities and smart cities in India as an

intensification of the practices, processes, and technologies of the aforementioned iterations of platform-mediated cities (Athique & Parthasarathi 2020).

On-Demand Urbanism:

Instant Delivery can certainly be understood as a 'natural' evolution of competing platforms services to promise ever-quickening benefits from simplified replenishment options, personalised algorithmic recommendation stacks, same day deliveries to instant deliveries and even "delivery in minutes" (tagline of Indian ID company Blinkit) (Berg and Knights 2019). However, the emerging socio-spatial practices and infrastructures in modern cities that are centred around on-demand services have begun to bifurcate the study of on-demand services as a phenomenon of their own.

The field has largely been dominated by macro perspectives that chart the political economy of on-demand platforms onto global and local landscapes (Berg & Knights 2019), the apparent powers of algorithms expressed in increasingly mundane activities (Popan 2021), as well as spatially-oriented perspectives regarding the rise of dark stores and ghost kitchens (Shapiro 2023). Geographers writing from Global North contexts have begun the task of investigating the broader social, cultural and political dimensions of on-demand 'digital urbanism' (Leszczynski 2020; Bissell 2020), but the work is still in its infancy. They note that as the scope and range of services provided by instant platforms have been evolving at a high velocity, it is tricky to give a sense of how digital platforms are differently becoming entangled with everyday urban life, leading research to instead rely on making generalised assertions based on statistical knowledge.

Kim (2022, 1) foregrounds the instant delivery phenomenon as suggestive of a complete reimagination of urban lifestyles through the term "Delivery City". It is a term coined for a "city affected by the phenomenon of the mobility of things or delivery" (3). A crucial component of the "Delivery City" rests on its capacity to designate power to the consumer to move others whilst remaining immobile (Sheller and Urry 2016). Through the redistribution of mobility, the relationship between "things" "spaces", and "people" changes (Kim 2022, 4). Along with this "mobility of things as opposed to the mobility of people" (3), the private space of the receiver strengthens in significance as the consumers become physically

immobile but are still constantly linked to various imagined spaces through the network. It can produce symbolic images of public activities, commercial spaces and social relations within consumers' private spaces. In Kim's (2022) perspective, the living space of the consumers in the delivery city serves as an everyday space that acts as a conduit for the internal or external flow of energy and things.

By effectively pointing out the new and multiplying interconnections between the physical and virtual through the newly reconfigured ID mobilities, he provides a fertile ground for furthering my inquiry and as such, is the namesake of this thesis. Under the conditions of a 'Delivery City' that is affected by the mobility of things, he sets the scene for a kind of platform city which goes beyond a platform's relationship with urban space as one that reshapes it into a technologically subsumed domain. Rather, he provides an avenue to explore how discursive relationships between urban spaces, social practices and platform technologies intersect and form technologically 'augmented' spaces.

A Micro-Transitional Approach to ID Consumption

The sensory dimensions of urban life have had a long lineage of thought from Simmel's (1918) writings or Wirth's (1938) sociological theories on urbanism as a way of life to the works of urban activists and scholars like Jane Jacobs (1961), to anthropologists such as Veena Das (2007) and Lakshmi Priya Rajendran and Aamstrong Anjumuthu (2021). These names are by no means exhaustive, but rather to explain that there has been a recurrent call for studying 'mundane' day to day activities and spaces for the cues it can provide for deciphering urban experiences and social needs beyond conceptual or numerical abstractions.

"Platform Urbanism" has been framed by some authors as an emergent condition resulting from the "co-generative dynamics of platforms and cities" (Rodgers and Moore 2020, 209). As has been mentioned in the previous sections, what is recurrently missing is an understanding of how these conditions are manifested. By framing the 'platform' and 'cities' as actors that coproduce urban spaces, the various kinds of individual actions, practices and behaviours that manifest and bring about these changes are glossed over. If this were to be true and ID platforms are becoming "applicable to each and every

aspect of the material environment" (Athique and Parthasarathi 2020), the day-to-dayness of ID platforms functioning and influence becomes near inescapable. Thus, it is an urban concern to enquire how and why such demands are generated, steered and satisfied in the first place.

Other scholars echo calls for understanding digital technologies within the larger assemblage of everyday habits and practices. For instance, Shepard (2013, 483) argues that we need to understand how technologies are becoming "entangled with everyday urban life in complex and multifaceted ways". Similarly, Bissell (2020, 109) warrants the study of affective and bodily evaluations of demand food delivery platforms for its potential values in policy settings. Leszscynski (2020, 204) urges a sensitivity towards the everyday 'mundane' practices through which contemporary techno-social spaces are produced and reproduced in the course of daily urban life. Pivoting from these provocations, this thesis tunes in to the micropolitical transitions of everyday practices of ID platforms, including their contradictions and dissonances, and asks how these practices shape and are shaped through relationships between ID platforms and people.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

As technologies advance to become more pertinent to day-to-day and micro practices it becomes increasingly difficult to separate human experiences in virtual reality from those in material reality. The ways in which these digital services are taken up, moulded, adapted and made sense of through mundane everyday practices belies multifarious socio-spatial relationalities. The lens of this thesis focuses on the ways in which individuals engage with ID technologies and make sense of their own platform behaviours. With Delivery services altering the manners of everyday consumption, the temporal orders, rhythms and social relationalities of everyday life hold potential as a site of investigating how everyday consumption practices may collide, complement or preserve.

Rather than conceiving of space as a container with fixed characteristics and nature, social scientists find it more productive to think of it as the result of social practices which people habitually repeat in ways which are recognisable but never completely the same and which involve a dynamic relationship between people, materials, meanings and technologies (Kitchin and Dodge 2014, 15). Adopting this view on space, is especially productive to study ID technologies for the level of dynamism it provides, with two distinctive features of how ID software affects spatial relationships can be noted - through 'practice' (Shove et al. 2012) and 'performance' (Kitchin and Dodge 2014). The difference between the two is in approaching people's relationships with ID due to diverse life contextualities and as active agents that are involved in producing the new technologically augmented spaces and experiences. Thus the analytical framework of this thesis is geared towards exploring these two dimensions seeks to reveal the ways in which the subjective experiences and sense-making of ID users in everyday contexts affects their urban experiences. In line with these objectives, the analytical framework is conceptualised through two interrelated dimensions: mapping the ecologies of experiences and locating augmented spaces.

Mapping the Ways that Everyday ID Consumptions Take Place: Ecologies of Experience and Social Practices

The first dimension of the framework situates ID consumption within diverse life circumstances in urban environments. Simpson (2013, 181) predicates an embodied approach of studying urban experiences, in which a sensitivity to "ecologies of experience" situates everyday practices within the

“inter-relational interdependence” of “specific and evolving socio-spatial contexts”. Applying the ‘ecologies’ of embodied experiences considers ID practices as a phenomenon that shouldn't be evaluated in a vacuum but rather as something contingent on the onflow of everyday circumstances. This involves analysing how ID services find a place in rhythms of daily life, such as in cooking or shopping routines and by introducing new temporal orders or ways of doing them. By examining subtly shifting habits, this dimension captures how participants' experiences of time are reordered and new routines are created by disrupting existing ones. Addressing such urban subjectivities is vital for understanding how ID platforms are reworking orientations towards spaces and significantly influencing how users interact with and find meaning through ID consumption.

For the purpose of this dimension, the main premise is that the connection between everyday life and the environment occurs through everyday practices such as cooking, eating, sleeping, taking care of their kids, working, and commuting. This section digs deeper into the narratives shared by the participants to bring out instances where personal routines and habits generate everyday ID consumption patterns and alter their interactions with spaces. Simple narrations about their everyday habits and routines related to walking, resting, talking, interacting, cooking become points of entanglement between participants' urban experiences and emotionalities and ID use (Shove et al. 2012).

Shove et al.’s (2012) understanding of social practices brings in a central component to this dimension of the framework. They posit that rather than studying a single practice that is suspended in time and space, they take simple observations of actions like sleeping, eating, working, playing within “temporal implications and contemporary complexes of social practices” (17). These mundane activities then become a starting point for more complex discussions on how micro and macro temporalities of daily life might be represented and conceptualised. Although they do not provide all the answers, the inquiries assembled here provide a starting point and suggest a number of paths towards a new synthesis.

Shove et al. (2012) use the lens of ‘social practices’ to operationalise the everyday into habits, actions, rhythms and routines. Their framework for analysing social practices studies it over a duration of time to capture its

emergence, persistence or decline, as well explanations that come from changing relationalities. They analyse daily social practices as something that is always subtly shifting and as such tied to temporal orders of coordination and rhythms among everyday actions. Accordingly, changing social practices cannot be characterised as a wholesale shift from one to another as daily practices such as eating, sleeping, working and consuming cannot be ordered on a scale of modernity or development as they are not reducible to differences in class, culture, urbanity or economic organisation (4).

Instead, they seek to foreground the material, emotional, moral and political dimensions that may be revealed over durations of time and repetition of social practices. This narrates everyday life as a more open and fluid terrain. While this format perhaps does not produce the picture of 'heroic resistance' as envisaged by Certeau (1980), it does emphasise the role of agency and mentality, putting back into the frame individuals and their ways of coping with everyday strains (Shove et al. 2012, 10). Rather than just viewing temporalities as outcomes of ongoing tensions between these 'heroic' individuals and oppressive systems, they seek to understand the many processes and practices that are involved in reproducing daily practices.

Shove et al. (2012, 10) propose reading social practices as "bundles of everyday practices", which takes into account individuals' relationalities, evolution of practices over a duration of time, and the coordination of practices with other everyday rhythms. By studying daily practices at the intersection of context, time and routines, there is an appreciation of the more diffused and nuanced patterns of power relations that mediate ID use. These evolving bundles map factors such as changing technologies, development of new skills or habits or shifts in values which influence the stability and evolution of practices.

Following Lefebvre's (2004) lifelong exploration of everyday life, Shove et al.'s (2012) framework includes a temporal texture to their analysis. The mapping of social practices occurs through a transitional understanding of how capacities for doing, sensing and perceiving can change through repetition. In the context of ID consumption, understanding how people's relationships with platforms evolve through time and through repetition reveals how their dispositions to platforms are ambivalent and changeable, complicating assumptions that platforms can unproblematically intertwine with everyday practices.

Understanding the rhythmic richness and modulations of everyday life by moving from single practices to a focus on their interactive dynamics and coordination ties together urban life with practices and processes beyond its economic structures. This leads to a more reflective, culturally rich and dynamic articulation of emotional relationships with urban environments (Burns 2000). However, the complex meaning-making processes and the overall urban experience is constructed not just through actions/practices but also from what they mean. Symbolic interpretations and aspirations that give social practices their significance. The order implied by various participants and the motivations stated by them are not reducible to just matters of ecology but is rather a more complex "performance of practice", as Yates (2022, 14) puts it. The "performance" in the second stage is meant to inculcate an immersive analysis in which practices are acutely and persistently conscious.

Locating Augmented Spaces: "Code" Spaces and "Glitchy" Pathways

As geographers Nigel Thrift and Shaun French (2002: 309) have noted "more and more of the spaces of everyday life come loaded up with software, lines of code that are installing a new kind of automatically reproduced background and whose nature is only now starting to become clear." Digital technology has become integrated into people's daily practices and is associated with many aspects of their lives that would be difficult or impossible to manage without anymore. It leads to the question of how the specific, cultural, social and geographic circumstances of entanglements between digital tools and urban experiences that influence the influencing the conditions through which space is constantly being re-created. Thus, the second dimension of the framework focuses on studying the new forms of spatialities, perceptions and bodily capacities associated with the dynamic changes introduced through digitalisation of everyday consumption. Following from the first dimension, this aspect forwards the narratives of how people can transform the mechanisms of digital platforms into deliberated digital practices, manifesting unique iterations of "human-place-technology relations" (Maciej 2024, 2).

Moving away from rationalist economic explanations that invoke the generic figure of the consumer (Pedwell 2019) and the related assumptions about the "power of capitalism" to manipulate desire and "leave little space for human agency" (Storey, 2014, 81), this section moves towards a renewed sense of politics of ID consumptions. This 'affective' politics responds to Pink and

Sumartojo's (2018) calls to enhance our sense of the multiplicity of different subjectivities that emerge and develop through ongoing imbrication in digital worlds. Here, digital practices are highlighted through bodily evaluations, such as comfort and discomfort as immanent to the onflow of urban experiences, rather than an ideology that is imposed from the 'outside' (Bissell 2020). In this sense, attuning to the changing capacities of doing, sensing and perceiving underscores the significance of habits, feelings and perceptions, which motivate specific and creative patterns of consumption on ID platforms.

This dimension pursues the premise that softwares matters in ways that extend beyond functional or instrumental utility. The following concepts demonstrate are focused on explaining how ID software influences social and spatial contours in everyday life.

Mixing Metaphors: 'Coded' Spaces and 'Glitchy' Processes

Jurgenson (2012) wrote against a bias of digital dualism that separated the digital and physical world as two distinctly separate and unrelated entities. Instead, he favoured understanding digital cultures as part of an augmented reality where "the physicality of atoms, the structures of the social world and offline identities 'interpenetrate' the online" (6). Simultaneously, "the properties of the digital also implode into the offline, be it through the ubiquity of web-connected electronic gadgets in our world or through the way digitality interpenetrates the way we understand and make meaning of the world around us" (17).

Kitchin and Dodge (2014, 17) take on a more active approach to this interpenetration and conceive of augmented spaces that can be generated or 'performed' through softwares. They term this process as "transduction". They further exemplify different modulations of these augmented spaces as "code/space", "coded spaces" and "background coded space". These classifications reveal the various dynamics of digital technologies as sociotechnical intermediaries between spaces and people. 'Code/space' refers to a dyadic relationship where if the software fails to operate the space is not produced. The "space" is dependent on the "code", without which it cannot exist. The second form, "coded space", is for if the software were to fail to operate for whatever reason, the space would still be produced as intended to solve a problem or perform a task but would be a potentially less efficient

solution. The difference between a 'code/space' and 'coded space' is dependent on the dyadic relationship between code and space. With a code/space the relationship is so all-embracing that if the software is put out of action, the intended code/space is not produced. Here, "software quite literally conditions… existence" (Thrift and French 2002, 312). In coded space, software matters to the production and functioning of a space, but if the code fails, the space continues to function as intended, although "not necessarily as efficiently or cost-efficiently, or safely" (Kitchin and Dodge 2011, 18). Here, the role of code is often one of augmentation, facilitation, monitoring, and so on rather than creation.

The last is the "background coded space", which is the term for the codes that exist in the background and have the potential to mediate a solution if activated. Since the platformisation of cities, much of ordinary living can be said to be occurring in "background coded space" where people are surrounded "by coded objects, coded infrastructures and coded processes that can be called upon in a myriad of ways to solve a problem or perform a task" (17-18). These objects, infrastructure, processes and assemblages possess the potential "to make things happen" (17). These elements have the ability to mediate, supplement, augment, monitor, regulate, operate, and facilitate collective life and reshape experiences.

These terms provide a lexicon for the analysis of urban experiences that are rendered through the consumer tactics pursued through ID platforms. The application of ID software to consumption spaces has mediated the transduction of new 'code/spaces' and 'coded spaces' where consumption practices now proceed. Moreover, the code formations are described as contingent, relational and scaleless, often stretching out across physical and digital networks (Kitchin and Dodge 2014, 15). Possessing these properties, code can be treated as a "relational solution" to different classes of urban problems, "such as domestic living, travelling, working, communicating, and consuming" (15).

