



Entrepreneurship in the Quick Service Restaurant Industry: an Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Quick service restaurants (QSRs) are often described as standardized and corporately controlled, yet entrepreneurship drives their creation, adaptation, and growth. This study examines how entrepreneurial orientation (EO), innovation, and digital adoption relate to firm performance among QSR operators in Delhi, India, and tests whether ownership structure and environmental dynamism condition these relationships. A structured questionnaire measuring EO, innovation, digital adoption, environmental dynamism, and perceived performance on five-point Likert scales was designed for owners, franchisees, and outlet managers across six zones of Delhi (N = 315). Analyses included reliability and validity assessment, exploratory factor analysis, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, bootstrapped mediation, moderation analysis, independent-samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA with Tukey post hoc tests, and chi-square tests. In the analysed dataset, EO strongly predicted innovation ($\beta = .61, p < .001$) and performance ($\beta = .29, p < .001$); innovation partially mediated the EO–performance link (indirect effect = .12, 95% CI [.05, .19]); digital adoption added a smaller but significant effect ($\beta = .11, p = .039$); and environmental dynamism strengthened the EO–performance relationship (interaction $b = .28, p < .001$). Independent owners reported higher EO than franchisees and company-managed managers, $F(2, 312) = 8.80, p < .001, \eta^2 = .053$. The paper offers theoretical, managerial, and policy implications for QSR entrepreneurship in Delhi's urban market

1. INTRODUCTION

Delhi's food landscape is among the most varied in India. Traditional street-food clusters in the walled city, café and fast-casual strips in South Delhi, high-footfall food courts in malls and metro stations, and a dense network of delivery-first kitchens coexist with national and international QSR brands. For millions of residents, quick service food is a daily convenience; for tens of thousands of people, it is a livelihood and a business. This combination of large demand, intense competition, and low entry barriers makes the city an ideal setting in which to study how entrepreneurship shapes the QSR industry.

Globally, the QSR model was itself an entrepreneurial invention. A reorganized drive-in kitchen built around a narrow menu and assembly-line production, combined with a franchising system that distributed capital and operating risk, created a template that spread worldwide (Kroc, 1977; Love, 1986). Critics have argued that this template, with its emphasis on efficiency, calculability, and control, leaves little room for creativity (Ritzer, 1993). Yet contemporary evidence points to ongoing entrepreneurial renewal: new menu concepts, new service formats, digital ordering, delivery platforms, and cloud kitchens continually alter the competitive landscape (Kraus et al., 2019; Nambisan, 2017). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated these shifts and tested operators' capacity to adapt (Alonso et al., 2020; Bartik et al., 2020; Madeira et al., 2021). Three gaps motivate the present study. First, entrepreneurship research has concentrated on technology firms and high-growth ventures, while the "everyday" small businesses that dominate consumer services receive less attention (Welter et al., 2017). Second, restaurant research has tended to examine operations and consumer behavior rather than entrepreneurial behavior. Third, evidence from emerging-market metropolises such as Delhi is scarce, even though institutional conditions,





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consumer preferences, financing, and platform ecosystems differ from those in the developed-market settings that dominate the literature. Studies of food-delivery adoption in India show that app-based channels are reshaping consumer behavior..

(Ray et al., 2019), but little is known about how operators' entrepreneurial postures translate into innovation and performance

1.1 Research Objectives

The study pursues five objectives:

1. To measure the level of entrepreneurial orientation, innovation, and digital adoption among QSR operators in Delhi.
2. To examine the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on innovation and firm performance.
3. To test whether innovation mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance.
4. To assess the contribution of digital adoption to performance and the moderating role of environmental dynamism.
5. To compare entrepreneurial orientation, innovation, digital adoption, and performance across ownership structures, outlet age, gender, and location.

1.2 Contribution and Structure

Theoretically, the study applies entrepreneurial orientation, innovation, and dynamic capability perspectives to QSR in an emerging-market metropolis. Practically, it offers operators and franchisors evidence on which capabilities relate to performance. Methodologically, it provides a transparent, reproducible analytical pipeline. Section 2 reviews literature and develops hypotheses; Section 3 presents the conceptual model; Section 4 describes the methodology; Section 5 reports results; Section 6 discusses findings; Section 7 sets out implications; Section 8 notes limitations and future research; and Section 9 concludes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Entrepreneurship in the QSR Context

Entrepreneurship has been conceptualized as innovation that disrupts established arrangements (Schumpeter, 1934), as alertness to unexploited profit opportunities (Kirzner, 1973), and as the discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). In QSR, these ideas appear in the creation of new concepts, the adaptation of menus to local tastes, and the redesign of service systems. Franchising adds another dimension: franchisees commit personal capital and bear risk while operating inside a brand system, which has led scholars to describe them as constrained entrepreneurs (Combs et al., 2011; Ketchen et al., 2011). Entrepreneurship in QSR therefore spans independent founders, franchisees, and managers who act entrepreneurially within company-owned networks. Table 1 summarizes the hypotheses developed in this section and their theoretical bases.

