

Cravings on Call: How Convenience of Food Delivery Feeds UCSD Undergraduates

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Background

- College students often engage in poor dietary habits, such as frequent consumption of high-calorie, low-nutrient foods, driven by time constraints, limited kitchen access, and low nutrition literacy¹
- Food delivery apps are quick but tend to promote ultra-processed options over nutritious foods²
- More than 70% of food delivery application users from a sample population of American 18 to 25-year-olds reveal that they order fast foods that are high in calories, like fries and pizza³
- Study explores how food delivery app use impacts UCSD students' diets, addressing gaps in behavior, motivation, and nutrition insight.

Objective

To evaluate how the accessibility and frequency of food delivery services impact the dietary habits of UCSD undergraduate students

Methods

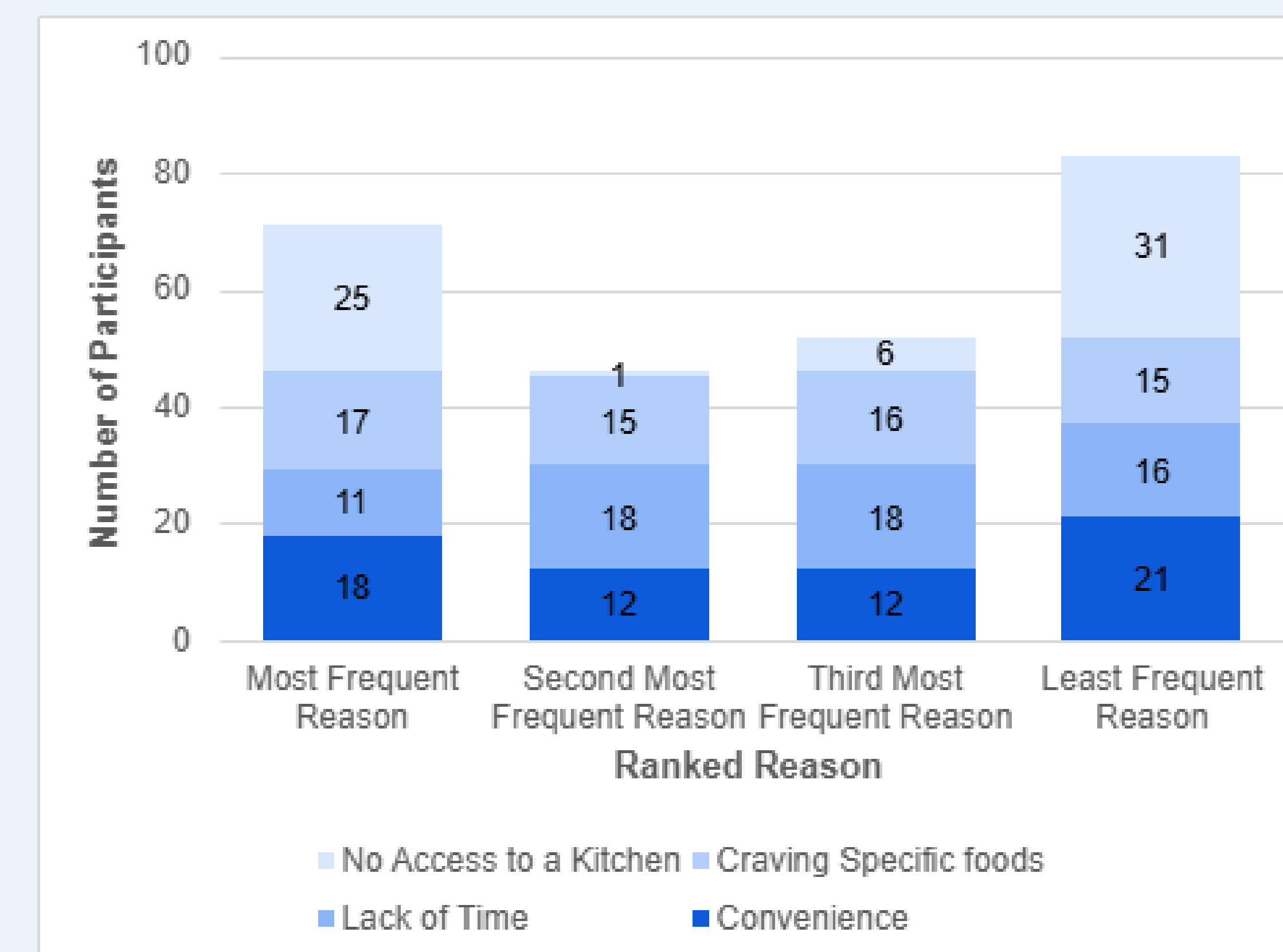
- Cross-sectional study using a Google Form survey distributed to UCSD undergraduate students, conducted from April-May 2025
- Exposure variables:** Frequency and convenience of food delivery service usage
- Outcome variables:** Dietary habits, including portion size, food choices, and perceived nutritional impact
- Recruitment methods:**
 - Sharing the survey on social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat)
 - Reaching out to student clubs and organizations
 - Contacting the UCSD Department of Public Health for distribution support
- Survey items:**
 - Frequency of food delivery service use
 - Typical food types ordered and portion sizes
 - Self-perceived health and nutrition habits
- Data analyzed using SPSS v.29 with descriptive stats, chi-square, t-tests, ANOVA, and logistic regression