The ubiquity and usage of "codes" in urban spaces can be studied empirically in a number of distinct domains. The emergence of new digital practices change the ways of communication and are often augmented by the user, consciously or not, with a spatial attribute (Ash et al. 2018; Maciej 2024). These are embodied in spatial practices that arise from realities that are saturated with

code. Codes have become essential to the ongoing consumption practices in cities, for example most retail services and logistical supply chains for ID depend on coded networks, databases and automated software systems to ensure their smooth operation. But code has also permeated many homes as it becomes crucial to solving many domestic tasks. The extent to which digitality is actively engaged in a multitude of tasks, ranging from the profound to the mundane, is easily overlooked yet readily apparent when thoughtfully considered (Dodge et al. 2009, 1283).

However, this coalesced assemblage of the digital with the physical is still ruptured with nooks, crannies, and gaps in the system, which make them necessarily incomplete in nature. This incompleteness can be revealed when the intended transduction of space fails, either through minor glitches or rarer, catastrophic incidents (Kitchin and Dodge 2011). These sentiments are further elaborated by posthumanistic media theorists who took a corollary tangent from the discourses on augmented realities to befuddle the distinction between the real and the digital through the 'glitch' metaphor (Nunes 2011; Russell 2012; Jurgenson 2012). While Jurgenson's approach of the digital age is illustrative of the 'new' everydays as occurring between increasingly blurred online and offline realms, glitch theories came in to identify moments, instances, routines and feelings that create "glitches", that is, moments that 'do not compute" within the totalising logics of platform consumption (Leszczynski 2020, 196). The glitch metaphor became useful in an era of growing dominance of informatic control, where 'error' could carve out an important critical lens for understanding what it means to live within a network society (Nunes 2011, 4).

The work of Agnieszka Leszczynski (2020) was the first in this genre to re-signify the works of glitch scholars as a tool with which to study a variety of engagements with platform urbanism as 'platform glitches'. Since her work, the glitch metaphor has captured the imagination of urban and platform researchers to give shape to a sub-genre in platform research. The frame recognises platform consumption as simultaneously a physical and digital act; as an 'augmented consumption'. The idea of the glitch has been operationalised in platform urbanism scholarship to narrate the pervasion of platforms in everyday actions in ways that defy or complicate 'platform logics' which have a tendency to make itself applicable to "each and every aspect of the material environment" (Athique & Parthasarathi 2020: 11). In juxtaposition to the defeatist claims of platform researchers who predict inevitably dystopian urban futures,

are the glitchy moments between the social and the digital fabric where the instant-delivery system does not (yet) function at a 100% efficiency.

In other words, 'glitches' can be thought of as identifying links between defining Kitchin and Dodge's (2014, 17) "coded space". A glitch can refer to the occasions, feelings, practices or bodies that do not compute in the platform logic, whereby the "code" of the coded space is not initiated, and less efficient 'space is produced'. This is the critical potential of the glitch, in the ways it can draw out moments of failure of digital systems built upon logics of maximum performance (Leszczynski 2020).

The complexities exemplified through 'glitchy' platform-urban configurations, particularly in contexts of the Global South, give strength to show more appropriate ways to study platforms in the south (Lozano-Paredes 2021). Thus when Nunes (2011, 4) calls the glitch or errata as "creative openings (...) that allow for a reconceptualization of what can (or cannot) be realised within existing social and cultural practices", it doubles this actions as it allows theorists to exceed traditional socio-digital practices that are observed in northern contexts. They open a space for alternative perspectives on 'what platforms do (and cannot do) in Global south contexts, to reveal sites where people enact new ways of social innovation, commoning and institutionalisation (Lozano-Paredes 2021).

However, inherent and embedded to these 'glitchy' observations, is the admission that these moments can very well or have already been fixed by being brought back into the platform ecosystem. The critical and liberative discourses in glitch theory are constantly running in parallel to the dominant cybernetic ideology of efficiency and control. As Sarah Barns (2020, 167) puts it, "platforms, in short, have limits, exceptions, malfunctions and many 'seams'". While glitch scholars consciously position their work against the logics of platform capitalism, it can also run the risk of conflating marginality with anti-hegemony, and glossing over the fact that glitches can also be implicated in the reproduction of platform capitalism (Carraro 2023). This complexity is crucial to remember while using the glitch metaphor. While it is illustrative as an artistic and political metaphor, it finds little favour in digital realms that are increasingly defined by protocol and predictable results (Nunes 2011).

Using this framework, I aim to address the intimate, micropolitical "human-place-technology relations" of ID consumption and shine light on how these services can both stabilise and disrupt daily life and potentially alleviate and generate new forms of social and spatial disjunctures. The two dimensions delve into reflexive processes of participants' perceptions to map the disembedding of prior consumption practices through everyday enablements and constraints and locate the new socio-spatial subjectivities that emerge from them (Bissell 2020).

CASE STUDY

Brief Context of Digitisation and Platformisation in India

The past decade has seen striking digital and technological developments in India, with the proliferation of many digital platforms that provide consumer services. Since 2015, the Indian Government has shown great enthusiasm towards facilitating the digital infrastructures necessary for realising the objectives of its vision for a 'Digital India' ("Vision & Vision Areas – Digital India." 2021). Many of the core initiatives of 'Digital India' centred upon the creation of telecom and app-based 'smart' governance infrastructures, which also provided fertile grounds for the entry of several tech giants into the Indian market (Mukherjee 2019; Athique & Parthasarathi 2020). This era, which has been described by urban theorists as a "digital turn in India's future" (Datta 2018), has fast-tracked the improvement of internet speeds across rural and urban areas of the country and the integration of banking systems into online consumption platforms. This was a deliberate consequence of the Digital India initiatives, that aimed to facilitate the participation of a much larger demographic in the digital economy (Sudhir and Sundar 2020).

The share of digital commerce in the Indian economy was already on a steady growth path at the time of the programs' conception. Still, the pandemic years created a surge for e-commerce and accelerated digitisation and automation even in small-margin sectors, such as retail, grocery, and dining (Sarwant 2019). At this time, everything from payments to meetings to grocery shopping moved online much faster for the middle classes. The ingress of ID services into the lives of the middle classes has occurred within the larger context of digitisation of urban infrastructures through smart governance, ride-hailing mobility, online shopping, banking, and the growing flexibility of work-from-home jobs. A local delivery company, Swiggy, shared in a press release that its instant-groceries orders grew by 16 times between June 2021-22, with most of it taking place in the metropolitan cities of Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, New Delhi and Chennai (Ahmed 2022).

The dense populations and growing middle classes of Indian metropolises have made them an ideal landscape for the penetration of quick e-commerce to an extent that has not yet reached Western cities (Gent 2022). Indians buy groceries more frequently than shoppers in the developed world, and the crowded cities have made it possible to connect a large number of customers with a wide range of restaurants, shops, or dark stores. Moreover, high levels of

unemployment and informal employment drive working classes to seek work in the gig economy, making the instant delivery service cheap and accessible to the middle classes at relatively low additional costs.

While these traits are generalisable throughout Chennai, on-demand services have a more notable presence in affluent areas like Adyar, Besant Nagar, and Thiruvanmiyur, as well as in emerging residential and commercial zones like Velachery and Old Mahabalipuram Road (Dhanrajani 2023). These southern neighbourhoods of Chennai are almost completely urbanised, with high levels of built density and population density (Suresh et al., 2022). In these areas, quick commerce apps promise order fulfilment in sometimes less than 10 minutes, unlike the northern parts of the city, where it can take longer than an hour to receive orders from the same app services. The concentration of commercial clusters near affluent areas has allowed delivery platforms to efficiently serve a large customer base within a limited geographic range. As Zepto CEO Palicha points out, Indian digital platforms leverage the pre-existing dense networks of small commerce to facilitate quick deliveries within a two to three-kilometre radius, making it easier for quick commerce industries to operate with fewer dark stores (Meghani 2023).

I conducted the research for this thesis in a conglomeration of three adjacent neighbourhoods in Chennai—Adyar, Besant Nagar, and Thiruvanmiyur. These three areas, all located in the southern part of Chennai, are historically affluent regions (Arabindoo 2009). These neighbourhoods host a diverse population of long-term residents, young professionals, students, and working-class communities. Due to their proximity to the beaches, which have long served as a popular gathering spot for Chennai's residents, several eateries, shops, and markets have cropped up around these areas. They host a wide range of restaurants, grocery stores, and food stalls that cater to different price points. This high density of commercial clusters around these neighbourhoods heightens its relevance to my research interest as it pronounces residents' use of ID services beyond reasons of convenience and ease of accessibility.

The Platform Market

Several startup companies popped up in 2015-16, during the rise of the industry, settling down into a few major, homegrown services by 2020. Food delivery remains the most popular segment, with Swiggy and Zomato forming the market's "duopoly" (Meghani 2023), providing a wide range of options from local eateries to high-end restaurants. Grocery and miscellaneous product deliveries, which are rapidly growing, have more players in the market, including Swiggy's Instamart, Zomato's Blinkit, Dunzo, BigBasket and Zepto as some of the top players. These apps have flourished into unicorn companies within 3-4 years, with Zepto being valued at 3.6 billion dollars and 13 billion dollars ("Zepto Raises $665 million", 2024; "Blinkit Now More Valuable", 2024).

There have also been a growing number of specialised instant delivery services such as pharmacy delivery apps like 1mg and Netmeds, which have options to upload prescriptions and immediately receive medication, or meat delivery apps like Licious that provide an array of the local catch and fresh cuts of meat. However, these apps have faced stiff competition from the top players, who are still flushed from the funds they raised in 2021 and 2022 during the lockdown. and can provide deliveries under 20 minutes. This has forced some specialised platforms like BigBasket that offered one-day grocery delivery services or food delivery apps like Zomato and Swiggy have all branched out to extend their on-demand services to grocery as well as non-grocery items like beauty products, toys, and electronics ("How Quick Commerce Is Rewriting the Rules" 2024). Dunzo had distinguished itself by offering personal concierge services, which included dropping off and picking up items from stores or friends' houses. The rapid popularity of this service motivated other quick commerce apps to follow suit. Swiggy introduced errand services in their platform under the title 'Swiggy Genie'. The main players in the on-demand market have all turned to hyper-local and multiservice platforms to keep up with their competitors. As all the established players are vying for a share of the increasingly competitive 10-minute delivery market, they introduce new dimensions of convenience through shorter wait times, diversified offerings, personal errands, and package deliveries that expand their customer base while edging out smaller startups.

Despite this consolidation of apps in the trajectory of the quick commerce industries, the platform landscape of Chennai is still relatively heterogeneous,

which has been overlooked by the platform urbanism scholarship, which has been dominated by studies on global giants like Amazon and Uber (Dattani 2021). These platforms have capitalised on the local market's demands in a way that global players like Uber have struggled to meet effectively due to a less localised approach. For example, homegrown apps like Zepto and Blinkit have taken into account Indian consumers' long-time habit of ordering just a few items from neighbourhood stores by phone, caste-based food preferences such as “pure-veg mode”, and specific mobility-related complications for delivery service workers.

A Brief Overview of the Customers’ Experience on the Platform

Especially since the pandemic, on-demand mobile platforms have become household names in middle-class residences in Chennai, with brand names like Swiggy and Dunzo becoming synonymous with ordering food or sending packages. While the COVID lockdown era was crucial in accelerating the soaring penetration of the platforms, the new structures of digitised consumption have become more permanent fixtures in the lifestyles of middle-class residents. This development of digital on-demand industries means that consumers can summon goods and services through digital devices instantly, provided to them by ‘gig workers’. The popularity of these services has been reconfiguring labour, retail, and consumer lifestyles in many Indian cities.

From the consumer's perspective, the ID experience is designed to have the most frictionless consumption experience possible. The app acted as a marketplace for connecting users with nearby delivery partners who could fulfil their requests, whether it be pick up and drop of goods to and from any location, whether it be between stores, restaurants, homes, offices or even public places (“The Business Model” 2023). For the average middle-class consumer in Chennai, stepping out of one’s home and visiting a physical store to buy products, try a new restaurant or hand over a book to a friend is no longer required. Consumption for them now requires little face-to-face interaction and can be accessed through online platforms at any time and from any location in the city, regardless of storms or heat. With short delivery times, no minimum orders, and delivery service members working round the clock, instant delivery apps are able to satisfy the latent needs of their customers in a way that traditional commerce never could.

The apps have come with increasingly sophisticated user interfaces designed to be visually appealing, intuitive, and emotionally engaging. Swiggy and Zomato follow similar UI designs with home screens that feature vibrant images of food, groceries and personalised recommendations. The app's navigation is quick and straightforward, with immediate access to essential features like Search, Cart, and Profile. Smart search and filtering options guide users to their desired dishes, while restaurant listings use thumbnails and emotional cues like "Hot & Fresh", "Guilt-free", or "Most Popular". The checkout process has clear steps and often includes special coupons with urgency cues like "Limited Time Offer" to encourage quick completion. The development of digital payments such as Net Banking, Credit/Debit Card, Unified Payments Interface (UPI), Cash on Delivery, and even scan on delivery, which allows you to scan a QR code from the delivery service person's phone to make the payment, have simplified online consumption down to the number of 'clicks' between the customer and the product. The customer can now place an order and figure out how they would like to pay as the order arrives.

At their advent, delivery apps had minimum order requirements, usually ranging from ₹100 to ₹300, depending on the service and the area of delivery. As popularity and frequency of consumption picked up, minimum order values were done away with, and apps could provide services at little to no extra fee, with only a nominal delivery fee between ₹10 and ₹50 charged during peak hours or longer distances. Thanks to offers and no minimum delivery amount, online orders have ranged from ₹11,535 to just ₹1 (Ahmed 2022). In addition, many instant delivery apps offer subscription plans that provide benefits such as free delivery, reduced service charges, exclusive offers and priority delivery slots during peak hours. These plans can range from ₹99 to ₹299 per month.

Real-time order tracking gives users precise information on the location of their orders and the time taken to reach them. This feature keeps the user engaged and more adaptable to potential changes in the timeline of the delivery process. The apps reinforce a sense of satisfaction through playful notifications and micro-interactions, like animations and positive language. The visual appeal, emotional cues and live-tracking information are some of the design features the apps use to create seamless and engaging ordering experiences that make customers feel at ease and encourage repeat use.

METHODOLOGY

As such, this thesis is concerned with the nuanced modes of encounters and relationalities in contemporary urban experiences and falls under the category of 'minor urbanism' (Shepherd 2013, 483). Minor urbanism research emphasises local and small-scale relationalities among human and non-human actors. This methodological approach confronts conditions that are much less 'iconic' and far murkier in scope and extent but shape the collective experiences of a city and constitute its varied cultural topography. Through the granular focus on the lives and contexts of the consumers, I propose to view in more detail how on-demand delivery can become differently entangled in urban realities while being attentive to moments that do not neatly fit into established dichotomies of physical and virtual, tangible and intangible or digital and analogue. My research aims to reveal the often overlooked consumption practices of ID services and the resulting urban experiences generated among consumers. This research objective requires a methodology suitable for bringing out the micropolitical transitions created in and through regular ID consumption. Following these prerequisites, I constructed my methodology through an inductive and subjective lens. The research philosophy was grounded in an 'interpretivist' approach as my reasoning for undertaking my research subject was based on the values that urban realities are socially constructed and subjective.