Table 1: Research hypotheses and theoretical basis

Hypothesis	Statement	Theoretical basis
H1	EO has a positive effect on innovation	EO theory; innovation research (Anderson et al., 2015; Gomezelj, 2016)
H2	EO has a positive effect on firm performance	EO–performance meta-analysis (Rauch et al., 2009; Wales et al., 2020)
H3	Innovation positively affects performance and mediates the EO–performance relationship	Business model and innovation research (Foss & Saebi, 2017); strategic entrepreneurship
H4	Digital adoption has a positive effect on performance	Digital entrepreneurship (Nambisan, 2017); food-delivery research (Alalwan, 2020; Ray et al., 2019)
H5	EO differs across ownership structures, being highest among independent owners	Franchising research (Ketchen et al., 2011; Michael & Combs, 2008)
H6	Environmental dynamism strengthens the EO–performance relationship	Contingency perspective (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005; Covin & Slevin, 1989)
H7	Newer outlets (five years or less) report higher digital adoption than older outlets	Liability of newness and digital-native entry (Kraus et al., 2019)
H8	Multi-platform delivery use is associated with ownership structure	Plural-form and franchising control logic (Bradach, 1997)

Note. EO = entrepreneurial orientation.

2.2 Entrepreneurial Orientation and Innovation (H1)

Entrepreneurial orientation reflects a firm's strategic posture of innovativeness, risk taking, and proactiveness (Covin & Slevin, 1989), extended by competitive aggressiveness and autonomy (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Recent work reconceptualizes EO as a behavioral and multilevel phenomenon (Anderson et al., 2015; Wales et al., 2020). By definition, EO encourages experimentation, so firms with higher EO are expected to introduce more product, process, service, and business model innovations. Reviews of hospitality innovation show that employee involvement, market orientation, and supportive management underpin innovative output (Gomezelj, 2016), and studies of restaurants and hospitality family firms link innovativeness to performance outcomes (Hallak et al., 2018; Kallmuenzer & Peters, 2018). Accordingly:

H1. Entrepreneurial orientation has a positive effect on innovation.

2.3 Entrepreneurial Orientation and Performance (H2)

A meta-analysis of EO research reported a positive association between EO and business performance across contexts (Rauch et al., 2009), though later work cautions that the strength depends on how EO is conceptualized and on contextual conditions (Wales et al., 2020). In QSR, proactive operators who anticipate demand shifts, such as dietary preferences or digital ordering, and who are willing to commit resources to new locations or formats may outperform passive rivals. Hence

H2. Entrepreneurial orientation has a positive effect on firm performance.

2.4 Innovation as a Mediator (H3)

Innovation is the mechanism through which entrepreneurial posture is converted into market outcomes. Business model research emphasizes that innovation in how value is created and captured can drive performance (Foss & Saebi, 2017), and dynamic capabilities research argues that the capacity to sense and seize opportunities and reconfigure resources underlies advantage (Teece, 2018). If EO shapes performance partly by stimulating innovation, innovation should mediate the relationship, consistent with strategic entrepreneurship logic. Thus:

H3. Innovation positively affects performance and partially mediates the relationship between EO and performance.

2.5 Digital Adoption and Performance (H4)

Digital technologies change the nature of entrepreneurial uncertainty, processes, and outcomes (Nambisan, 2017). For QSR, digital adoption includes mobile ordering, digital payments, loyalty programs, delivery platform integration, and digital marketing. Research on food-ordering apps shows that perceived usefulness, convenience, and enjoyment influence consumer adoption and continued use (Alalwan, 2020; Ray et al., 2019; Yeo et al., 2017), and the pandemic accelerated shifts in consumer behavior toward online channels (Sheth, 2020). Operators who adopt digital tools can reach more customers, collect data, and improve order accuracy. Therefore:

H4. Digital adoption has a positive effect on firm performance.

2.6 Ownership Structure and EO (H5)

Franchising offers a proven template, brand recognition, and training, but it also constrains decision rights, so franchisees often have less discretion than independent owners (Combs et al., 2011; Ketchen et al., 2011). Managers of company-owned outlets typically operate under centralized control. Independent owners, who bear full risk and enjoy full autonomy, are likely to display higher entrepreneurial orientation. Michael and Combs (2008) showed that franchisee outcomes depend on both franchisee capabilities and franchisor practices, which underscores the role of structure. Hence:

H5. EO differs across ownership structures, with independent owners reporting higher EO than franchisees and company-managed outlet managers.

2.7 Environmental Dynamism as a Moderator (H6)

Contingency perspectives hold that the benefits of EO depend on environmental conditions (Covin & Slevin, 1989; Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005). In dynamic environments, characterized by rapidly changing tastes, technologies, and competition, proactive and innovative behavior should yield larger returns because opportunities are more abundant and incumbents' routines are less reliable. Delhi's QSR market, with its high competition, platform dependence, and shifting consumer preferences, is a dynamic setting. Accordingly:

H6. Environmental dynamism strengthens the positive relationship between EO and firm performance.

2.8 Outlet Age, Digital Adoption, and Delivery Platforms (H7, H8)

New ventures face the liability of newness but can design digital capabilities into their operations from the start, whereas older outlets may be locked into legacy routines (Kraus et al., 2019). This suggests that newer outlets adopt digital tools more readily (H7). Finally, in plural-form systems, company control may differ from franchisee discretion in channel decisions (Bradach, 1997), so the use of multiple delivery platforms may vary by ownership (H8):

H7. Newer outlets (five years or less) report higher digital adoption than older outlets.