Results

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics (N = 63)

Age	N (%)
18	5 (8%)
19	6 (9%)
20	14 (22%)
21	27 (43%)
22+	11 (18%)
Academic Year	
First Year (Freshman)	6 (9%)
Second Year (Sophomore)	7 (11%)
Third Year (Junior)	25 (40%)
Fourth Year (Senior)	25 (40%)
Gender	
Female	37 (59%)
Male	26 (41%)
Food Delivery Application Usage	
Use	52 (83%)
Do Not Use	11 (17%)

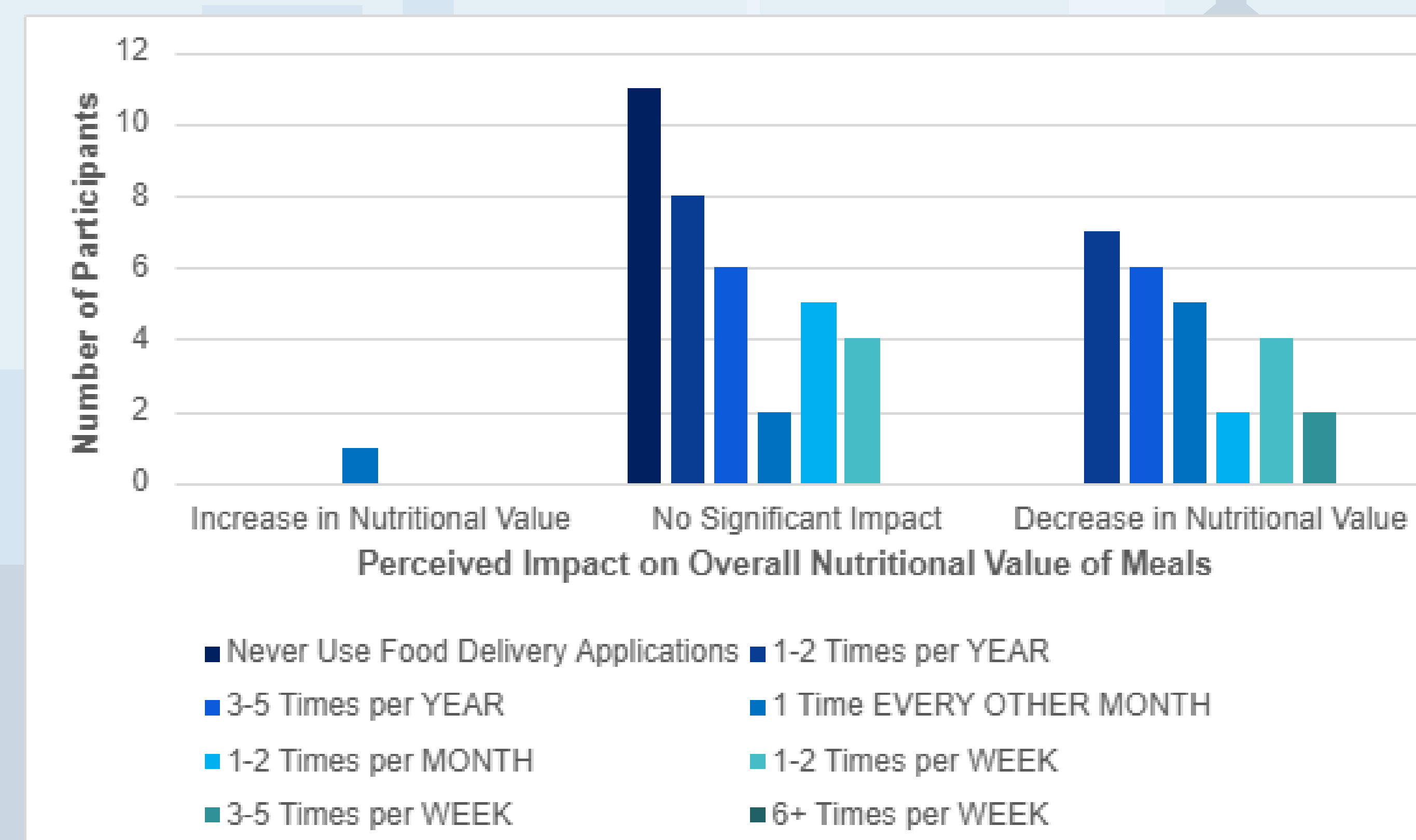
Figure 1. Reasons Why UCSD Students Use Food Delivery Applications



ANOVA test shows that "No Access to a Kitchen" is a group that is significantly different than the other groups ($p = 0.027$).

Not having access to a kitchen was the most and least frequent reason why students used food delivery applications, which makes access to a kitchen a significant factor.

Figure 2. Food Delivery Application Usage and Perceived Impact on the Overall Nutritional Value of Meals



Chi-square test showed no significant association between the frequency of food delivery application usage and the perceived impact on the overall nutritional value of meals consumed by UCSD undergraduate students ($p = 0.535$).

Conclusions