The Grounded Theory Approach

My primary objective is to explore and understand my participants' experiences, from which I will develop insights into the nature and functioning of the ID platform. To give in to research on everyday life practices and acknowledge that the individual always informs the researcher about "their way of doing things" (Charmaz 2006, 1), the grounded theory approach enables the participants to build the theory rather than to measure their everyday actions against a norm created from different lived realities that then check for its similarity and differences.

I will employ a grounded theory approach, a qualitative research methodology that involves developing theories directly from the data collected during the research process instead of relying on pre-existing theories or hypotheses (Charmaz 2006). This methodology comprises flexible guidelines and heuristic

devices that shape qualitative data collection and analysis. It prioritises the experiences and narratives of the participants and includes the researcher's observations of their contexts for a comprehensive conceptualisation. These subjective facets regarding experiences are an essential part of my data collection, for it allows me to identify and reflect upon participants' private and public environments and relationally engage with their experiences. This method encourages a 'protracted' investigation since spending time in the field, the site of study, and the interpretation of local and situated cultures all form a part of the data generated (Charmaz 2006).

Moreover, the grounded theory framework and its ascribed mixed qualitative methods enable the researcher to understand participants' relationships with the platform services in the context of their lifestyles, homes, neighbourhoods and other relevant contexts that may emerge. These factors unveil whether a culture of ID consumption exists that extends beyond solely easier and faster access to products by charting the contexts within which ID users' motivations and expectations are situated, how they change as they experience the platform environment, interact with other users and are exposed to different social norms. This line of inquiry enables the research to include the environment of on-demand consumption practices, the types of interactions which manifest, and socio-cultural elements that may drive new ways of being.

Research Timeline

As the grounded theory approach emphasises iterative and inductive research, the data collection and analysis timeline is crucial in the research process. To enhance the validity of the data and analysis, I have approached my research through a 'zigzag pattern'; that is, to collect data, come back and analyse the data with the help of conceptual and theoretical tools and then go back to the field for a second round of data collection, either from the same or from different sources (Creswell 2013). The back and forth between the literature and the data created a circular process whereby one informed the progress of the other, and both became more focused and specific as the research progressed.

To test the hypothesis of my topic, that a 'culture' of ID use' exists, I had already conducted ten preliminary interviews in December 2022. I wrote a thesis proposal with my initial findings for an Urban Sociology class as a part of the 4CITIES Masters Program. Then, I continued to do a comprehensive scan of the

literature, after which I prepared a semi-structured interview guide for my next round of interviews that took place between December 2023 and January 2024. During this time, I stayed in the Adyar, one of the neighbourhoods of my research object and went to the homes of my participants to conduct the interviews. Along with collecting the interviews, I could reflect upon their domestic practices and immediate urban surroundings. When I collected 15 interviews, I took a break from the interview collection for two weeks to listen back, transcribe a few interviews, and reflect on the narratives that were shared. I then highlighted some themes I wanted to pursue in my next round of interviews. For the following 12 interviews, I made no substantial changes to my interview guide but changed my tactics to pursue information regarding my highlighted themes. Following Charmaz's (2006) grounded theory approach, I conducted the literature review after collecting data and conducting preliminary independent analyses.

Data collection

To pursue my research interest in exploring everyday urban experiences around the consumption of instant delivery meant diving into their practices and habits, consumption preferences, family and housing dynamics, and ways of building social relations. Adopting qualitative data collection methods enabled an in-depth exploration of the phenomena. This methodology provided a rich, contextualised and subjective understanding of user experiences, contributing valuable insights to the literature on everyday life in the digital age. I conducted my primary data collection through semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

To recruit participants, I reached out through digital platforms and word-of-mouth. I put up 'stories' on Instagram that were shared by other accounts of people from Chennai. Outside social media, I contacted neighbours and acquaintances within the geographic delimitation. To widen my sampling network, I asked participants to share contacts with people they knew who would be suitable for my study. Especially after the first eight interviews, this drastically improved my reach, allowing me to contact participants outside my social bubble. I used this method of finding participants, known as snowball sampling, since there was no prior sampling frame or target population relevant to my research question.

Fig 1: Participants Locations in the study area of Adyar, Besant Nagar and Thiruvanmiyur. 1:18930. Sources: GADM, Google Earth, Open Street Map. Map by Author

To participate in my study, I required that they live in Adyar, Thiruvanmiyur or Besant Nagar and frequently use ID services. Since Chennai's populations and neighbourhoods reflect a great degree of heterogeneity, I narrowed the area of study to improve the credibility of the findings, albeit for a small section of Chennai. Fig. 1 represents the three neighbourhoods, with the blue dots representing the locations of the participants.

I did not define a specific number to qualify as a 'frequent' ID user, due to concerns about accurate self-identification of their use frequency. However, I estimated that participants who considered themselves frequent would use ID services at least twice or thrice a week. As I will further expand in my results section, my expectations exceeded this number. Further factors that guided my choices were based on maximising diversity of experiences across various factors, including the range of on-demand services used, household composition, work and home locations, occupations, and demographic, socio-economic and socio-cultural identifiers.

Nevertheless, the participants are a non-representative sampling as the degree of variance was determined by the respondents to the call. Moreover, the discretionary spending fundamental to regular ID use meant that the variation in socio-economic status varied to a relatively small degree—instead, the sampling aimed toward theory construction, not for population representativeness.

I have collected interviews with 28 participants, ranging from 20 minutes to an hour. Table 1 represents a participant profile with anonymised names and information regarding their age, gender and profession to provide an idea of the diversity of the sample. The interviews were conducted in person at the participants' homes and were audio-recorded. The interview format was semi-structured and focused on the participant's histories of using on-demand platform apps and open-ended questions about their opinions, predictions, worries and wishes about the apps. The interview style encouraged backwards-tracing reflections on the practical dimensions of how their use of platforms fits into their everyday practices. Some discussions took place with inputs and perspectives from other household members. There were also opportunities to observe users interacting with ID services in real time, which provided additional context for their verbal accounts. These additional data

points improved the validity of the interviews as actual events and other household members validated participants' narratives. Another way to ensure my findings' reliability was to repeat their stories in my own words and ask the participants if I understood them correctly. These reiterations were included in the interview transcripts.

Table 1: Participant Profile

No.	Name	Age	Gender	Profession	No.	Name	Age	Gender	Profession
1	Parvathy	45	W	Artist	16	Riwan	24	F	Medical Intern
2	Sowmya	36	W	Web developer	17	Joel	27	M	Product Marketer
3	Aldrin	23	NB	Musician	18	Sindhuja	24	F	Advocate
4	Hari	30	M	Entrepreneur	19	Sathya	29	F	Sustainability Consultant
5	Ramaiah	72	M	Catering and Realtor	20	Bala	32	M	Product Manager
7	Rukmani	68	W	Homemaker	21	Sanjana	26	F	Product Marketer
8	Ajay	48	W	Architect	22	Diwakar	24	M	Student
9	Chitra	45	M	Finance Specialist	23	Rajeswari	46	F	Real Estate Agent
10	Suchin	41	M	Lawyer	24	Samira	40	F	Professor
11	Matthew	25	M	Agriculturalist	25	Ambika	24	F	Marketing Manager
12	Amit	65	M	Student	26	Ganesh	51	M	Non-profit volunteer
13	Rachel	58	F	Homemaker	27	Pravin	68	M	Retired Interior Designer
14	Sivananda	34	M	Income Tax Officer	28	Naresh	38	M	Field Executive

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16	Riwan	24	F	Medical Intern
17	Joel	27	M	Product Marketer
18	Sindhuja	24	F	Advocate
19	Sathya	29	F	Sustainability Consultant
20	Bala	32	M	Product Manager

Participants were provided information about the study, including its purpose, methods and scope. Verbal consent was obtained from all participants to participate as subjects for my thesis. The confidentiality of participants has been maintained by anonymising names and replacing them with names that conform to similar cultural markers.

Analysis of Collected Data

'Interpretive phenomenological analysis' is a method of data analysis commonly used by interpretivists since it maintains their stance from the data collection process not to test out a hypothesis but rather to allow for 'themes' to emerge from the data (Spiers & Smith 2019). This approach aims to generate insights from qualitative data through detailed open coding to uncover patterns, relationships, and concepts. The detailed examination of individual lived experiences through this method is particularly useful when seeking to develop a deep understanding of a particular social experience and the ways in which individuals make sense of that experience.

I uploaded all my interview transcripts to MAXQDA. I first approached my interview transcripts individually, adding dated 'memos' for each interview. I then compiled my data by comparing my notes across several interviews and grouped recurrent themes from descriptive codes. Individually approaching the

interviews first allowed me to iteratively scrutinise emerging themes several times and build connections within and between categories. This method deals with the data in stages, first individually and then collectively, to identify recurring themes, patterns, and categories that represent core aspects of user experiences (Spiers & Smith 2019). This process of emergent coding and then re-coding enabled me to identify themes (Gibbs 2007). The dated memos helped me keep track of my progress in my understanding of the emerging narratives, chart an evolution of more robust themes, and identify any misconceptions that emerged. The memos and the 'zooming in and out' of the scale of my data analysis allowed for flexibility in exploring topics of interest while maintaining a consistent framework through the analysis process.

In terms of presenting my findings, I was inspired by the works of feminist scholars and their empirical research on relationships between social constructions of femininity, domestic relations and consumption (Jacobs 1993; Narayan 2023). Proponents of minor urbanism have often relied on 'vignettes' as a means of theorising from partial and 'embodied' perspectives (e.g. Leszczynski 2020; Bissel 2022). Noticing and valuing marginal narratives through my research, I seek to carve out nuanced stories about people's use of ID services. Focusing on these moments, however small and makeshift, trains the researcher's eye for moments and spaces where platforms may work in unexpected ways.

These vignettes are not intended to represent methodological or empirical cohesion—which is precisely why I also term my participants as vignettes rather than case studies. I employ these vignettes instrumentally as illustrative devices to identify unique spatio-temporalities where the confluence of cities and platforms exhibit patterns but are also observably glitchy (Leszczynski 2020).

Thus, I take a methodological strand from minor theory and present my data in narrative forms that are inspired by the 'vignettes'. While I group analysis into some of the major themes that have emerged from my coding process, this will take on a narrative format to include descriptions of participants' contexts and summaries of days in their lives when relevant. This method of presentation allows me also to include my observations of participants' spaces and identify concepts or ideas that are hidden within textual data but might be linked to the observed phenomenon.

Positionality

I grew up in the Adyar neighbourhood of Chennai, which is part of the area in which I study. I lived there for 12 years and have frequently visited since I moved to Europe for my studies. While this topic intuitively made me feel a sense of authority in being able to speak for and about the place and its people, my background and experiences significantly shaped my reality and, as such, formed a particular lens through which I view the city and my subjects. Since my topic is qualitative and subjective, it was crucial for me to reflect on my position throughout the research process.

Because of my position within the social group, this research was largely immune to the intricacies of class and caste power dynamics that could have affected the mutual respect and empathy integral to creating rich and detailed data from interviews. Rather, since I studied a social group I belong to, the problems of my positionality and reflexivity were not so much associated with the academic voyeurism of studying the 'others' as much as the biases that come with studying the 'same'. My reflexivity through the process was geared towards paying attention to the participants' behaviours without distorting meanings or treating their actions without scrutiny due to my familiarity with them.

On the other hand, having lived in Europe for several years, I was not completely an insider either. When participants brought forward realities of living in the neighbourhood that were unfamiliar or unrecognisable to me, I needed to listen to their experiences without disbelief or doubt. I hope to have created a rich repository of qualitative data that does not take small details for granted.

Another factor that affected my research was being socially perceived as a young woman. Participants had an easygoing and nonchalant attitude to the interviews, which enabled open, reflexive, and detailed conversations. Especially with other women, we bonded while sharing our obstacles of everyday existence in private and public spheres in the city, which they then translated to their motivations with ID use.

‘VIGNETTES’ OF THE PLACES, PULSES AND PEOPLE OF ID

Each vignette represents different demographics of ID users in terms of age, financial status, household type and stages of life. Participants had vastly varying disposable incomes, with some younger participants working at entry-level jobs and living alone while others living in households with two or three earning professionals. Despite these differences, the use of ID services was pervasive across the participants, with their income levels not determining their frequency of use.

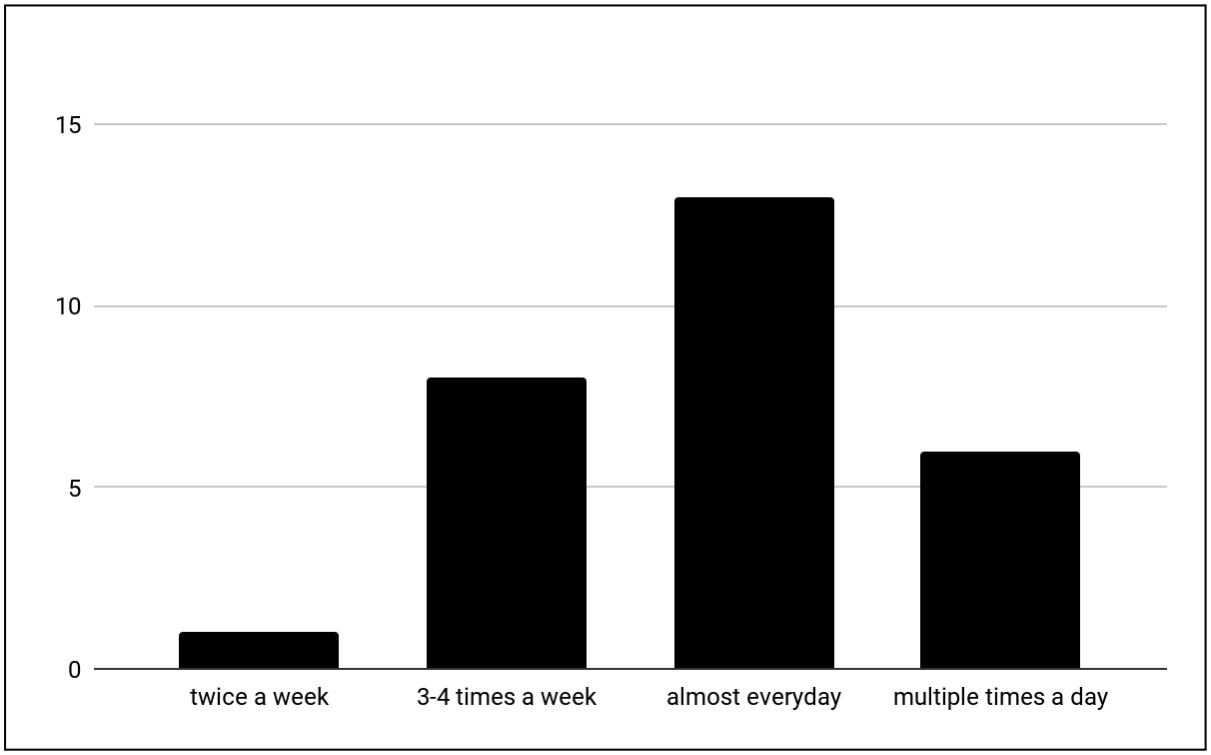

Fig 2: Frequency ID Use Frequency among all Participants

Fig. 2 shows the reported frequency of ID use among all the participants interviewed. For most participants, ID use was an almost daily activity. This data is helpful in understanding how deeply integrated ID platforms are in the participants' lives. The terms used in Fig. 1, like 'almost everyday', '3-4 times a week', and 'multiple times a day', are fluid. They represent how most participants chose to describe their order frequencies to imply the variability in their consumption patterns. Some participants admitted that the number could drastically change over months, oscillating between several times a day and once or twice a week. They implied how specific changes in their circumstances affected related practices.