H8. Multi-platform delivery use is associated with ownership structure.

3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The conceptual model positions EO as the primary antecedent of firm performance. EO influences innovation (H1) and performance (H2); innovation influences performance and mediates the EO–performance link (H3); digital adoption has a direct effect on performance (H4); and environmental dynamism moderates the EO–performance relationship (H6). Ownership structure is treated as an antecedent differentiating EO (H5), while outlet age and delivery platform use are examined as contextual correlates of digital behavior (H7, H8). Outlet age, number of employees, ownership type, and gender enter performance models as controls. The model draws on strategic entrepreneurship logic, in which entrepreneurial behavior and strategic capability jointly create value (Teece, 2018)

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The study uses a quantitative, cross-sectional, explanatory survey design. A structured questionnaire is the primary instrument, and hypotheses are tested using inferential statistics. The design is appropriate because the aim is to test theoretically derived relationships among measurable constructs across a defined population.

4.2 Population, Sampling Frame, and Sample Size

The target population consists of owners, franchisee-operators, and outlet managers of QSR outlets operating in the National Capital Territory of Delhi. A QSR outlet is defined as a food-service establishment offering a limited menu, rapid preparation, and counter, takeaway, drive-through, or delivery service. The unit of analysis is the outlet, represented by one respondent with decision-making responsibility (owner, franchisee, or manager).

A sample of $N = 315$ was specified. The sample size is justified on three grounds. First, the questionnaire has 30 measurement items, and 315 respondents exceed the commonly recommended ratio of ten observations per item (Hair et al., 2019). Second, a sensitivity calculation based on the noncentral F distribution indicates that, with $\alpha = .05$ and nine predictors, the design has power of about .79 to detect an overall regression effect of $f^2 = .05$ and about .87 to detect $f^2 = .03$ for an individual predictor (Cohen, 1988). Third, the sample supports subgroup comparisons across three ownership categories with at least 65 respondents per group.

A quota-based stratified approach allocated the sample across six zones of Delhi to ensure geographic spread, with respondents then selected through convenience and referral within each zone. Table 2 shows the allocation.

Table 2: Sample allocation across Delhi zones (N = 315)

Zone	Illustrative market character	<i>n</i>	%
South Delhi	Café and fast-casual clusters, high-income catchments	66	21.0
West Delhi	Residential markets, mixed independent and franchise outlets	60	19.0
North Delhi	University belts, dense commercial and street-food areas	55	17.5
East Delhi	High-density residential and value-oriented markets	50	15.9
Central Delhi	Traditional bazaars, office and tourist footfall	45	14.3
New Delhi	Business districts, malls, and metro-linked food courts	39	12.4
Total		315	100.0

4.3 Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire is designed for administration in person or online, with respondents assured of anonymity and voluntary participation. A pilot with a small group of operators is recommended to refine wording, and the instrument is available. Participants should be informed of the study's purpose, and no personally identifying information is collected.

4.4 Measurement Instrument

All constructs were measured on five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Likert, 1932). EO items draw on the innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness dimensions of Covin and Slevin (1989) and Lumpkin and Dess (1996). Innovation items cover product, process, service, and business model changes (Gomezeli, 2016). Digital adoption items were informed by research on food-ordering technologies (Alalwan, 2020; Ray et al., 2019). Environmental dynamism draws on Miller and Friesen (1982). Performance is measured subjectively, relative to competitors, which is common in small-firm research when objective data are unavailable (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005).

Table 3 presents the measures.

Table 3: Measurement instrument: constructs and items

Construct	Items	Illustrative item wording
Entrepreneurial orientation (EO)	9	"We frequently introduce new menu items or concepts"; "We are willing to invest in uncertain but promising opportunities"; "We usually act before competitors respond"
Innovation (INN)	6	"We have improved our kitchen or service processes in the last two years"; "We have introduced new service or ordering formats"
Digital adoption (DA)	5	"Most of our orders are received through digital channels"; "We use digital tools for payments, loyalty, or marketing"
Firm performance (FP)	6	"Our sales growth is better than competitors"; "Our profitability is better than competitors"; "Customer satisfaction is higher than competitors"
Environmental dynamism (ED)	4	"Customer tastes in our area change rapidly"; "Competitors frequently launch new offerings"
Demographic and outlet profile	8	Zone, ownership type, gender, age group, education, outlet age, employees, use of multiple delivery platforms

4.5 Statistical Tests and Rationale

Table 4 lists the tests used and their purposes. Analyses were conducted in Python using the SciPy and statsmodels libraries; the full script is provided.

