

Food Delivery Industry: A Cross-Sectional Study of Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction after the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

In the current economic situation, consumers no longer focus on the price, quality, and other functions of goods or services but pursue for more satisfaction in the consumption process. In recent years, with the continuous improvement of Internet technology, the food delivery market has developed rapidly and attracted more and more people to enter the market. In the fierce competition, food delivery businesses gradually realize the importance of customer participation. This study will use a causal explanatory research design. It will distribute the online questionnaire through a convenience sampling technique to specific locations in China. Literature studies have yielded the following conclusions: the convenience of the delivery platform, information accuracy, and personalization characteristic of the electronic food platform can affect customer satisfaction with the delivery platform. This paper will summarize the analysis of the research conclusion, put forward the corresponding management suggestion to improve customer satisfaction, and discuss the limitations of this research and provide suggestions for future research directions.

Keywords: Food delivery, consumer satisfaction, e- platform.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of the social economy and the exponential growth of e-commerce, consumers can easily buy the items they need without leaving home. Nowadays, the Internet age is changing people's way of life. Reflecting on this background, the food delivery industry came into existence. It is the product of the Internet ordering platform and e-commerce. As soon as this industry appeared, it captured people's attention. With the rise of the Internet and with the help of e-commerce, consumers are fully aware of the convenience of delivery platforms.

Food delivery is generally understood as the delivery service of fast food. In China, common food delivery platforms include Meituan, McDonald's, and KFC. In a broad sense,

everything that provides outbound services and goods belongs to food delivery, such as flower delivery, commodity delivery, door-to-door repair appointments, etc.

With the improvement of people's living standards and the strong consumer demand, ordering food delivery has become a lifestyle that many consumers are accustomed to. More than 25% of all people in China have ordered food delivery online. At the same time, according to a report released by a third-party consulting agency, China's food delivery market presents a "631" industry pattern, with Meituan's food delivery market share reaching 63.3% and Ele. I's market share is 29.1%. (Dcci,2018)

Food delivery is a process in which self-service ordering is realized through the Internet,

whereby the food is delivered to the door by delivery staff. The focus of food delivery is to guide offline users to online consumption, increase customer flow for businesses, and carry out management of customer relationships, thereby improving customer loyalty, increasing consumer dependence, and achieving revenue growth.

The characteristics of catering food delivery include online ordering and door-to-door delivery and prominent user stickiness. The current situation of China's catering industry food delivery reveal fierce market competition, the adoption of discount strategies, high logistics and distribution costs, and factors that affect consumer satisfaction in distribution. Among them, the impact of the delivery process is particularly prominent. When users place an order, they expect fast services and even order tens of minutes to half an hour in advance. The problem, if these needs are not met, consumers' expectations will be significantly reduced, which will affect consumers' willingness to buy again.

As the concept of healthy life is deeply rooted in people's minds, consumers are paying more and more attention to issues such as food safety, the taste of dishes, and the freshness of ingredients. In-depth research is needed on how catering food delivery can provide consumers with satisfactory services and build trust between customers and merchants. Customer satisfaction is affected by many aspects. The service quality gap model established by Parasuraman points out that customer satisfaction refers to the performance of the gap between expectations and perceptions in terms of service. (Parasuraman and Zeithaml, 1988).

Therefore, this study was proposed to fully understand the satisfaction level of consumers in the food delivery industry and obtain a detailed analysis of factors affecting customers' satisfaction with food delivery.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

A survey conducted by Wu (2018) revealed that customer satisfaction could be higher in the food delivery business. 30.4% of the respondents believed that the food catering speed was slow, leading to low satisfaction, and 27.4% of the respondents thought that the lack of food hygiene and safety led to low satisfaction. 10.5% of the respondents believed that the deliciousness of the food caused their satisfaction to be low, 11.1% of the respondents felt that the portion of the food was not enough to satisfy their needs, and 20.7% of the respondents stated that their satisfaction was low.

With the rapid development of the food delivery market, its problems have gradually emerged, such as the ease of use of the food delivery platform, the accuracy of information released on the food delivery platform, the characteristics of the food delivery platform, low-cost performance, poor service attitude, and slow platform response. Food delivery needs to be more timely; food is currently unhygiene, and many other reasons causing consumers to be unsatisfied.

Cheng (2014) summarized current Chinese and western literature through a comprehensive literature review and selected several factors that have the highest impact on customer satisfaction to build an online customer satisfaction evaluation model under the B2C model. The influencing factors are perceived convenience, perceived price, perceived quality, after-sales service, online service, perceived safety, and logistics and distribution.