As such, understanding how diverse life circumstances get reeled into the platform includes looking at ID consumption beyond the conventional reasons

of convenience and efficiency. When speaking about their ID use, participants often began by explaining the other things that usually took up time in their day, whether it was their job, long commute hours or care duties for other family members. They reveal how their use of ID platforms is not limited to reasons of speed and efficiency but rather occurs within a complex circumstantial "ecology" (Simpson 2013, 181) in urban dwellings. As such, these vignettes affirm Pink and Sumartojo's argument that digital technologies are contextual and "always part of something else" (2018, 840), involving diverse habits of thinking and feeling. Thus, to understand the role that platforms play in various stages of life, their ID consumption practices need to be conceptualised in terms of their analogue continuity with other practices.

To delve deeper into these instances, I will be focusing on interviews with 9 participants, consisting of narrative 'vignettes' that provide a sense of how the participants' relationships with ID have evolved, how they've changed and the larger context of their lives within which these urban-digital engagements evolve. This approach was chosen as opposed to selecting a limited number of quotes that resonate with pre-given themes because to work with social practices as something that is constantly evolving through circumstances that are external and internal, placed and placeless, and to theorise everyday digital practices through in-depth portraits of the "ecology of encounters" (Simpson 2013, 181) with digital and physical elements in participants lives.

These participants were chosen firstly because they represented recurring narratives of experiences in using ID services; secondly, because they demonstrated the most reflexive attention to their consumption habits and provided detailed recounts; and thirdly, because they demonstrated a range of diverse life circumstances, including life-stage, family composition and employment situation. Rather than making generalised diagnoses about the impact of ID on urban life, these singular stories provoke a granular perspective of the entanglements between the users and the platform. This part of the analysis is exploratory and provides a perspective on how ID use enters daily practices already saturated with prior 'ways of doing'. Thus, the vignettes can sometimes relate to multiple themes from the next chapter. They provide a sense of the variable iterations of platform intermediations in reshaping urban experiences.

This chapter situates the participants' narratives within the framework's first dimension. It endeavours to expand some of the more subtle and nuanced modes of encounter and relationality that comprise contemporary urban experience (Shepherd 2013). It charts the contexts and evolutions of ID use through specific materials, competencies, and symbolic meanings they ascribe to it, which create "bundles of everyday practices" (Shove et al. 2012, 10). As the following vignettes will show, when ID consumption is studied contingently with the onflow of their everyday experiences, different subjectivities emerge through the specific socio-spatial processes that come with dwelling in Chennai. Each vignette has a structure of highlighting the participants' everyday contexts, the ingress of ID into their dail consumption practices in lieu with other significant shifts in their lives, habits, and perceptions. Thus, it also serves the function of capturing the evolutions and fluctuations in city-resident-platform entanglements over time, which will enhance the discussions in the next chapter of how specific and local contexts encourage or dissuade the advancement of ID-mediated lifestyles. By taking on such a micro-transitional lens, these vignettes, far from being epistemological case studies, bring us an alternative perspectives of understanding what ID platforms do when used by people in the south (Lozano-Paredes 2021).

Sathya and Bala

Sathya and Bala are in their late twenties/early thirties, working remote jobs as a sustainability consultant and product manager, respectively. They recently got married and moved out of their respective parents' homes' to a house in Thiruvanmiyur. Being new to the neighbourhood, they didn't have the established connections usually required to find domestic help, and it was convenient not to have to plan what was required around the house. With their habitual ID use, they never need to keep track of the stock of things in the house. Instead, Bala says:

> "*We're like, reactive buyers. We only realise that we don't have something when we need it. And then we won't actually go buy right, like, then we order so it's there in 10 minutes.*"

With both their collective delivery orders, there can be deliveries at their doorstep at least a few times a day.

Though delivery options had already been around for some time, they grew accustomed to it during the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time, both their respective households used it for "*timepass*" because they were bored and wanted to try new things. When Bala and Sathya moved in together, they thought they'd hire a cook and set up the house like their parents. However they found that ID was more personalised, flexible and gave them more privacy from society's eyes. Because of their regular orders, they've managed to live at home for 1-2 years without any domestic help apart from a cleaner.

Sathya explains that she loves to go for walks, but she rarely does because she feels unsafe and constantly on alert. Even though there are stores not so far from them, she prefers just to order it in when she's not in the mood to, saying:

> *"With the help of instant delivery, it reduces the times where you have to go out for necessary... because here, for me, it's like... Walking outside is an unpleasant activity, minus the two or three streets around my house. If you want to go further than that, it's unpleasant, right? It's, like, you know, like dangerous and you have to be watchful, you can't just, like... stroll? It's not a pleasurable activity, and, like, that adds to the sort of barriers you have in doing this."*

Bala drives but also dislikes having to take the car out unless *"absolutely necessary"* since the city is always crowded and it's not pleasant to drive most of the time, especially from Thiruvanmiyur. So while they go out for social occasions and still visit certain restaurants for the ambience and cuisine, they tend to order more casual, familiar foods for delivery. For the most part they enjoy their evenings and weekends at home, with some food delivery and a movie or arrange a games night with their friends at their place. They both feel that they go out far less than they used to now.

The one habit that hasn't changed for Bala even after his change in consumption patterns, is his regular Star Biriyani visits. It is a popular Biriyani joint that he visits every week wiuthout fail. Sathya chuckles that it's a really crowded and *"pretty filthy place*", but he would never order from there. He responds thatthere are some places one shouldn't order from because the place is so integral to the experience it offers.

> *"More than having food at the restaurant, I think we like to see people, you know, around us, and yeah, I think it's more of that."*

Sathya prefers to spend her free time at home though. "*The delivery thing hasn't just made these chores easier"*, it's made her *"free time more freeing"*. Sathya and her girlfriends have a 'girls night' tradition, where they like to get together to go out to a bar or club. "*But honestly, it's a lot of planning, it's a lot of work"*. They would need to figure out carpool routes so no one has to go home alone late at night and arrange for drivers because they cannot drive and there were no good public transport options. Then there was the restrictions of what dresses they can wear during the commute, what they actually want to wear and what they can be seen wearing in society. It bedomes tiring. Nowadays, they've got into the habit of all meeting up at someone's place, where they can dress up however they like, drink and get whatever anyone wants to eat. They like to mimic the bar experience a little, by ordering bar foods and getting cocktail mixers for their drinks. Since a lot of her friends are mothers, they usually also needed to arrange for someone to stay with their kids, to go out for girls' night. Now, the kids to also get together with them and have their own room with a movie and games. They treat them to whatever they want: *"We get to have our fun and order something for ourselves and the children are happy, you order their pizzas and ice creams".*

Sathya says that she has come to feel that "it's most relaxing to sit at home and not do anything." But she reminisces when she lived in Bangalore and went out to different cafes with her friends and overall spent a lot more time outdoors. She could see how her relationship with the city was much deeper than here. She feels she no longer knows the people who work or frequent the shops and restaurants around her. Without shopping for things and going out to little street food stalls, she feels a *"connection to that space is lost"* and she feels like she's been living *"in a confined and individualistic world"*, disconnected from their local community and food sources.

They're frustrated that their ID habits have made them lazy and have prevented them from doing things that they used to find enjoyable, like cooking, perusing new shops, and finding little stores. The woman at the supermarket near her parents' home still keeps her favourite yoghurt in stock and brings it out whenever she goes to the store. These moments have made them feel they want to reduce their instant delivery consumption. They've recently decided that they will hire a cook to make them home-made meals and generally keep an eye out for what was needed around the house.

Ganesh

Ganesh is in his early fifties and has been working as an urban architect at the energy and electricity planning department of an NGO for more than a decade. He lives with his wife, daughter and mother-in-law. He reports using ID services around once or twice a week, though he suspects that his 19-year-old daughter uses it more often for late-night treats and sending and receiving packages between her friends' homes. On the weekends, as a treat or when their cook couldn't come, they order from a restaurant. When they order food, they like to pick out their favourites from different restaurants and "order a buffet by mixing from 2 or 3 different places". Apart from that, they occasionally use the courier services to send gifts to their relatives or pick up items from a shop that is not on the platform. Instant groceries, they avoid consciously because Ganesh wants to personally select fresh ingredients and ensure the quality of the products.

He says with having an equal division of household tasks between him, his wife and his daughter, along with the additional support from the domestic worker, it's easy for him not to require ID that frequently. He's made a routine of going for a morning walk when he picks up fresh fruits and vegetables for the day, which the cook then prepares for the family's meals. It's all "already embedded" into their daily routine. However, upon asking Ganesh about his past relationships with ID, he admits that his daily routine did not always look like this.

He admits he has known the allure of the "ID trap". During the COVID-19 pandemic, his family used ID a lot more frequently, both for its grocery services and food deliveries. He remembers that there was a point when they were "so bored of everything, and of each other's cooking" that they started ordering out or trying out snacks from Instamart "pretty much every day as a source of stimulation during the pandemic". But after about a year of "reckless" ID use, he felt concerned about their habits. He felt that the practice was wasteful, unsustainable and unhealthy. He felt it was unnecessary in their lives since they have the privilege of having a cook who makes all their meals every day, and could make whatever dish they ask for. Sometimes, during their frequent use, the food prepared by the cook would be wasted, because they bought something they were craving instead. *"The more you give into it, the more you*

want it", he says. He reflects that their frequent ID use was making them lazy and lethargic.

Ganesh explains that during his frequent use, he realised ways in which his daily rhythms changed. It also pushed him to consider the broader implications of technology platforms on urban lifestyles in general, saying:

> *"I realised that was so much part of how Chennai was, and Chennai is, I think many parts of Chennai, that this might end up, um, yeah, just creating additional walls between, um, the local stores and the community around it."*

This struck him as especially worrying because Chennai is already a very divided city, with very few everyday spaces that cross class divisions. If the ID services continued to take off in this way, he would be concerned about what it would do to the local economy and how accessible it would be for all segments of the population, saying:

> *"I'm also thinking about that, you know, this whole thing comes at a cost, right? And so is this really, truly accessible to the whole city or is it parts of the city? Is it, is it certain people, you know, do you have to be of a certain financial category capability, uh, to even access some of these, uh, facilities? Uh, and what about the rest then? You know, how do the, who will, who will provide for the rest?"*

He felt quite resolved to make some changes for his wellbeing, his ethics and wanting to save what he saw as a fading image of Chennai in light of these services. Since the pandemic regulations loosened up, the whole household has tried to reduce their ID consumption by being more conscious of the moments when they order it. They're more intentional about their use now and save it for moments when there is no better choice. They live right above a host of local fruit and vegetable hawkers, who provide way fresher and riper local produce than what is available on the apps. When he got into the habit of going for morning walks, he also started picking up fresh vegetables every day. At his home, they also kept a running list of things they needed on a fridge magnet so that whenever someone went out, they could pick them up.

He consciously changed his habits to look for local sources who could provide him with the same services. For other items, like meat, fish, pantry staples, and

medicines, he began to reconnect with local shop owners. They had moved houses after the pandemic, but they weren't far from his old place. He had established connections with the shop owners on that street for over twenty years. The medical store and the milkman from his previous apartments' street offered to deliver their goods to him so he didn't have to travel the further distance and could still keep him as a customer. Their non-perishable items like dals, oils and spices, get regularly replenished by the 'corner store', who keeps a tab that they pay at the end of the month. He says,

> *"I don't think I've met him. I mean, I think I met him three years ago, but after that, it's all, it's all online. I just message him if we're going out of town and I say, if you're not here, don't deliver for three days or five days or whatever. And then everything is so we don't interact as human beings, but that is face to face."*

Once he re-connected with the shop owners in his area, these daily tasks have been nearly as convenient as the services provided by instant delivery.

Samira

Samira is a forty-year-old academic living in a household of six, including her, her husband, her two children and her parents-in-law. Her husband works in the army and is often not home for months, leaving her to manage the household by herself, with the aid of domestic help. She uses ID largely to meet her household's grocery and daily needs and likes to stock up on the items rather than making smaller purchases. She chooses between several apps, depending on the best offer, and uses it around 2-3 times a week. She only orders foodwhen the household help is unavailable or when her family needs something while she is at work.

Prior to moving to her current location, she used to relyalmost exclusively on local markets, but after she moved, she decided not to interact with the local vendors in her neighbourhood anymore. Her daily routines of coming home and going out were marked by the shopkeepers and customers at the local joints around her old place and she received calls or knocks on her door at odd hours of the day. People she had daily interactions with near her old place had observed her husband was often not home and would make sly remarks to her. She'd given her number to some hawkers who wanted to inform her when they

got new products or acquaintances she made but would receive calls at odd hours of the night. She grew frustrated and despisedleaving her house, so the move came as a relief. She recounts:

> *"But then people are people so men are men so they will try to get a chance. So I stopped it. So I said, no, I'm not going to give my number anywhere unless it is absolutely necessary. And apps are more safer. I feel safer unless you are going to do something, unless I'm going to initiate something, it's not going to happen. So this is a better mode for me to stay back and carry over and avoid unnecessary interactions"*

Using the app-based services, she feels more comfortable as they provide a more impersonal and controlled interaction. Since then, she's felt safer and "less perceived" in her new neighbourhood. She had stopped going out for even a meal or a snack, but since the anonymity she's gained from her ID consumption, she's begun to feel safer and freer in her new neighbourhood.

> *"So I'm now on my own, I am exploring it. I am testing out new things. In fact, after coming here, we did go out once or twice. I went out once with my son. I took him out on dinner. I took out my kids, all three of them. Just three of us, we went out for another small snack kind of a thing. After school, I picked them up and we just went. So it is very rare, but it has happened. It has just started probably. It has just started after coming to this place. So maybe this place, I feel a little safer or I feel in control or I don't know what is transpiring, but it has just happened."*

She reflects on the dangers she's faced made her feel that her father was justified for raising her in such a protected and controlled environment. It's the same with everyone around her, she notes. Even among her colleagues, when they want to take a lunch break or meet for tea or coffee, they tend to order at the university rather than go to the tea shop nearby, which is a typically male-dominated space. But recently she has been feeling that she can choose the experiences she wants to have and can avoid places that she does not feel comfortable in. She also wants to show her children more of the city while they are growing up.

Parvathy

Parvathy is a full-time artist in her mid-forties, living in an apartment with her husband, two children and her in-laws. She uses ID *"every other day for*

something or the other", primarily relying on Swiggy and Dunzo. For food and grocery deliveries, she sticks to Swiggy because she has a 'Swiggy One' membership, which costs 129 rupees for three months and waives her delivery charges. But her most frequented app is Dunzo, for its errand services. Though Swiggy provides the same service, she started using Dunzo as soon as it came out, and was the only app to provide the service,and just got used to it. Dunzo is particularly useful for Parvathy, as it allows her to quickly and conveniently handle tasks like picking up forgotten items from her children's school or purchasing art supplies from stores that are not in the platform system. These services save her the hassle of driving and parking, and gives her time to do more important tasks that need her attention.