Table 4: Statistical tests, purposes, and hypotheses addressed

Test or procedure	Purpose	Hypothesis
Descriptive statistics, skewness, kurtosis	Profile respondents; check normality (	skew
Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, AVE	Reliability and convergent validity (Cronbach, 1951; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994)	Measurement
KMO and Bartlett's test; exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation	Sampling adequacy and dimensionality (Bartlett, 1954; Kaiser, 1974)	Measurement
Harman's single-factor test	Common method bias screening (Podsakoff et al., 2003)	Measurement
Fornell–Larcker criterion	Discriminant validity	Measurement
Pearson correlation	Bivariate associations	H1–H4, H6
Simple linear regression	EO → innovation	H1
Hierarchical multiple regression, VIF, Durbin–Watson	EO, innovation, digital adoption, dynamism → performance with controls (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019)	H2, H3, H4
Bootstrapped mediation (5,000 resamples)	Indirect effect of EO on performance through innovation (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2018; Preacher & Hayes, 2008)	H3
Moderated regression with simple slopes	EO × dynamism interaction (Aiken & West, 1991)	H6
One-way ANOVA, Levene's test, Tukey HSD, Kruskal–Wallis	Group differences by ownership	H5
Independent-samples <i>t</i> -test (Welch)	Differences by outlet age and gender	H7, exploratory
Chi-square test, Cramér's <i>V</i>	Association between categorical variables	H8, exploratory

Note. Significance level $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed).

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Participation is voluntary, responses are anonymous, data are stored securely, and results are reported only in aggregate.

Where real data are collected, institutional ethical approval should be obtained and informed consent documented.

4.7 Data Source and Transparency Statement

For this illustrative manuscript, a dataset of 315 respondents was generated by a seeded simulation (script `simulate_data.py`) that assigns zone and ownership quotas, produces five latent constructs with plausible interrelationships, and converts them to bounded integer Likert responses. The simulated structure deliberately includes some relationships that are supported and some that are not, so that the analytical pipeline can be demonstrated realistically. Because the data are artificial, the findings carry no empirical authority about Delhi's QSR sector. Researchers using this template should replace the data file with real responses (same column names) and re-run `analyze.py`.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Respondent Profile

Table 5 summarizes the profile of the 315 respondents. Franchisees formed the largest group (41.9%), followed by independent owners (37.5%) and company-managed outlet managers (20.6%). Men accounted for 65.1% of respondents. The majority were aged 31 to 40 years (36.2%) and held a graduate degree (53.7%). Outlets had been operating for an average of 5.10 years ($SD = 3.48$) and employed an average of 10.19 workers ($SD = 6.18$). Ownership type was independent of zone, $\chi^2(10, N = 315) = 7.96, p = .633$, indicating a balanced distribution of ownership types across the city.

Table 5: Profile of respondents (N = 315)

Variable	Category	<i>n</i>	%
Ownership	Franchisee	132	41.9
	Independent owner	118	37.5
	Company-managed outlet manager	65	20.6
Gender	Male	205	65.1
	Female	110	34.9
Age group	21–30 years	85	27.0
	31–40 years	114	36.2
	41–50 years	77	24.4
	Above 50 years	39	12.4
Education	Up to higher secondary	48	15.2
	Graduate	169	53.7
	Postgraduate	98	31.1
Multiple delivery platforms	Yes	192	61.0
	No	123	39.0

Note. Outlet age $M = 5.10$ years ($SD = 3.48$); number of employees $M = 10.19$ ($SD = 6.18$).

5.2 Reliability and Validity

Table 6 presents reliability and convergent validity. All Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the .70 threshold (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), ranging from .761 (environmental dynamism) to .919 (EO). Composite reliability ranged from .849 to .933, and average variance extracted (AVE) values exceeded .50 for all constructs, supporting convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Standardized loadings ranged from .68 to .85.

Table 6: Reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE	Loading range
EO	9	.919	.933	.609	.68–.85
INN	6	.897	.921	.660	.76–.85
DA	5	.832	.882	.599	.75–.80
FP	6	.874	.905	.615	.72–.83
ED	4	.761	.849	.586	.73–.82

Note. CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted. Loadings are from single-factor solutions per construct.

The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure was .93 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(435) = 4,707.5, p < .001$,

indicating that the data were well suited to factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974). Exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation extracted five factors with eigenvalues above 1, which together explained 62.2% of the variance. Every item loaded on its intended factor (all primary loadings at .63 or higher) with cross-loadings of .33 or lower. Table 7 reports the factor structure summary.

Table 7: Exploratory factor analysis summary (varimax rotation)

Factor (construct)	Eigenvalue	Rotated variance (%)	Minimum primary loading	Maximum cross-loading
1 (EO)	9.41	17.9	.63	.33
2 (INN)	2.69	13.4	.71	.30
3 (FP)	2.54	12.7	.69	.24
4 (DA)	2.22	10.2	.75	.20
5 (ED)	1.80	7.9	.73	.10
Cumulative		62.2		

Note. KMO = .93; Bartlett's $\chi^2(435) = 4,707.5$, $p < .001$. Eigenvalues are from the unrotated solution, listed in descending order; they are not specific to the rotated factors. Rotated variance is shown for each construct's factor.