- About 39.7% of students say they use food delivery apps mainly due to a lack of kitchen access, while studies reported convenience as the main reason⁴
- For UCSD students, structural barriers (e.g., limited kitchen access) may drive delivery use more than lifestyle convenience
- No significant association was found between how often students used food delivery apps and their perceived impact on meal nutritional quality
- Yet, most students reported that using food delivery applications negatively impacted the overall nutritional quality of their meals

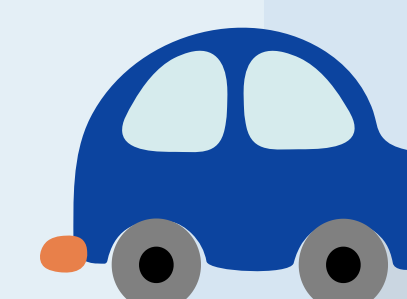
Policy Implications

- Partner with local restaurants and delivery platforms (DoorDash and Postmates) to promote healthy, affordable options by providing incentives
- UC San Diego Housing, Dining, and Hospitality (HDH) can improve dorm room living by providing increased access to kitchens, to promote home cooking

Acknowledgments

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References



- No association between the frequency of food delivery application usage and the perceived impact on the overall nutritional value of meals
- However, most students believe that using food delivery applications did not positively impact the overall nutritional value of their meals