Parvathy's use of these services increased significantly during the pandemic, when their domestic staff couldn't come for work. She got used to it because it allowed her to be more flexible with meal planning and reduced her need for advanced preparation. It quickly became a more integral part of her lifestyle, she says, reflecting, *"I don't know how I used to do it before Dunzo".* When she hasn't been able to organise lunch for the kids, she can have the 'Dunzo guy' drop it off at school. Nowadays, they have a provision near the entrance of the school building for errand services to drop off lunchboxes, forgotten homework, stationary etc.. But food ordered from restaurants is frowned upon, she adds.

She draws a scene of a day in her life in which she has three flows of morning preparations, one for her children to leave for school, one for her husband to leave for work, one for her in-laws to feel comfortable and set up for the day, and then her own needs are met somewhere in between. She would already be in the car going somewhere for work , when she coordinates for the groceries to be delivered for the maid, schedules the lunchbox to be picked up for her children and orders art supplies to the studio where she'll be working. When she comes back from work, she might order some snacks for the house, like kati rolls or chaat if the children are hungry and occasionally, an ice cream after dinner when a sugar craving strikes. Upon reliving her day she corrects herself that ID *"has actually now become an everyday thing".*

She evocatively praises ID for the comforts it has provided her. She finds the convenience of these services, such as pre-saved orders and transparent pricing, has saved her a lot of time and worries. Her only qualm with the apps are the product selection issues in Instamart, unlike her local corner shop who

would keep stock of the products she would regularly buy. She still buys from him when her usual oil or dal brand is not available on the apps. She just calls him and tells him, and he'll drop it off in the next hour. But, apart from these small things, she loves the ID services for the agency it has given her to create more time for herself, and do more important things. But towards the end of the interview she reflects that she still feels stressed despite all the *"extra help". "You buy time, but you're not less busy."*

Joel

Joel is in his mid-twenties and living with his friend in an apartment in Thiruvanmiyur. When they first moved in, he had grand plans for cooking. He thinks of himself as *"somewhat of a foodie*" and was excited to experiment in the kitchen. The first weekend, he cooked his mom's mutton gravy. It took him three hours to make it, *"which he never cleaned",* his roommate adds from the background. Another day, he made biryani, and it was the same case. Half a day was gone with just making the food. Once again, no dishes were done.

Joel used to live with his mother outside the central city, and most ID services were unavailable there. Before moving to his current house, he had only tried the apps while visiting his friends in the central city. But after his attempts at cooking for himself and realising how time-consuming it was to make the meals he grew up eating, he started resorting to ID. Within the first few weeks, he went from having used it a handful of times in his life to every single day. After he stopped freelancing and started a full-time job, he began to use it for all his meals, groceries, and miscellaneous products. His ID orders regularly came in at a time when he was tired and could not function in more ways. *"I noticed all the options are there. I can just like click click click to add it."*

He has long commutes, about two hours to reach his current work place. This means he leaves the house at 7:30 am and comes back around 10pm. The evening commutes take a little longer because of traffic. He usually does all his ordering on commute, and times it so that by the time he is home his food is already there. He does not particularly love how dependant he is on ID but he priorotises it 'for his sanity':

> *"I remember at a point, both of us (his roommate) wanted to just cook and eat but I think after a point work was more difficult for me because evenings I'd be really tired and I'd always end up ordering."*

ID consumption had been a big part of giving him the rest he needs to continue the next day. It's given him a way to take care of his needs and give himself *"a hard earned break"* he deserves at the end of the day. He loved to play FIFA or practice vocals at the end of the day to wind down, with something resembling the home-cooked he would have had at his mother's home.

He uses ID a lot to mirror the food he grew up eating, that his mother would make. He even times his order so it can 'greet him' when he comes home at night after work or in the morning for breakfast as he is getting ready. He observes that he has made his ID ordering rhythms mimic life when he lived at his mother's house. Every day he when he would get ready for school, his mother would have breakfast prepared for him as he came out of his room. Likewise, he always had warm, home-cooked food to arrive at when he returned home at night. He makes the apps do that for him now. He reflects that though it wasn't a conscious pattern to mimic the rhythms of his mothers' home, he has taken on that pattern in his delivery behaviour. Even on his rest days, he orders the meals his mother would cook on weekends like like Biryani or mutton gravy.

He has considered hiring a cook, but then decided against it. He takes out his phone, checks his monthly expenditure on the app, and concludes that it is much cheaper to order every meal, especially when using promos and coupons, than hiring a regular cook for the house.

Ambika

Ambika is in her mid-twenties and is the head of marketing for her company. Helping her coordinate, manage and sort through life to meet her domestic needs, she actively embraces a digital lifestyle, using ID for groceries and food deliveries four to five times a week. She used to live at home with her parents till she went to Italy for an exchange program. She reminisces about how nice it was to go out for a walk or run her errands by herself. Going grocery shopping or buying bread at the local bakery were genuinely pleasant experiences. She

felt safe even going out at night to buy a box of cigarettes from the night shop. Initially, even such little things were exciting, she says, *"I didn't even speak the language, but I never had to think twice when I stepped out".*

Having long been reliant on the support of others for simple things such as going out, Ambika felt liberated in being able to carve out her own space and habits. Coming back home after living in Italy, she felt it was infantilising to be dependent on her parents for everything and reliant on support systems for her safety. When stepping out, she was always chaperoned by someone, whether it was the family driver or another family member. When she started earning enough to sustain herself, she took *"a risky decision to move out"*. This was an uncommon decision for someone her age, especially a young woman. But she was inspired by seeing some other friends her age who also made that decision to live alone. She saw that they could easily manage their lives with their salaries, and used a range of digital consumption services to easily manage their lives.

She found their lifestyles appealing and decided to make her own move. However, in the first few weeks, she still tried to buy and cook her own food. She wanted to live like she did in Italy where she enjoyed making her own home. But gradually she also switched to using ID like her friends. Though she liked her lively street, which had many shops, the experience of walking down there was not pleasant for her.

> *"I just don't also like being stared at or looked at (...) I don't know if you know about Balaraman Street (as seen in Fig. 3), but it's like so busy, like people are always coming in and out. So like, everyone's like looking at you. And I feel like there aren't a lot of young women that live here. And it has a very old crowd, at least this street. And you don't see a lot of young women, especially my age and living by themselves."*

She felt insecure and exposed, especially because she lived there and her address would be known. So, she began to order in as opposed to stepping out. Often, she orders from these places in her street and receives it through a delivery member in under 10 minutes. By doing this, she still gets to enjoy the benefits of living in such a lively street without experiencing the discomforts first-hand. It's not the ideal home, but she would gladly make this sacrifice for her sense of independence.

Fig 3: A visibly male-dominated corner in Balaraman Street

Especially now that she's busy with her job, after her long days at work, when she comes back home, she no longer wants to do more chores anyway.

"When I'm home, I don't want to work, and also, like, my job involves meeting and talking to a lot of people. So when I come home, I don't want to talk to people. That's relaxing for me".

It's not easy like it was in Italy, when, *"it didn't really feel like a chore"* and she *"didn't really have to interact with anyone"* to do her groceries.*"But like, here it's*

not like that…" she reflects. These days, she plans something with her friends on the weekends and doesn't *really* miss going out alone.

Sachu

Sachu is in her early thirties and works as a lawyer in a criminal and human rights law firm. She had been sharing her home with her mother till recently. After her mom got admitted to the hospital, she had a rough time and started using ID as a way to cope and avoid some of her basic responsibilities. She would just scroll on her phone in bed, order something, and then watch TV until the food arrived. She says, at this time:

> *"A big part of ordering in, is about cravings. At least for me. And I know, from what most of my friends have also told me. It is for them as well."*

After months of living like this, she started feeling "*gross, disgusting and irresponsible"*, reflecting:

> *"It's also directly linked to how my mental health is. And generally how my food habits are and how my nutrition is. The better it is. Like the less ordering in. And in moments where it's bad or not going as well. Then I would. There will be a higher tendency for me to order in. Which again shows why ordering in is not a good thing. See. It's only coming in at those moments."*

She began to feel negatively about her *"excessive"* ID consumption. She felt that a big part of improving and taking care of herself would be kicking the *"Swiggy addiction"*. It wasn't comforting anymore, and she felt out of balance. She felt embarrassed when she saw how much takeaway trash would get collected over a week in her house. She felt like she was using the house like a motel. She was determined to change her patterns.

> *"I'm not someone who's lazy. Like I'm very active. I'm always doing things. But, if I'm looking at all the time that I have, if I've finished work and also, like, done dealing with my mom's shit, then like, I want that little bit of time. I don't want to be, where I have to go out, do more things around the house. But how I was using it made me feel more unhealthy. I didn't like it, I wasn't feeling good. It started feeling like I was doing it…. because I have to do it. It has to be more of, like you want to do it."*

She hated coming home from work and seeing all the wasted leftovers and trash from the packaging every day. She remarked that when she spent time on cooking her own food or choosing what the cook would make she would remember what was in the fridge and what was left. But with ID, she grown grew into the habit of ordering, turning on the TV and *"switching off"* her brain. A lot of leftovers just get wasted because *"you just put it in the back of your fridge and forget about it. You order a new thing next time you feel hungry".*

She scouted many stores in Chennai that sold fun and healthy products like granola, chickpea pasta, and cheeses. They were in different parts of the city, which would have been difficult for her to reach regularly. She found that she could also purchase from those stores through ID apps, so she transferred her addiction to work for her in a productive way. She hired a domestic worker to cook meals for her. She just had to order whatever groceries she wanted to eat that week. Using delivery services to buy specific and exciting new products, she has been able to re-make her home into a healthier and happier place despite being restricted in time and energy.

Diwakar

Diwakar is in his mid-twenties and lives with his mother in their family home. It was originally a house of four, but they've faced two deaths in the family. Diwakar's older brother had passed away a decade ago because of cancer. They had felt *"talked about"* because of cultural stigmas surrounding death, especially of a younger person. More recently, when his dad died because of COVID-19, Diwakar and his mom faced a lot of stigma associated with those who caught the virus as well as the unpropitious sign of a second death, especially of the family's head. They felt vulnerable and isolated from the neighbourhood since the deaths occurred in the family. They felt watched by the others in the locality, making them uncomfortable to go out as much as they used to. Diwakar's mother has grown wary and distant from any 'strangers'.

Since their long-term domestic worker left three years ago, they've been using ID platforms to order food and groceries daily. They order South Indian breakfast items like dosa and idli daily and rotis and sabzi (vegetable side dishes) for dinner. Most of their groceries also go through the app, but there are

a few items his mom is particular about, her talcum powder and the quality of her fruits, so he steps out to buy them.

Their domestic worker had lived with them for twenty-one years, and he felt *“like part of the family after one point”*. Diwakar and his mother have been unable to find a replacement for him, which Diwakar acknowledges is partly due to his mother's trust issues. After the death, his mother has grown a lot more suspicious of outsiders, especially those from the neighbourhood, who know their family history. They’ve been looking to employ someone for the house again so they can have homecooked meals, but Diwakar says it’s not easy:

> *“To hire somebody else? We've been trying to. We've been looking everywhere. We've been trying to get another person to come and work for us. But it's very difficult. Very, very difficult to find a person. I mean, you know, and since it's just the two of us living at home, you know, a house, not in a flat or apartment or something. So, I mean, you can't… She has to be behind that lady or guy, you know, the whole time.*

Otherwise, I mean, if you don't…If you don't, like… Like, somebody has to supervise, you get what I'm trying to say. Otherwise, if you just leave them like that, you know, then they'll… I don't know. Maybe they can steal, they can do a lot of stuff.”

Their experiences in the neighbourhood and perceptions surrounding this have led them to rely heavily on instant delivery services, but they still feel it’s not the safest option. Since they have such a high traffic of delivery service members visiting their home daily, they’ve invested in additional spatial arrangements to ensure their safety. They have installed remote locking systems and surveillance cameras to see who’s at the door before they pick up their delivered objects. It seems to Diwakar that things will not change for a while unless they are somehow forced to find a different routine.

RESHAPING URBAN EXPERIENCES THROUGH ID PRACTICES

This section digs deeper into the narratives shared by the participants to bring out the instances where personal habits, everyday ID consumption and experiences in the city interact. More specifically, these moments explain how ID consumption comes in place to reshape their daily urban experiences through new 'ways of operating' (Certeau 1984). Simple narrations about their everyday habits and routines related to walking, resting, talking, interacting, and cooking become points of entanglement between participants' urban experiences and emotionalities and ID use (Shove et al. 2012). These themes interrogate how ID is used as a tactic that involves fixing frustration or coping with everyday life. From there, the recognition of stress in their routine are decisive moments that rupture past practices and invoke a transformation in their daily practices and in the process, alter their symbolic use and interpretation of spaces (Bissell 2020).

In this chapter, I theorize how and why ID platforms makes a difference in particular social experiences and the ways in which individuals make sense of that experience. By utilising the second dimension of the framework, I provide a thematised set of experiences to think through how code transforms the nature of objects and infrastructures, transduces spaces, transforms modes of experiencing urban spaces and engenders new forms of creativity and empowerment. To employ these concepts in the diverse ways in which ID shapes the experiences of everyday life, I've focused on aspects of domesticity, leisure, and the surrounding community. In each of these categories, the sub-sections deal with the moment-to-moment ways that problems are encountered and solved by identifying social activities that are now regularly transduced as ID code/spaces, coded spaces and background coded spaces comprising coded objects, coded infrastructures and coded processes (Kitchin and Dodge 2014, 17). These categories are by no means exhaustive but rather evocative and recurrent sentiments that situated people's ID practices within specific and evolving socio-spatial relations. Moreover they explore critical and experiential avenues in which ID can be recognised for being truly embedded as an everyday background 'code' by being flexible enough to be contextually adaptable to the messy, contingent, and fluid circumstances in which people's daily lives unfold (Bissell 2020).

As seen in the previous chapter, reflections on participants' use of ID services were articulated through a discussion of perspectives on their lives, routines and dwellings that set out from a premise of their active and reflexive

engagement with their surroundings. This is a reminder not to reduce readings of the platform phenomenon into a set of transactional logics and social considerations that emerge solely as corollary effects (Barns 2020; Leszczynski 2020). ID software shaped the participants' possibilities in everyday life by augmenting their everyday spaces and routines with a range of possibilities to re-create and reconfigure daily sociospatial experiences. The following themes chart the various symbolic "performances of practices" (Yates 2022, 14) in the participants' everyday lives, ranging from successful synchronisation to tension and disruption. In doing so, the following analysis narrates how consumers 'creatively use' (Certeau 1984) ID technology to reshape their everyday experiences and in the process create new modes of place understandings.

Urban Experiences of Domestic Practices

This category focuses on ID as a way of `coding' home spaces and domestic practices by becoming enrolled into constellations of everyday routines and sensations in domestic and home-making processes. As homes are being networked into a range of coded processes that distance or de-place domestic practices it opens up new formations and routines in the domestic sphere. As the following sub-sections show, ID services make a difference to the 'transduction' of home spaces as the spatiality of participants' homes are beckoned into being as 'coded spaces' or 'code/spaces'. The new recreated domestic spaces are seen to blur classic divisions between public and private, online and offline, and work and family. The augmenting capacities of ID make itself relevant by providing partial solutions to the relational problems of domestic living (for example, cleaning, cooking, and personal care) but also enables other problems to be addressed from home (such as practices of leisure or socialising activities) which will be discussed in the following categories (Kitchin and Dodge 2011).