Harman's single-factor test indicated that the first unrotated factor accounted for 31.4% of the variance, well below the 50% benchmark, suggesting that common method bias was unlikely to be a serious problem (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

5.3 Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Discriminant Validity

Table 8 presents means, standard deviations, skewness, kurtosis, and correlations. Mean scores were moderately high, ranging from 3.68 (ED) to 3.81 (DA). Skewness and kurtosis values were within ± 1 , supporting approximate normality. EO correlated strongly with innovation ($r = .605$, $p < .001$) and moderately with performance ($r = .455$, $p < .001$). Innovation ($r = .419$) and digital adoption ($r = .245$) were also positively correlated with performance (both $p < .001$). Environmental dynamism had a small correlation with performance ($r = .128$, $p = .023$) and was not significantly correlated with EO, innovation, or digital adoption.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics, correlations, and discriminant validity

Construct	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skew	Kurt	1	2	3	4	5
1. EO	3.75	0.63	-0.23	-0.39	.780				
2. INN	3.76	0.66	-0.09	-0.60	.605***	.813			
3. DA	3.81	0.58	-0.30	-0.07	.278***	.263***	.774		
4. FP	3.73	0.61	-0.11	-0.42	.455***	.419***	.245***	.784	
5. ED	3.68	0.60	-0.28	0.26	.083	.030	.047	.128*	.765

Note. N = 315. Bold diagonal values are the square roots of AVE. * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

The Fornell–Larcker criterion was satisfied: the square root of each construct's AVE (.765 to .813) exceeded its highest correlation with any other construct (maximum $r = .605$), supporting discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

5.4 Test of H1: EO and Innovation

Simple linear regression showed that EO significantly predicted innovation (Table 9). EO accounted for 36.6% of the variance in innovation, $F(1, 313) = 180.67$, $p < .001$. H1 is supported.

Table 9: Simple regression of innovation on EO (H1)

Predictor	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Constant	1.390	0.179		7.76	< .001	[1.038, 1.742]
EO	0.633	0.047	.605	13.44	< .001	[0.541, 0.726]

Note. $R^2 = .366$; $F(1, 313) = 180.67$, $p < .001$.

5.5 Tests of H2, H3 (Direct Effect), and H4: Hierarchical Regression

A two-step hierarchical regression predicted performance (all continuous variables standardized). Step 1 entered controls (outlet age, employees, ownership dummies, gender) and explained a non-significant 2.3% of variance, $F(5, 309) = 1.46$, $p = .201$. Step 2 added EO, innovation, digital adoption, and environmental dynamism, increasing R^2 to .269 (adjusted $R^2 = .247$), $\Delta R^2 = .246$, F change(4, 305) = 25.61, $p < .001$. The full model was significant, $F(9, 305) = 12.46$, $p < .001$. Variance inflation factors were all below 1.71 and the Durbin–Watson statistic was 2.02, so multicollinearity and autocorrelation were not concerns.

As Table 10 shows, EO ($\beta = .289$, $p < .001$), innovation ($\beta = .207$, $p = .001$), digital adoption ($\beta = .107$, $p = .039$), and environmental dynamism ($\beta = .098$, $p = .047$) each had a significant positive effect on performance. None of the control variables was significant. H2 and H4 are supported, as is the direct-effect component of H3.

Table 10: Hierarchical regression predicting firm performance (standardized coefficients)

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	95% CI
<i>Step 1: controls</i>					
Outlet age	.052	0.049	1.07	.288	[−.044, .149]
Employees	−.057	0.049	−1.16	.246	[−.155, .040]
Franchisee (vs. independent)	−.054	0.113	−0.48	.632	[−.276, .168]
Company-managed (vs. independent)	.033	0.138	0.24	.810	[−.238, .304]
Gender (female)	.099	0.103	0.96	.340	[−.105, .302]
<i>Step 2: focal predictors</i>					
EO	.289	0.064	4.52	< .001	[.163, .415]
Innovation	.207	0.062	3.32	.001	[.085, .330]
Digital adoption	.107	0.052	2.07	.039	[.005, .208]
Environmental dynamism	.098	0.049	1.99	.047	[.001, .195]

Note. Step 1 $R^2 = .023$; Step 2 $R^2 = .269$, $\Delta R^2 = .246$, $p < .001$. Coefficients shown are from the full model. Maximum VIF = 1.70; Durbin–Watson = 2.02.

5.6 Test of H3: Mediation by Innovation

Mediation was tested using a bootstrap procedure with 5,000 resamples, controlling for digital adoption and environmental dynamism (Hayes, 2018; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). EO had a significant effect on innovation ($a = .605$), and innovation had a significant effect on performance ($b = .196$). The total effect of EO on performance was .394, and the direct effect after including innovation fell to .276. The indirect effect was .119, with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval of [.050, .192] that excludes zero, and the Sobel test confirmed significance ($z = 3.34$, $p < .001$). Approximately 30.1% of the total effect was transmitted through innovation. Because the direct effect remained significant, the pattern indicates partial mediation, and H3 is supported (Table 11).

Table 11: Mediation analysis: EO → innovation → performance

Path	Estimate	95% CI or test
EO → Innovation (a)	.605	Significant
Innovation → Performance (b)	.196	Significant
Total effect (c)	.394	—
Direct effect (c')	.276	Significant
Indirect effect ($a \times b$)	.119	[.050, .192]
Proportion mediated	30.1%	Sobel $z = 3.34$, $p < .001$

Note. Unstandardized coefficients; 5,000 bootstrap resamples; digital adoption and environmental dynamism included as covariates.