In recent years, the food delivery industry has developed rapidly, and the market competition is fierce. More and more food delivery platforms have entered the market to divide up the market. Each forum has invested much money to compete for market share. The threshold for food delivery is not high, consumers have many choices, and the

consumer group is relatively fixed. Many food deliveries are financed through e-commerce platforms, and it takes work to seize the largest market share.

Research Objective

The following are the objectives of the study:

R.O. 1: To examine the effect of ease of use of the food delivery platform on customer satisfaction in the food delivery industry.

RO2: To examine the effect of information accuracy of the food delivery platform on customer satisfaction in the food delivery industry.

RO3: To examine the effect of personalization of the food delivery platform on customer satisfaction in the food delivery industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview of the food delivery industry

Today, food delivery consumption has been expanding from pure Internet delivery to the service field, becoming an indispensable part of many consumers' lives. (Wang, 2021) The whole society is developing rapidly. With the influence of the market background in the food delivery industry, the food delivery platform provides a very convenient platform for consumers. The food delivery platform has become an indispensable tool in people's lives.

In recent years, the rapid development of the Internet has also promoted the development of the food delivery industry. Many food delivery software has appeared in the market, such as Meituan Food Delivery, Ele. Me, Didi Food Delivery, Dianping, etc. Many businesses have joined the food delivery platform in line with the development of the times. Among them, Meituan and Ele. me have dominated the e-marketplace. According to Ke and Wang et al. (2021), taking Meituan Food Delivery as an example, the platform currently has 250 million users, more than 2 million cooperative

merchants, more than 500,000 active riders, and an average of 21 million orders per day which attests to the growth for this industry.

2.2 Industry Status

According to Trustdata (2019), the total transaction volume of China's food delivery market reached 603.5 billion yuan in 2019, up 30.8% compared with 2018. Due to the impact of COVID-19, the number of food delivery users decreased in the first quarter of 2020 compared with last year. Still, with the improvement of the epidemic situation in China, the resumption of work and production of enterprises, and the implementation of contactless food delivery, the number of food delivery users began to rebound. According to Trustdata (2019) by the end of March 2020, the number of Internet food delivery users reached 397.8 million, and the utilization rate also reached 44.0%. The food delivery industry is expected to maintain medium-high development in the next few years.

With the increased industry volume, food delivery has begun to show a more diversified trend in recent years. One of the trends is digital upgrading. Based on the original third-party platform, diversified service systems such as shared kitchen, merchant side, user side, and delivery test have begun to appear. Trend two is that with the expansion of the boundary of Internet catering, trendy shops, chain brands, health, and nutrition have become the keywords of the food delivery industry, and consumers are more in pursuit of rich and diverse dishes. The third trend is that the extension of food delivery continues to expand. Fresh flowers, daily necessities, and other orders are growing fast. Food delivery will meet the needs of different users and provide diversified production and marketing services such as children's meals, nutritional meals, and senior meals.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

2.3.1 Technology Acceptance Model

Many scholars believe that rational behavior theory still needs to be improved in the study of behavioral aspects of information technology. Therefore, in the late 1980s, Davis and Bagozzi et al. (1989) developed a technology acceptance model (T.A.M.) based on rational behavior theory. It is used to explain the user's intention to adopt new information technology for the first time, and it is applied to the related research field of information systems. After that, this theoretical model of research user's intention to use technology is widely accepted and used. The reasons why the technology acceptance model can be so commonly used in the research are as follows:

- (1) The technology acceptance model has an excellent psychological foundation.
- (2) Can be used as a guideline for building a successful information system.
- (3) Many past studies support models of technology adoption, which are robust in terms of time, population, or technology.

In the technology acceptance model, it is assumed that the actual system use is affected by the user's use behavior intention, and the user's use behavior intention will be affected by the user's attitude. Attitude and behavioral intention are two factors in mind that directly influence user behavior. In addition, attitudes are influenced by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which are extrinsic factors. Perceived ease of use refers to the subjective determination of prospective users to improve their job performance using a particular system, and perceived ease of use directly affects attitudes and perceived usefulness. Furthermore, perceived usefulness affects behavioral intention to use, based on the expectation that using the technology will increase job performance. The technology acceptance model has predictive and

explanatory power for new technology products (Gentry & Calantone, 2002), so most of the research on the use of information technology have adopted the technology acceptance model (TAM).