Ambika's 'Code/Space': A Home of One's Own

Ambika highlighted how ID services aided her in moving out and having a home of her own. Without the ID "code", it would not have been possible for her to move away from her parents and live alone. As she mentions, it is not common for women to move out of their parents' homes until they get married or are much older. Despite the cultural mores, she decided to move out, knowing

that she could figure out alternative ways to fulfil her daily needs in the era of increasing digital means to conduct her daily life. Still, she attempted to 'live like she did in Italy' without being completely dependent on ID. However, intense feelings of discomfort disrupted her access to the 'regular' spaces of her street, making it impossible for her to perform some of her basic household chores and needs.

After feeling uncomfortable walking or being seen in her street, she used ID as an innovative 'tactic' to manage her daily needs. The specific social circumstances of Ambika's life result in her home-making experience as one that has a dyadic "code/space" relationship, in the sense that it would have been impossible for her to live alone without the help of ID services to bring her the things she needs. In Ambika's context, her use of ID services is embedded in household management, negotiations of independence, and "growing up" amidst a contentious relationship with the space around her. The feelings of discomfort she felt to be seen in her neighbourhood thwarted her everyday consumption practices, which were integral for her to live on her own. By merging surrounding spaces with the code of ID, Ambika produced a safe and comfortable home space for herself, making ID a major site of decision-making in her life.

Inherent in Ambika's phrasing of her experience is the sentiment that it is not ideal to be heavily reliant on ID for her basic needs. She goes back to the times she was living in Italy, where she felt she could more freely access the stores and shops around her neighbourhood at any time of day. But then, she reflects on her choices against weighing the odds of feelings of stunted growth and lack of privacy against being dependent on "code" to fulfil the needs of her home. In the end she views her dependence as a small sacrifice to have her own home.

ID technology has become integrated into her daily practices. It is associated with such fundamental aspects of her life that it would be impossible to manage today without these devices. Various applications and devices to perform and manage daily activities have become so common and ordinary that they are often used mechanically, as something natural, and have become an effect of technological progress (Maciej 2024). This is illustrated by her description of her process of 'homing' through a set of digital practices embedded in specific realities rather than 'home' as a fixed and static entity

(Shove et al. 2012). This example shows how ID can mediate matters of the private realm, such as a feeling of safety and comfort at home, as they are directly linked to the public realm through a complex and interrelated system of gendered (im)mobilities, materialities and localities.

Parvathy "Coded Space": Caring ID Consumption

For Parvathy, her consumption of ID platforms was articulated in relation to the multiple roles she fills in a day. Her daily life includes completing domestic and care duties for the other household members while also fulfilling professional tasks as a full-time artist. She evocatively praises the advent of ID technology for providing her with the ability to be more 'efficient' and more seamlessly coordinate various tasks. Her emphasis on 'efficiency' here travels from the description of an ID "coded space" to signify her performance of juggling her domestic and work life. While describing her home-making experience, she highlights how her digital consumption experiences have given her the ability to fit in everything that needs to be done. After having grown used to ID for her day to day domestic activities she says*, "I didn't know how I used to do it before*" . In these reflections, she points out how, without ID, domestic practices were a more labour-intensive experience (Dodge et al. 2011).

In Parvathy's scenario, ID services have been a harbinger of a new relationship to domesticity as it (partially) outsources her domestic activities to the platform. ID services streamline tasks by remembering and recommending items based on past purchases or running errands for her children or parents-in-law, redefining the work she needs to do within the household. The integration of these platforms into her daily life suggests a changing landscape of domestic labour, where traditional roles are renegotiated not within the household's members but distributed differently across the city (Kim 2022). Connecting 'things' (like groceries) to 'people' (like her children) and 'places' (home) (Maciej 2024) allows her to simultaneously meet her family's expectations of home while also pursuing activities outside of the domestic sphere. No matter where she is physically placed, through her smartphone, she can coordinate activities such as groceries, delivery of objects and other errands for her children or her parents-in-law.

Parvathy feels that by being equipped with her smartphone to provide and alter things at home, she can do more things at once as long as she sticks to the 'efficient' schedule. In stressful situations, with demands being placed on her

abilities, time, attention, and patience, ID seems to come to the rescue by being available on demand and absolving her of the need to perform her domestic tasks only by being physically present in those places. However, with the household chores of her domestic sphere and the productive tasks of her professional sphere always coming with her anywhere she goes through her smartphone, it has given her a feeling of *"always being on"* and connected to the needs of her home.

Thus her smartphone acts as the "codeject" (Kitchin and Dodge 2014, 17) that enables her to call upon the ID service "to solve a problem or perform a task" in her domestic sphere from anywhere. Here, the relevance of ID in producing relations between people and spaces becomes evident as she remains tethered to the demands of her domestic sphere wherever she is. This means that by being everpresent in the 'background' through mobile codejects, ID creates more chances for her to be accountable for her domestic duties. Here, ID contributes to influencing gendered domestic labour practices but, on the other hand, rewrites expectations of human capacities by dissolving the boundaries of space.

Sachu's 'Glitch' - A home-making glitch that mends itself

Sachu perceived her frequent ordering of food delivery as a negative coping mechanism that was closely linked to her mental health and overall habits. Her peak consumption was soon after her mother was admitted to the hospital, and she was newly living alone. Alongside the stresses of her working life and her mother's health, ID came in not just as a convenient and efficient way to solve some of her needs but also as a kind of emotional support (Mörtenböck & Mooshammer 2021). But over time, she began to feel lazy, unhealthy and out of control, going on to view her food delivery habit as an addiction. Sachu's feelings of shame and guilt over her delivery habit are significant as a 'glitchy' sensation that runs contrary to the purported benefits of ID platforms, which rest on inducing feelings of ease, comfort and convenience for its users. Sachu's reflection shows how one's discernment about their habits of use, why they were using it, and how it was affecting their life could significantly disrupt the streamlined narrative promoted by platforms that emphasise convenience and satisfaction.

While her story indicates how these platforms can create efficient and easy "coded spaces" that play a role in alleviating forms of structural discomfort

induced by her work and family circumstances, the emergence of bodily discomforts acts as a 'glitch' to the underlying consumer logics of food delivery platforms. In this respect, the 'glitchy' feelings associated with her reflexive awareness of the incapacities produced by her ID consumption gather to provoke an 'interruptive' agency to change her habits (Shove et al. 2012).

However, the glitchy realisations of her bodily (in)capacities have also been brought back through the many "seams" of the system (Barns 2020, 167). She narrates how, though her ID consumption has significantly reduced, she still uses it a few times a week, benefiting from the 'guilt-free' tags on menus, nutritional data and options to 'lighten' a meal. She mentions that the app's classifications were a lot more rudimentary a few years ago, but with improved product information, she can make an informed choice that aligns with her health goals. Consumer choices away from ID, such as Sachu's, illustrate how reflexivity can change one's orientation towards the platform and how such feelings are instrumental in creating more nuanced app configurations.

As shown in the screenshot in fig. 4, the app's algorithm picked up Sachu's changing habits and recommended differently coded restaurants and grocery products such as keto pancake mix, chickpea pasta and salad dressings. Through these measures, ID platforms found alternative ways to augment and supplement domestic tasks and plug the home into its 'code' (Dodge et al. 2009, 1288). Her 'glitchy' feelings could be mended back into the platform through different channels of consumption. These glitches can sometimes work as a conversation between the users and the platform to iron out future kinks and be implicated in the reproduction of platform capitalism (Carraro 2023).

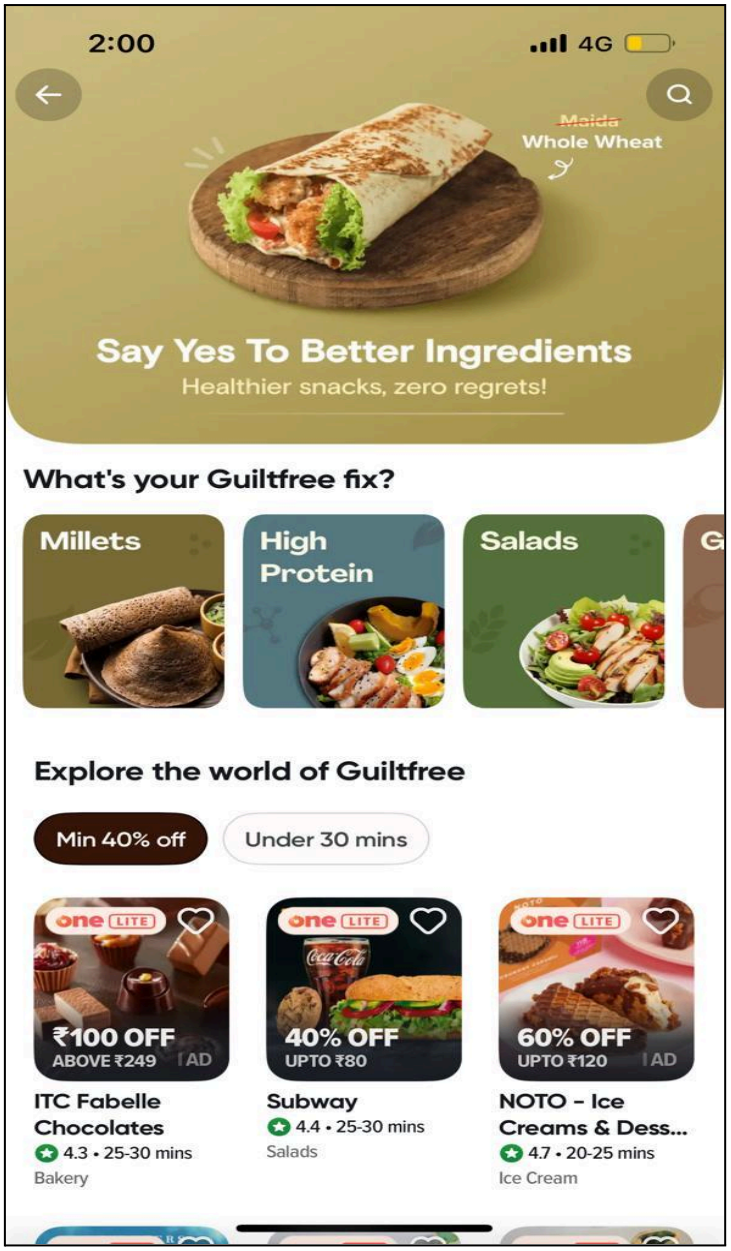

Fig 4: Screenshot of Sachu's Swiggy app recommendations

Through these instances, I want to consider the degree to which 'newer' arrangements of homes are being transduced by ID technologies into 'coded spaces' or 'code/spaces' (Kitchin and Dodge 2014). Individuals have more complex relationships to their homes through ID. Conventional understandings of home as private and secluded spaces are narrated relationally to the outside world. ID can beget understandings of home as a dynamic entity with degrees of fading and emerging placelessness. These newer arrangements and descriptions reveal that through ID, the everyday landscape of home possesses a 'tactical' (Certeau 1980) nature— for those making home in or in spite of their surroundings.

ID is reconfiguring the social and material relations of home, often in banal and subtle ways, by creating different capacities and reshaping domestic living and its spatialities by, on the one hand, augmenting and supplementing domestic tasks and, on the other, plugging the home into new, extended, distributed networks. They do so because they transduce space, that is, "they beckon new spaces and spatialities into being through their actions" (Dodge et al. 2009, 1289). Codes create new experiences of domesticity in reiterative and transformative practices through the work that people make them perform.

Ambika pursued her desires to have her own 'space' and to be less dependent on others by optimising and self managing the fulfilment of her needs through ID. Parvathy positions ID as a crutch for her, defined by the flexibility and accessibility that it provides her in fulfilling her domestic practices. Sachu's consumer resistance along personal lines was met with alternative routes for ID codes to find relevance in her realisation of a domestic space that aligned with her new vision. With the new possibilities provided through "coded" homes and the open circulation of commodities, ID has ushered in structural changes to the rhythms and functionings of the domestic sphere. The "background coded" objects, infrastructures and processes, such as their phones or the new facilities to enable ID objects into different spaces such as schools and offices, enabled participants to conduct their domestic practices differently and reshape domestic living and its spatialities.

Urban Experiences of Leisure

The vignettes showed how, for several participants, ID came in due to time scarcity from the segmentation of work in their daily lives and the inability to keep up with increasing demands or pressures they felt. ID use was often described in relation to people's work circumstances as a way to pursue leisure activities more efficiently, pursue multiple activities at once, or provide more opportunities for more short and self-directed leisure experiences.

Though feelings of relaxation and preferences for leisure activities were subjective and highly varied, what leisure meant in people's lives often came in juxtaposition to their work or other major stressors in their life. Their narratives suggested how ID could be involved in the processes and practices implicated in making time and spaces for leisure. These following subsections

show how ID's core utility as a convenience technology and its contribution to a more flexible organisation of time in peoples lives becomes a crucial player in their experiences of time and space (Shove et al. 2012).

The stories also exemplified more complex and symbolic materialisations of time and spaces of leisure. Acts of ID consumption would be used to distinguish 'ordinary times' from 'leisure times' through collective as well as personal associations, rhythms, qualities, sensibilities and objects. This symbolic aspect is significant because it was a major correlation in participants' narratives. ID consumption as a source of leisure was crucially instrumentalised through simulations of 'something else', whether it was another space, time or feeling.

In this light, ID consumption can be explored as a meshing of social, digital, and spatial relations. The following accounts highlight "human-place-technology relations" of participants' leisure experiences (Maciej 2024) by showing how ID can reshape their experiences of physical spaces through the acquisition of ID content. In this way, new 'places' emerge by being rediscovered by recognizing the presence of virtual network space and things that link it to the actual world (Kim 2022). Things that can be experienced in a certain space are reconstructed through imagined presences, even if they are embodied in a completely different space.

Joel 'Code/Space': Materialisation of Leisure Time

Joel narrates his use of ID services as a necessary indulgence. Despite feeling too reliant on ID, he does not try to change his habits because that is the only way he can get some rest after working as hard as he does. Beyond the feelings of exhaustion, it was an actual lack of time which drove his use of platforms. He positioned the free time he can create for himself in the evenings through ID as a space of leisure and comfort that would have otherwise not existed. In Joel's scenario, his leisure is a "code/space" manifested through ID against the time pressures of his long commutes and demanding work schedules.

Here, the ID 'code' is significant in its ability to materialise disposable time in his life, which he would not have otherwise had. Online grocery shopping and food deliveries freed up his time for relaxation and social activities. Joel wishes he could cook for himself or go to stores from time to time and find what is new in supermarkets, but without the rest, he gets for short bursts of time at night,

he would be unable to carry on with his routine long-term. Here, In Joel's iteration of "code/space", his daily life rhythms of work and rest are built upon ID's 'functionality'. The modulations of ID are indispensable to the temporal order of Joel's life. Joel's ID habit is imbricated in a temporal order that produces his time and space of leisure by enabling him to pursue his current work and leisure routine and through the objects he associates with leisure, such as ordering late-night snacks or food. The objects provided by ID and the association of the practice itself have become an indispensable component of his idea of leisure.