5.7 Test of H6: Moderation by Environmental Dynamism

Mean-centered EO and environmental dynamism and their product were entered in a regression predicting performance, controlling for digital adoption. The interaction term was significant ($b = .276$, $SE = .077$, $t = 3.57$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.124, .428]) and increased explained variance by 3.0%. The overall model explained 26.0% of the variance in performance. Simple slope analysis (Table 12) showed that the EO–performance relationship was positive and significant at all levels of dynamism but stronger when dynamism was high (slope = .564) than when it was low (slope = .236). H6 is supported.

Table 12: Simple slopes of EO on performance at levels of environmental dynamism

Level of environmental dynamism	Slope	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Low (−1 <i>SD</i>)	.236	.066	3.57	< .001
Mean	.400	.049	8.21	< .001
High (+1 <i>SD</i>)	.564	.068	8.28	< .001

Note. Interaction term $b = .276$, $p < .001$; $\Delta R^2 = .030$; $df = 310$.

5.8 Test of H5: Differences by Ownership Structure

A one-way ANOVA tested EO differences across ownership types. Levene's test was non-significant ($p = .239$), so variances were assumed equal. EO differed significantly by ownership, $F(2, 312) = 8.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .053$, a medium effect. The non-parametric Kruskal–Wallis test confirmed the result ($p < .001$). Tukey post hoc comparisons (Table 13) showed that independent owners ($M = 3.93$) reported significantly higher EO than franchisees ($M = 3.67$, mean difference = .266, $p = .002$) and company-managed managers ($M = 3.58$, mean difference = .353, $p < .001$), while franchisees and company-managed managers did not differ ($p = .628$). H5 is supported.

Table 13: One-way ANOVA and Tukey post hoc comparisons for EO by ownership

Ownership	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Independent owner	118	3.93	0.60
Franchisee	132	3.67	0.67
Company-managed manager	65	3.58	0.53

Comparison	Mean difference	<i>p</i> (Tukey)	95% CI
Independent vs. Franchisee	.266	.002	[.082, .451]
Independent vs. Company-managed	.353	< .001	[.128, .578]
Franchisee vs. Company-managed	.086	.628	[−.135, .307]

Note. ANOVA: $F(2, 312) = 8.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .053$. Levene's $p = .239$.

Supplementary ANOVAs showed no significant ownership differences in innovation, $F(2, 312) = 1.77$, $p = .172$, $\eta^2 = .011$; digital adoption, $F(2, 312) = 0.98$, $p = .377$, $\eta^2 = .006$; or performance, $F(2, 312) = 1.84$, $p = .160$, $\eta^2 = .012$. Performance also did not differ across the six zones, $F(5, 309) = 1.18$, $p = .319$.

5.9 Tests of H7 and Exploratory Group Comparisons: *t*-Tests

Welch independent-samples *t*-tests (Table 14) found that digital adoption did not differ between newer outlets (five years or less; $M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.59$, $n = 203$) and older outlets ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.57$, $n = 112$), $t(234.4) = 0.56$, $p = .577$, $d = 0.07$. H7 is not supported. Exploratory comparisons by gender found no significant differences in EO or performance.

Table 14: Independent-samples *t*-tests (Welch)

Comparison	Group 1 (<i>M</i> , <i>SD</i> , <i>n</i>)	Group 2 (<i>M</i> , <i>SD</i> , <i>n</i>)	<i>t</i> (<i>df</i>)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Digital adoption: ≤5 yrs vs. >5 yrs	3.82, 0.59, 203	3.79, 0.57, 112	0.56 (234.4)	.577	0.07
EO: Male vs. Female	3.75, 0.61, 205	3.74, 0.68, 110	0.19 (202.1)	.853	0.02
Performance: Male vs. Female	3.71, 0.59, 205	3.77, 0.64, 110	−0.86 (208.0)	.393	−0.10

Note. Welch's correction applied. All effects negligible.

5.10 Test of H8 and Exploratory Associations: Chi-Square

Overall, 61.0% of outlets used multiple delivery platforms. The proportion was 64.6% among company-managed outlets,

56.1% among franchisees, and 64.4% among independent owners, but the association with ownership was not significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 315) = 2.29, p = .319$, Cramér's $V = .085$. H8 is not supported. Multi-platform use was also not significantly associated with performance tertile, $\chi^2(2, N = 315) = 2.88, p = .237, V = .096$ (Table 15).

Table 15: Chi-square tests of association

Test	Variables	χ^2	df	p	Cramér's V
H8	Ownership $\times$ multi-platform use	2.29	2	.319	.085
Exploratory	Multi-platform use $\times$ performance tertile	2.88	2	.237	.096
Sample check	Zone $\times$ ownership	7.96	10	.633	—

Note. All expected cell counts exceeded 5 for the first test (minimum expected count = 25.4).

5.11 Summary of Hypothesis Tests

Table 16 summarizes the outcomes. Six of the eight hypotheses were supported.

Table 16: Summary of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Test	Key result	Decision
H1: EO $\rightarrow$ Innovation	Simple regression	$\beta = .605, p < .001$	Supported
H2: EO $\rightarrow$ Performance	Hierarchical regression	$\beta = .289, p < .001$	Supported
H3: Innovation $\rightarrow$ Performance; mediation	Regression; bootstrap	$\beta = .207, p = .001$; indirect = .119, CI [.050, .192]	Supported (partial mediation)
H4: Digital adoption $\rightarrow$ Performance	Hierarchical regression	$\beta = .107, p = .039$	Supported
H5: EO differs by ownership	ANOVA, Tukey	$F(2, 312) = 8.80, p < .001$	Supported
H6: Dynamism moderates EO $\rightarrow$ Performance	Moderated regression	$b = .276, p < .001$	Supported
H7: Newer outlets adopt more digital tools	Welch t -test	$t(234.4) = 0.56, p = .577$	Not supported
H8: Multi-platform use associated with ownership	Chi-square	$\chi^2(2) = 2.29, p = .319$	Not supported

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 EO, Innovation, and Performance

The analysis supports the central proposition that entrepreneurship matters inside a sector usually regarded as standardized. EO was strongly related to innovation ($\beta = .61$), accounting for over a third of its variance, and remained a significant predictor of performance after accounting for innovation, digital adoption, dynamism, and structural controls. This is consistent with meta-analytic evidence that EO is positively associated with business performance (Rauch et al., 2009) and with hospitality studies linking innovativeness and resilience to restaurant performance (Hallak et al., 2018; Kallmuenzer & Peters, 2018). It also aligns with the view that entrepreneurial behavior is multilevel and context-sensitive (Wales et al., 2020).

The mediation result adds nuance. Roughly 30% of EO's total effect on performance operated through innovation, while the remainder was direct. This partial mediation suggests that entrepreneurial postures influence performance through observable innovation outputs, such as new menu items, improved processes, and new service formats, but also through other mechanisms, such as faster decision making, opportunity alertness, and willingness to commit to new sites. This pattern fits strategic entrepreneurship logic and dynamic capabilities perspectives, in which the ability to sense and seize opportunities is distinct from, but complementary to, the production of specific innovations (Foss & Saebi, 2017; Teece, 2018).

6.2 Digital Adoption

Digital adoption had a smaller but significant effect on performance ($\beta = .11$). The modest magnitude may reflect the fact that digital tools have become widespread in Delhi's QSR market, with mean adoption scores high and relatively homogeneous across outlets, so they function more as a competitive necessity than a differentiator. This reading is

consistent with research showing that consumers increasingly expect app-based ordering (Alalwan, 2020; Ray et al., 2019; Yeo et al., 2017) and that the pandemic normalized online channels (Sheth, 2020). The correlation between EO and digital adoption ($r = .28$) suggests that entrepreneurial operators are somewhat more likely to adopt, but adoption alone is not sufficient for superior performance; it must be integrated with operations and customer experience (Nambisan, 2017).

6.3 The Moderating Role of Environmental Dynamism

The significant interaction indicates that EO pays off more in turbulent environments. At high dynamism, the EO–performance slope was more than twice as steep as at low dynamism (.564 versus .236). This is consistent with the contingency view that entrepreneurial behavior is most valuable where change creates opportunities and renders established routines less reliable (Covin & Slevin, 1989; Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005). For Delhi operators, the practical implication is that proactive innovation is most rewarding in fast-changing micro-markets, such as areas with intense competition or shifting demographic and taste patterns, while in stable markets the premium on entrepreneurial behavior is smaller, though still positive.

6.4 Ownership Structure

Independent owners reported the highest EO, whereas franchisees and company-managed managers did not differ from each other. This pattern matches the argument that franchisees are constrained entrepreneurs who trade autonomy for a proven system (Combs et al., 2011; Ketchen et al., 2011) and that company-managed outlets operate under centralized control (Bradach, 1997). It also echoes evidence that franchisee outcomes depend on both individual capabilities and franchisor practices (Michael & Combs, 2008). Importantly, performance did not differ across ownership forms, implying that different structures can reach comparable outcomes through different mixes of autonomy, support, and standardization: independent owners rely more on entrepreneurial posture, while franchisees and managers rely more on brand and systems.

6.5 Non-Supported Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were not supported. Newer outlets did not adopt digital tools more than older outlets (H7), suggesting that in Delhi's platform-dominated market, digital adoption has diffused broadly regardless of outlet age. This could reflect competitive pressure that forces even long-established outlets to join delivery and payment platforms. Likewise, multi-platform use did not vary by ownership (H8), nor did it relate to performance tertile, which may indicate that platform presence is nearly universal and that its value depends on how platforms are used rather than on whether they are used. These null results are informative: they suggest that digital presence is a baseline requirement and that differentiation arises elsewhere, a point that merits investigation with real data (Kraus et al., 2019).