Joel brings on an additional factor in the production of his leisure space, that of the 'form' of his "code/space". After mentioning how the functionality of ID materialises indispensable time to himself, he describes how the form taken of the code/space itself is integral to his feeling of leisure. His ID use intentionally mimicked the temporal eating, snacking and celebrating patterns of life at his mothers home. The pattern enabled him to replicate an external feeling of stability and routine that he craved. Here, the codes' indispensibility was manifested due to feeling of comfort it could create by simulating intimate rhythms from his life. His symbolic interpretations of his daily practices intimately intertwining its services with his experience of his new home, working life and leisure.

As such, the significance of the form and functionality of his "code/space" show how ID has become entangled as an indispensable software in his daily life through the construction of identities and personal meanings. The two facets of Joel's leisure code/space are significant in highlighting how the compelling nature of "code/spaces" also comes into being because codes make a difference to the form, function, and meaning of a space. ID software generates new behaviours and opportunities, as well as traffic in meanings, readings, and interpretations without which that space would not materialise. This reading reveals that the production of code/space can also be emergent, relational, contingent, and embodied in nature rather than the more dominant reading of deterministic, fixed, universal, and mechanistic code/spaces (Kitchin and Dodge 2014, 1). as communicators and stabilizing devices which people employ to attain, reproduce and challenge temporal identities.

Sathya's Coded Space: Socio-technical Imaginaries of Nightlife

After several 'girls' nights' that involved a whole host of arrangements for Sathya and her friends, they started finding it easier and more genuinely relaxing to have their gatherings at home. Sathya and her friends had to navigate social and safety concerns such as late-night commutes, violating 'social codes' of proper attire or leisure activities, and generally being visible in public and attracting attention. When she was presented with the option of avoiding those complexities and the constant fears of potential violence and social judgement, she more frequently opted for their girls' nights to be organised within her or her friend's homes. They had house parties before but it didn't have the feeling of the traditional nights, and instead felt like they were just going to the homes of one of their friends. Since the host would be responsible to provide and curate the space, it didn't have the same sentiment of everyone having a fun and carefree time. This is where ID changed their house parties.

Sathya hosted some 'girls' nights' parties at home by ordering in food and drinks similar to what they would get at the bar. Here, the ID code aided her to simulate their experiences at clubs by moving objects from outside to a controlled and safe environment. With the additional benefit that she didnt carry any burden also changed the overall experience as no one felt burdened to host, or obliged towards the host. The 'carefree' essence of their nights was preserved. With ID they could also curate some of their experiences of clubbing at home, by bringing in drinks and food that was associated with the nights out. Here, the mobility of things to them, as opposed to the other way round, is able to enrich and diversify their means of using private spaces (Kim 2022, 10).

The curation of 'coded space' gatherings with her friends revealed that the leisure spaces they formerly inhabited were actually not a completely relaxing experience. Earlier, despite her fears and discomforts, she felt they didn't have another option if she wanted to celebrate, relax or set time away for her friends. ID gave her a satisfactory alternative route where she could enjoy some of her favourite things about her social gatherings, such as drinking and dressing up with her friends, without having to make uncomfortable choices regarding her safety and social reputation.

Sathya's reasoning for avoiding the leisure spaces they used to frequent. Mundane leisure activities such as pub hopping, watching films, travelling or shopping can quite quickly turn into extremely violent encounters for women. This "coded space" comes in to "virtualise potential mobilities in an effort to prepare for, prevent, or preempt some future event" (Kitchin and Dodge 2021, 337). Accordingly, the meaning of the physical space weakened as captured in the decline the interaction between the former clubbing spaces and Sathya ans her friends changed due to the "imagined existence provided by objects" (Kim 2022, 15). Her experience and negotiation of spaces accents Maciej's (2024, 2) analysis of digital placemaking, who concludes that "without space and place as a framework of experience, communication is meaningless, and yet without communication, we would not be able to imagine space and place".

Her use of ID posits it as a 'coded infrastructure' in that it opens up new organisations of life choices and movements to offset the day-to-day struggles she faces in appropriating and using public and social spaces. Sathya's interpretations about the spaces they occupied and the experiences they had in those spaces inform her creative ID consumption conjointly with the ID platforms own vision to simulate place based experiences through its digital and mobile means (Kim 2022). This production of 'coded space' provides a complex portrayal of the role of digital technologies that can at an instance empower individuals but at the same time more deeply embed larger faults in the system. The enrolment of ID as a solution to wide scale concerns and negative experiences of women occupying public and privatised spaces brings with it a whole new layer of complexity and risks to digitally augmented daily living, despite the rhetoric of software making life easier.

Bala's 'Glitch': When Experiences are Better Than Things

Despite using ID services multiple times daily, Bala's weekly practice of going to Star Biriyani was not brought into his ID habit. Working a remote job meant that much of his life was conducted through platforms, apps and websites. His regular work and domestic routine is marked by the technological efficiencies of an assemblage of 'codes'. When ID services, among other platforms,are so deeply embedded into his daily routine, his weekly rhythm of going out to the mess hall disrupts his conventional rhythms of time in which the mindless grind of his daily platform habits get broken by the energising thrill of the outing. He admits that usually, and for most restaurants, the hassle of waiting in line, pushing his way through the crowd and sitting in a hot and crowded

mess hall to get his food would not be appealing and he would prefer to get it delivered to him. The whole process of going and eating at the mess hall takes a lot longer than when he orders in food. On most occasions, Sathya and Bala prefer to order in and use their leisure time to relax at home. When it comes to this one place, he opts to go to the physical location despite the traffic, long queues and other discomforts he usually dissuades him from going out. His outings to Star Biriyani is a 'glitchy' practice among his usual consumption patterns where he unexpectedly withdraws from his ID use due to their omnipresence in producing spaces in the rest of his life.

He says there are some experiences of consumption when it is not 'just' about the food but a more complete and place-specific experience that cannot be subsumed into his platform consumption. For him, it's not just about the food he eats but that he misses seeing the other people in the mess also eating. He cherishes the small interactions with the other customers at the joint and recognising and being recognised by the other regular customers. This moment gives him the opportunity to re-orientate himself away from the home and the routines of his work and domestic life. When his life's routines are largely produced through platforms, this act of consumption that does not compute within the platform logics "allow for a reconceptualisation of what can (or cannot) be realised" (Nunes 2011, 4) within his existing digital practices.

The political significance of this moments do not come in the form of a malfunctions or heroic subversion of the system but rather as momentary 'openings' that mark alternative potentials (Nunes 2011). Terming this moment as a "glitch" allows us to observe the fluctuations in everyday digital practices of the participants without exaggerating the significance of individual or temporary acts of defiance. Thus while the marginal moments observed here offer epistemological entry points, it cannot in itself imply a political position.

In the range of perspectives on leisure, ID services have acted as the catalyst for the intensification of leisure practices, either by creating more time or being more efficient. Bala's experience highlights how in a "platform society" (van Dijck et al. 2018, 7) that is built on efficiency, leisure can feel less leisurely as people rush to cram more and more leisure activities into a finite time and space. As a response, Bala produces his leisure space by not initiating the 'code' of his coded space and purposefully opting for the less efficient space.

If Joel and Sathya's use of ID provide instances of how once ID use has been initiated in people's lives, it is made to do work in the wider world, such as generating daily life rhythms and leisure activities that would have not otherwise been possible; for Bala its over presence in his daily life creates a temporary tear in his leisure. ID actively partakes in their experiences far beyond the moments fo consumption, by resignifying their meanings of time and space.

When Bala and Sathya's coded spaces are juxtaposed to one another for the oppositional experiences they beget in feeling leisure, it brings out how digital technologies play a part in politicised and gendered negotiations of city spaces, when access to city spaces for leisure and livelihood is not uniform. The everyday fears of violence renders Sathya and her friends constantly fearful, unsafe, and feel 'out of place' in cities, whereas the construction of Bala's leisure is constructed on feeling 'a sense of belonging' in a physical space. The synergies and conflicts in the physical realms of life implode into the online (Jurgenson 2012), begetting diverse forms of inhabitation in the 'Delivery City'.

In all these cases, the spatial context is not incidental or inert, it is constitutive and productive. People's labor in workplaces, retail and leisure spaces, domestic life takes place within individual homes, past memories and distinctive neighborhoods and communication among friends or strangers is embedded within particular domains or links together geographically separated places. People's active engagement with ID to imitate, simulate, alter and enhance spaces, shows that the spatial context of these experiences is an active participant in the making of meanings and memories. From this perspective, the work that software does is profoundly shaped by the co-constitutive relationships between software, social relations, space, and time (Shove et al. 2012). That is, ID platforms are specific regulatory mechanisms that influence the conditions through which society, space, and time are formed for its users.

Urban Experiences of Belonging (in a Community)

This category deals with an immersive understanding of the participants' lifeworlds in their community— their social relations and rhythms and the cultural and personal meanings it holds for them. I intend to bring into design discussions centred on people's experience of belonging (or lack thereof) in their immediate environments. ID 'coded' objects contribute to a varying sense

of one's position in their locality, as ID practices increasingly 'de-place' and distance daily activities from physical spaces. Locating coded practices, objects, infrastructures, and processes relationally to participants' experiences of their local community makes it possible to determine their deployment of ID as a mediating tool that reshapes their neighbourhood experiences.

The experiences of belonging narrated by participants are personal and inflected by, but not reducible to, the presence of ID systems. Rather, ID comes in to reveal the logics through which digital systems transduce particular "human-place technology relations" (Maciej 2024, 1). The 'code/spaces' and 'coded spaces' are created in accordance with the social relations participants want with their community, which are driven by personal and social discourses with varying understandings of what their locality means to them. These discourses and experiences either legitimise or disadvantage the increasing ubiquity of ID mediations as a way of mundane consumption based communications.

Moreover, amidst scholarly assertions on the the densification and machination of urban lives as they are increasingly constituted by the commodification of communication by platforms (Athique 2020, 554), this category interrogates how the discursive representations of urban social relationships and ID technologies beyond the narratives of extraction, accumulation and dispossession. 'Belonging' in a community is understood here as an active practice and process that is continually shifting but is also affected by past practices, beliefs and experiences. These experiences provide empirical material for making sense of the sociality and spatiality of code as a result of the accumulative and repetitive observations of participants, that produce a sense of both space and belonging in their locality.

Samira Code/Space: Exploring her Neighbourhood Again

Samira's exclusive use of ID services for her daily purchases made outside life accessible again in her new neighbourhood. After having several uncomfortable interactions with street hawkers, shopkeepers and other people she regularly encountered in her previous neighbourhood, she grew avoidant and wary of the streets and local shops. It made her hesitate to step out, unless absolutely necessary because she felt that intimate details of her life were being observed by a larger public. As a response, when Samira moved to her

new neighbourhood, she decided to avoid all kinds of public interactions. In an attempt to regain control over the situation, she made a marked shift in her consumption practices to completely avoid and disengage from the neighbourhood's public and commercial spaces. She did not want to be known or know anyone in her neighbourhood.

Over time, as she began to feel safer in her new neighbourhood, she began to to want to go out more. The app had given her anonymity and she started to feel she could go out and have interactions with people she chose. For Samira, ID produced a 'code/space' neighbourhood by establishing formalised and anonymised interactions between her and the market for her daily consumptions. Her story represents how the function, appearance, and actor interaction in the neighbourhood can change according to the uses of delivery services.

Here the 'code/space' created is the sense of belonging Samira experienced in her in her new neighbourhood that would have otherwise not experienced. The experiences in her new neighbourhood had a dyadic relationship to ID, as she saw her anonymity as the result of highly crafted and de-localised digital experiences of consumption.. Her uncomfortable and at times even dangerous encounters in her previous neighbourhood as she became a familiar face corroborated her beliefs of avoidance of strangers and urban spaces. The agency she had to be seen when she wanted to and interact only with whom she wanted, contributed to a sense of safety and agency in her new neighbourhood. She wanted her children to grow up feeling curious and building memories in the places they grew up in. She began to go out and spend time with her kids at parks or cafes for the first time.

What Samira's code/space neighbourhood shows is the ways in which ID interpolates, mixes with, and takes part in the generation of new relationships with urban spaces (Kitchin and Dodge 2011, 16). Here, Samira's subjective spatiality, that is, her renewed relationship with her neighbourhood, was made possible by altering her ways of inhabiting her neighbourhood. Here 'code/space' takes another route to expand out of the online, to become spatially active. Her experience indicate how allegiances towards creating one kind of urban reality are not binding, and people are open to change. The value of 'code/space' is contingent and unstable, "always on the verge of collapse"

(Kitchin and Dodge 2011, 38) as it deals with new data, scenarios, configurations and user intents.

This particular iteration is important to note that even in a dyadic relationship between ID platforms and spaces, it is not "deterministic (that is, code determines in absolute, nonnegotiable means the production of space and the sociospatial interactions that occur within them)" nor "universal (that such determinations occur in all such spaces and at all times in a simple cause-and-effect manner)" (Kitchin and Dodge 2022, 337). Rather, the code/spaces that emerge through daily practices are contingent, relational, and context-dependent. 'Code/spaces' unfolds in multifarious and imperfect ways, embodied through performance and often unpredictable interactions of the people within the space (between people and between people and code). Code/space is thus inconsistently transduced; it is never manufactured and experienced in the same way.

Diwakar's 'Coded Space': Mediating Community Interactions

After the death of Diwakar's father, he and his mother felt hesitant and vulnerable to interact with others in their neighbourhood due to their reputation as a 'house of death'. His mother grew wary of strangers who might take advantage of her and feared another infection in the family. After their long-term domestic helper moved away, their fears were exacerbated by the thought of having to interact with people in her locality to find a new domestic helper and to have to go out to local shops and eateries personally. Diwakar and his mother's use of ID could be classified as a 'coded space', whereby ID mediates their interactions (and avoidances) with the people in their neighbourhood. At a time when they felt shunned and judged by others in their area, ID enabled them to produce a space that required them to deal with their social reputation as little as possible.

ID services entered their lives as the main route through which they could access all their daily needs instead of personally inhabiting their localities' commercial spaces or encountering people. Since the 'things' they are used to from the city can reach their doorstep (Kim 2022), even the interactions of opening the door could be monitored through the app. The ID platforms' specific regulatory practices that facilitated feelings of safety and 'sanitisation' during the surge of digital consumption during COVID-19, such as the option for 'Leave at the Door', 'COVID-19 Vaccinated delivery member' became an integral

component in the production of Diwakar's 'coded space'. The ID apps' nuanced regulatory and surveillance software enabled them to choose settings for their interactions with delivery service members to be 'coded' through real-time tracking and personal information about the deliverer.

In many ways, the compulsory nature of surveillance in ID platforms is not an issue but a feature when there is a loss of a sense of belonging, trust and safety in one's local community. In these circumstances, Diwakar participates in surveillance and the platform's data collection to enhance his feeling of privacy. The creation of dynamic systems of surveillance in ID platforms functioned to ease anxieties about unknown or public interactions. Here, ID-enabled 'coded spaces' may open up tricky spaces and understandings to become subject to personal fears, anxieties, and impressions of their users.

Diwakar admits that if it were not for the robust ID network, they would have been forced to hire domestic help and deal differently with their fears, but he did not want to entertain what that reality would have looked like for them. Instead, their of ID was the first of a larger "coded assemblage of infrastructures" (Kitchin and Dodge 2014, 17), such as their CCTV by their front door as an additional guarding of their private spaces from their anxieties associated with the neighbourhood.