6.6 Gender and Location

Exploratory tests found no gender differences in EO or performance and no performance differences across zones. If replicated with real data, these results would suggest that entrepreneurial capability and performance in Delhi's QSR sector are not systematically tied to gender or location, which is encouraging for inclusion and for spatially balanced development of the sector. However, null findings should be interpreted cautiously given statistical power limits for small effects.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Theoretical Implications

The study extends EO research to the QSR sector in an emerging-market metropolis and demonstrates how EO, innovation, digital capability, and environmental conditions combine to explain performance. It supports a contingent, partially mediated view of EO and illustrates the usefulness of ownership structure as a differentiator of entrepreneurial posture in franchising contexts. It also responds to calls for research on everyday entrepreneurship (Welter et al., 2017)

7.2 Managerial Implication

Table 17 summarizes managerial implications. Operators should treat entrepreneurial behavior as a managed capability: encourage experimentation, empower staff to propose improvements, and monitor competitor moves. Franchisors should create channels, such as advisory councils and pilot programs that let franchisees contribute and test ideas, since franchisees reported lower EO than independent owners. Because digital adoption was high and homogeneous, operators should shift focus from mere presence on platforms toward data use, direct channels, and service integration.

Table 17: Implications and recommendations

Stakeholder	Finding	Recommendation
Independent operators	High EO but limited system support	Pair entrepreneurial energy with cost discipline and formal learning routines

Franchisees	Lower EO than independents	Seek franchisor permission for local experiments; use multi-unit growth as an entrepreneurial path
Franchisors and chains	EO equal to or lower than independent firms	Build franchisee advisory councils, test kitchens, and reward systems for local innovation (Kuratko et al., 2014)
All operators	Dynamism strengthens returns to EO	Invest in market scanning and rapid experimentation, especially in high-competition zones
All operators	Digital adoption widespread; modest performance gain	Move from presence to integration: direct ordering, loyalty data, service redesign
Policymakers	Entrepreneurship supports performance across zones	Provide accessible small-business finance, simple licensing, and digital skills training

7.3 Policy Implications

Policymakers in Delhi can support QSR entrepreneurship through accessible finance, streamlined licensing, food-safety guidance, and digital skills programs, particularly for small independents. Because entrepreneurial behavior appears to matter most in dynamic markets, policy that reduces information barriers about demand trends, regulation, and technology could amplify returns. Support for fair labor practices and sustainable packaging and waste management can also strengthen the sector's legitimacy; turnover and workforce stability remain important issues for QSR performance (Park & Shaw, 2013).

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The study has several limitations. The most important is that, in this version, the data are simulated, so the findings cannot be generalized and serve only to demonstrate the analytical pipeline. If real data are collected, further limitations will apply: the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; self-reported, subjective performance measures may be affected by common method bias, even though Harman's test was reassuring; convenience and referral sampling within zone quotas limits representativeness; and a single respondent per outlet may not capture organizational reality.

Future research could use longitudinal designs and objective performance data, such as sales and survival; include multi-respondent designs; apply covariance-based or partial least squares structural equation modeling; examine specific EO dimensions separately; and explore additional moderators, including franchisor support and labor conditions. Qualitative case studies of founders and multi-unit franchisees could illuminate how effectual and causal logics are combined (Read et al., 2016; Sarasvathy, 2001). Comparative studies across Indian cities would test generalizability, and research on delivery-platform dependency, automation, and sustainability would further clarify the future of QSR entrepreneurship (Wirtz et al., 2018). Table 18 outlines a research agenda

Table 18: Future research agenda

Theme	Research question	Suggested approach
Real-data replication	Do the relationships hold among actual Delhi QSR operators?	Survey of 315+ respondents using the provided instrument and script
EO dimensions	Which EO dimension matters most for performance?	Dimension-level regression or SEM
Objective performance	Does EO predict survival and sales growth?	Longitudinal panel with financial data
Franchisor practices	How do control and support shape franchisee EO?	Dyadic franchisor–franchisee surveys
Platform dependency	How do commissions and data control affect margins?	Mixed methods and financial analysis
Resilience	Which capabilities best predict recovery from shocks?	Event-based longitudinal designs (Kuckertz et al., 2020)
Cross-city comparison	Do findings differ across Indian metros?	Multi-city comparative survey

9. CONCLUSION

This paper developed and demonstrated a full empirical design for studying entrepreneurship in Delhi's quick service restaurant industry. Using a 315-respondent dataset and a battery of tests, including reliability and factor analysis, correlation, multiple regression, bootstrapped mediation, moderation, *t*-tests, ANOVA, and chi-square, the analysis

indicated that entrepreneurial orientation was positively related to innovation and performance, that innovation partially mediated the EO–performance link, that digital adoption added a modest independent contribution, and that environmental dynamism amplified the returns to entrepreneurial behavior. Independent owners were more entrepreneurially oriented than franchisees and company-managed managers, yet performance did not differ by ownership, and neither outlet age, gender, location, nor delivery platform use produced significant differences.

Because these results were generated from simulated data, their value lies in showing how the question should be tested and reported, not in describing Delhi's actual QSR sector. The accompanying questionnaire, dataset structure, and analysis script allow researchers to replace the simulated file with real survey responses and produce authentic findings with minimal additional work. When that is done, the paper's discussion, implications, and abstract should be rewritten to reflect what the real data show. The underlying argument, supported by the wider literature, is that entrepreneurship is not peripheral to QSR but central to how outlets adapt, innovate, and compete in a fast-changing urban market.

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