Here, Diwakar's negotiations between hiring domestic help, establishing communication with the people in his locality versus using ID reveals how its services acquire their value in relation to and as part of a struggle between competing routes to his daily practices (Kitchin and Dodge 2022, 312). He recognises that he would have found different means of conducting their daily consumption routines if ID were not available. However, having grown accustomed to their current configuration of ID use, Diwakar and his mother prefer interacting with their locality through the anonymised and standardised processes it facilitates. Diwakar's ID 'coded space' is produced as a spatial alternative that profoundly alters his relationships and interaction with his community by changing the means by which he responds to his feelings of insecurity because of his social status and perceptions of belonging or exclusion.

'Glitch': Ganesh Questions his Loss of Connections with the Local Vendors

Ganesh's frequent and exclusive consumption of ID consumption during COVID-19 made him feel that he was losing ties with the neighbourhood that he's been living in for 20 years. He reminisced about his past connections with the local vendors and shopkeepers before his delivery habit and longed to re-make that feeling by reducing his ID consumption. ID platforms are hallmarked by their ability to connect people to things, creating a coordination of space and time in a markedly different way from traditional retail (Berg & Knights 2019). However, despite producing a space that functioned at a higher efficiency, the ID network of consumption made unexpected changes in daily routine, over time accumulated in a loss of connection with his neighbourhood. This incidence points to one interpretation of glitch as an intervention arising from his reflexivity of a changing sense of belonging in his community.

Ganesh reconnected with the shopkeepers and vendors near his old apartment, who offered to personally deliver their products to his new address. The local vendors in Ganesh's neighbourhood employed strategies to compete with ID services by closely mimicking their strategies. They mirrored platform features such as 'simplified replenishment', 'one-click digital payments', 'fast delivery or free' by keeping monthly customer tabs, stocking up on preferred brands of customers and providing personal delivery free of charge. As can be seen in the poster in fig 5, the shops increasingly digitised their communication by becoming available for online orders through WhatsApp, requiring fewer face-to-face interactions and communications. The interconnected practices of local vendors' business strategies, with Ganesh's changing orientations towards his everyday consumptions, bundled together to form a new constellation of practices in their locality.

Fig 5: A Poster in a Corner Shop on Ganesh's Street

Ganesh's shift in practices illustrates how social phenomena are constituted through "aggregations of practices" (Schatzki 2012, 44) of the individual with their community. His changed everyday practices were largely made possible through the efforts of local vendors, who mimicked the 'platform model' of services, meaning he could change his consumption patterns without altogether forgoing the digital efficiencies. It shows that the norm of "mobility of things" (Kim 2022, 2) as opposed to mobility of middle-class people was not a practice brought about exclusively through ID platforms or an isolated service provided by platforms, but rather a continuation of pre-existing work done through informal economies, local vendors and domestic workers.

In this context, this 'glitch' nudges an important question - "who – and whose bodies – present as undesirable or 'not computing'" (Leszczynski and Elwood 2022, 363) with the translation of the logics of platformisation, datafication, and algorithmic optimization of the urban consumption. His fluctuation in practices offers a possibility to glance at the inner workings of ID services and reveal how it can or can not been integrated into the rituals and routines of everyday actions. This 'glitchiness' of platform–urban configurations constitutes the

marginalities where already existing informal 'interfaces' belie over determinations of "the total and complete capitalist takeover of cities being ushered in on the coattails of digital platforms" (quoted in Leszczynki 2020, 196).

His story bears witness to a much more complex suite of evaluations involved in everyday consumption practices and their role in feeling tethered to one's community. Far from being influenced by the 'seductions of platforms' speed and efficiency, Ganesh's narrative reveals how ID platforms can have different deleterious impacts which compromise a user's sense of community. His example advances glitch epistemologies as an intentional ethos of taking notice of seemingly superficial incongruities in urban experiences that appear to interrupt the transduction of spaces according to digital logics. Engaging with these instances are revealing of how these 'coded' mediations of urban spaces can be interrupted and made differently (Leszczynski and Elwood 2022).

For Samira, ID produced a 'code/space' neighbourhood by establishing a sense of anonymity and giving her the agency to choose which interactions she would partake in. Diwakar's coordination of his consumption habits exclusively through platforms helped him evade the judgements of his community. Ganesh shifted his consumption practices to foster and strengthen his ties with the community in his neighbourhood. These code/spaces and coded/spaces allow for daily lives to be organised differently from restrictive or inflexible established conventions by organising community interactions based on choice, voluntary participation, and mutual interest. By delving into the narratives of people's sense of belonging, ID is spotlighted as a tool that aids the restructuring of local social relations. They represent how the function, appearance, and actor interactions in the commercial spaces of a neighbourhood can change through ID consumption. The instances charted not only how they used ID to modify and remodify their current urban experiences but also rubbed up against prior notions, beliefs and experiences to provide alternative 'ways of doing' and commence profound re-makings of their urban experiences.

CONCLUSION

It has been a challenge of platform studies to address the influence of platforms without painting it as all-powerful or merely instrumental (Leszczynski 2020). While it is clear that platforms play an increasingly significant role as digital and economic actors, they are also shaping key dynamics of urban life. However, non-representationalist understandings of the digitally mediated cities remains a complicated affair, yet are crucial to connect the new entanglements of intimate with the structural. The political relevance of this strand of research is its forefronting of how ID platforms modulate people's sense of wellbeing in the city, through subjective and nuanced measures. Taken together with this 'minor' perspective, is the politics against rational economic explanations of consumers and realted abstractions about "the capitalist takeover of cities" (Sadowski and Gregory 2017: n.p).

In this context, this thesis explores the capacities of consumers to reshape their urban experiences through their ID consumption. The observations presented here have emphasised a wide range of micro-political urban experiences and practices: interactions with strangers, new domestic arrangements, enabling or constraining bodily experiences, the discovery of new views and the reading of new meanings. These narratives have diffused the well-worn figure of the passive consumer against the totalising nature of platform politics. The 'niches' filled by ID services in each participant's life were deeply contextual and socio-political. Their stories accentuated the many realities that need to be considered when studying the platform market, as not simply economic, but are socially, culturally and spatially embedded diverse practices involved in daily urban rhythms.

The contributions of this thesis, are as follows. First, it exposes a detailed portrait of the use of one type of digital-urban platform – Instant Delivery - by the middle-class populations residing in South Chennai. I examined the arrival and particularities of the newly adopted ID consumption practices as a popular endeavour in which people continuously use their ID practices as vehicles of control – ever moving back and forth between states of public and private, work and leisure, and home and away. People navigate their daily lives around the city, aided by platformed renditions of it. This thesis provides an epistemological entry point for how ID technologies are taken up, moulded, adapted, and made sense of through the the everyday practices of the middle-class in these neighbourhoods.

Second, it furthers the notion of a 'Delivery City' in Chennai through a detailed understanding of how ID platforms are changing everyday habits in the city for consumers in different circumstances. In this sense, the mobility of things predicated in the definition of the 'Delivery City' is shown to reorganise the subjectivities of consumers by opening up new potentials for socio-spatial relationalities, experiences and practices through new digital infrastructures of consumption. While the concept itself is rich in its potential for reimagination of fundamental characteristics of current lifestyles, through the lens of mobility and spatial planning, I focus on the experiential dimension to induce discussions of the use of ID platforms are not merely as a question of accessing goods and services quickly but also a deeper ongoing imbrication in negotiations of domestic practices, time, agency and belonging.

Third, it reveals that the augmented spaces of the 'Delivery City' are the result of a wide range of 'creative acts of consumption' that portray converging desires and demands from new organisations and arrangements of domesticity, economic interests pushing for higher productivity, calls for more efficient use of resources to longings for personal happiness and well-being. It shows how ID's productive capacities of augmenting spatial realities are mediated by intentional and reflexive acts of consumption. Thus, using the theory of 'code/spaces' and 'coded spaces' exemplified distinct examples of how the 'Delivery City' is often co-produced by people's conscious practices along with the technological possibilities of ID. What this means is that how consumers engage with ID platforms and react through embodied practices is often contingent on their abilities, experiences, prejudices, and everyday contexts. ID uses are entangled and relational to embodied experiences and arise as alternative social or cultural practices, rather than a simple, deterministic or rationalised economic exchange.

Fourth, while the platform serves to generate solutions to some problems and alleviate forms of infrastructural or societal discomforts, consuming through the platform over long periods of time, new discomforts emerged for some users. The vignettes showed the 'unintended' emotions that emerged for several participants. After having appreciated the 'fix' of ID consumption for a while, they began to challenge and re-evaluate their routines and the repercussions of the systems in which they occur. The reflexive awareness that emerges from participants narratives, indicates complexities and frictions in the seamless operation and consumption of digital platforms as they begin to

question the long-term sustainability of their reliance on these services. Over prolonged use and reliance, through micro-political evaluations, some participants noticed that ID came in as a band-aid fix for different things they actually wanted from the city - whether it was the freedom to walk, travel, rest, party, communicate, consume and live. They demonstrated ambivalence towards their consumption patterns and complicated withdrawn readings of unfettered penetration of platforms into peoples lives. While in many of these cases, the 'code' replaced the means by which those practices previously used to work so that if the ID code failed, then the space failed to be produced, these moments of ambivalence were illustrative in identifying unique spatio-temporalities where people's relationships with the platform were observably glitchy, and evaded the distillation of their everyday actions into patterns, processes, or expected outcomes. If coded spaces hold the potential to remake and reshape urban practices and experiences, then the glitch holds the potential to materialise and (re)make platform urbanism in different ways (Leszczynki 2020).

The numerous cases discussed here all emphasise a call for a sustained and differentiated empirical study of ID as a component of urban experiences and as something that intermeshes people's evolving socio-spatial relationships, albeit imperfectly. Platform studies need to be open to a plurality of approaches and techniques, to provide useful empirical material for making sense of the multifarious and subtly mutating socialities and spatialities in the era of Web 2.0. Ultimately, this thesis shows that ID platforms have become an everyday infrastructure that matters in deep and intimate ways for the consumers in question. ID has become extensively and intimately woven into the fabric of people's lives in diverse, significant and banal ways (Kitchin and Dodge 2014). Collectively, these perspectives highlight the necessity for more dialogical and context-sensitive ways of approaching the knowledge of space to create paradigms for foregrounding mundane and alternative perspectives that nourish ongoing inquiries of the reshapings, remakings and reorderings that are a fundamental enterprise of cities.

"[S]pace is neither absolute, relative or relational in itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances. The problem of the proper conceptualization of space is resolved through human practice with respect to it." —(Harvey 2010, 13)

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Critics of qualitative research point to the problems of reliability and validity of the techniques adopted, especially when descriptive narratives are used since they are unique to the circumstances in which they are produced, and hence pose the question of whether they can be generalised. While the responses of middle-class residents in the selected neighbourhoods indicate experiences in a locally specific way, is there a generic nature to these modes of interpretation? Do they highlight a commonality of urban experiences and processes of meaning-making? It is difficult to put these results to the test without first devising some way of characterising and comparing the practice-performance complexes of different societies within and beyond Chennai. In this context, whether these particular findings about middle-class behaviours in Chennai can be extrapolated to other Indian cities can only be established after a more in-depth comparative study. An initial glance through new article scans on ID consumption patterns (Ahmed 2022; Gent 2022) indicates similarities and dissimilarities.

In terms of the research trajectory and scope of analysis, this investigation has illuminated other areas needing examination. Firstly, it is important to further test the influence of Chennai's historical context as a postcolonial city, its cultural values, and its demographic profiles. Secondly, placing the perspectives of the consumers in dialogue with delivery service members or the ID companies would have added a layer of richness to my analysis and allowed me to interrogate other dimensions of ID-augmented urban experiences. Platforms have begun to influence everyone's experiences in the urban space, whether or not they are actively participating in the system (Kim 2022). Hence, it is necessary to differentiate the actors of a 'Delivery City' in detail to grasp their spatial practices and experiences. In-depth research and questions about informal economies, domestic work, local vendors and related heterogeneous systems are implicated in understanding the various synchronous and asynchronous structures that emerge alongside the platformisation of cities. As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, the dissolution of physical obstacles between the consumer and the product alters the reasons and frequency of consumption. From there, there is the question of how the 'physical obstacles' dissolve - and dissolve for whom? And what happens to these 'dissolved spaces'?

Kim (2022, 8) predicts that in the 'Delivery City' with the mobility of things, urban spaces simply become spaces of movement and passing, to

accommodate high levels of rapid mobility. Further studies could examine futures of urban spaces and the ethical dilemmas of such potentialities as urban functions and infrastructures become increasingly digitised. Moreover, A broadened conceptualization of a 'Delivery City' would be incomplete without interrogating who is seen as having rights to digitally-mediated and mediatized materialities in Chennai, such as ID, but also extend to other everyday urban-platform configurations such as ride-hail apps and mobile-based citizen apps. Studying these platforms is becoming increasingly important as the platform-mediated optimization of urban services are transforming and becoming indispensable to the everyday lives for some urban subjects. Thus, understanding daily lives through more widescale research on an entire platformised city, such as those of Barns (2020) and Athique and Parthasarathi (2020), needs to be expanded further to explain the social, economic, and spatial contours of platforms.

APPENDIX

Interview Guide

Since I followed a semi - structured style of interviews I did not create a definitive list of questions. I created a list of themes to guide me in exploring the topics I wanted to explore, and to keep track of the data collected through the course of the interviews. These were:

Introductory Questions

- How often
- Which apps
- What services
- Since when did use become frequent

Household Habits

- Occasions/times of use
- Expected duration of delivery
- Coordinations with other members of the house
- Products regularly accessed
- Changing household chores
- Replacement of household staff

Lifestyle/Urban Habits

- Changing patterns of consumption outside
- Instant Delivery use in social situations
- Spaces to avoid
- Preference/conveniences - How exactly does ID provide convenience

Platform-induced Interactions

- Opening times of stores
- Familiarity with Delivery Workers
- Accessibility of products
- Local delivery circuits
- Geography of orders

Introspective Questions

- Fears
- Local delivery circuits
- Anomalies in use
- Discontentment with platform consumption

- Overall perceptions
- Value in their daily lives

During my pause in interviews I added these notes for further investigation:

- Feelings of shame attached to ID use - where does it come from
- Ask to see the apps, what are the last 10 purchases they made
- What's new, for better and for worse, about ID compared to old, localised delivery services

I used some prompts to improve conversations and generate deeper insights. This method enabled participants to share their experiences in their own words and reflect on their behaviours and motivations. Some of them were:

Do you like going for walks?

This question was important for me to get an understanding of the participants' relationship with public space, unrelated to ID. Through this question I got a sense of how often participants' stepped out and what kinds of reasons motivated them to go out, whether for leisure or work. It proved insightful for bringing out different entanglements of ID services with people who preferred to stay at home as well as people who actively enjoyed going outside.

Do you order out when it rains?

The rains in Chennai are torrential. Especially during the monsoon months, the city regularly floods to the point of infrastructural damage. During the cyclones, It is a regular occurrence that residents are stuck inside their homes for a day or two. The throes of the floods affect citizens disproportionately, based on neighbourhood and type of housing. This question gave me a clue of what privileges they were used to and their awareness and perception of the workers who are involved in providing ID services.

Are there any places you don't order from on principle because you love to physically go there?

My intention here was to explore instances where ID was insufficient for the users. What were the new motivations to visit brick and mortar sites when not absolutely necessary to consume a product? When did the convenience of ID actually pose an obstacle to the full consumption experience?

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