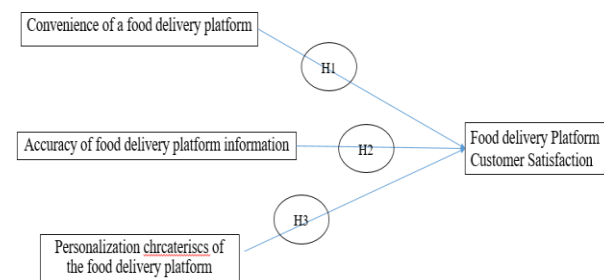
2.4 Theoretical Framework

The following framework evaluates the relationship between the food delivery industry according to the previously set independent and dependent variables. It includes some independent variables (I.V.s) that can be actively worked on by the merchants, such as the ease of use of the food delivery platform and the accuracy of the information of the food delivery platform. The dependent variable (DV) is consumer satisfaction with the Chinese food delivery industry.

This study aims to determine the following:

- 1) The relationship between convenience (I.V.s) of Chinese food delivery platforms and consumer satisfaction (DV) with the food delivery industry.
- 2) The relationship between information accuracy (I.V.s) of food delivery platforms and consumer satisfaction (DV) in the food delivery industry.
- 3) The relationship between personalization characteristics (I.V.s) of food delivery platforms and consumer satisfaction (DV) in the food delivery industry.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



2.5 Hypothesis

Based on the theoretical framework model, it shows the relationship between variables and the hypotheses studied in this report. In this hypothesis, convenience, information accuracy, and personalization of food delivery platforms are taken as independent variables (I.V.s), and consumer satisfaction with the food delivery industry is taken as dependent variables (DV). According to the theoretical framework, the following hypotheses can be obtained:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive and significant relationship between the convenience of the delivery platform and consumers' satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive and significant relationship between the information accuracy of the delivery platform and consumers' satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive and significant relationship between the personalization characteristics of the delivery platform and consumers' satisfaction.

3. METHOD

3.1 Data Source and Collection Method

This study takes Chinese food delivery platform users as the research objects and utilizes a questionnaire survey. This online survey form will be set through an APP named "Questionnaire Star". This simple and convenient application provides users with robust and a systematic online questionnaire design, data collection, custom reports, survey results analysis, and other services. The links to the questionnaire will be distributed online through WeChat, Q.Q., network links, and other methods. The application is easy to operate, and it only takes a few minutes for respondents to complete the questionnaire. Furthermore, all responses are voluntary,

response to the survey is without pressure or influence (Zikmund et al., 2012).

3.2 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

3.2.1 Sample Size

Pedhazur and Schmelkin (1991) stated that 50 respondents are more sufficient for each variable in a quantitative study, cited by VanVoorhis & Morgan (2007). However, Manning and Munro (2007) stated that a group size of 100 is categorized as "poor," 200 is classified as "fair," and a group size exceeding 300 is considered "good." According to Saunders et al. (2012), 300 respondents are enough to represent the overall population. Therefore, this study will distribute 400 questionnaires to Guizhou University and surrounding residents in Huaxi District, Guiyang City.

3.2.2 Sampling Technique

In this study, the possibility of probability events is excluded, and the sampling method of the questionnaire can be completed by collecting data from targeted respondents. The questionnaire will be distributed to the groups with the most frequent users of the food delivery industry and their friends and relatives through these groups, increasing the coverage of respondents. In addition, by using convenient sampling, researchers can cost-effectively collect data over a targeted period (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.3 Pilot Test

Pilot tests are required regardless of whether questionnaires are used or adapted from other studies (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The ideal sample size of the experimental research is 30 (Cooper&Schindler, 2014). Therefore, 30 respondents who are using or have used food delivery services will be targeted for the pilot study.

A preliminary test was conducted before distributing the questionnaire to the target

respondents. According to Cooper and Schindler (2014), small-scale tests or trial runs are purposefully undertaken to prepare for fundamental research. The advantage of conducting preliminary tests is ensuring that the study's weaknesses can be identified before further preliminary tests are carried out. This also helps to minimize risks and inform investigators where studies may fail (De Vaus, 2013). In this initial test, factor analysis and reliability tests were performed, before questionnaires were sent to 300 respondents. Therefore, a sample size of 10%-15% is recommended for preliminary tests (Cooper&Schindler, 2014). This pilot test has been conducted among 30 consumer respondents to ensure that these items are suitable for this study. SPSS statistical tool was used for data analysis, including factor analysis and reliability test.

4. RESULTS ANALYSIS

4.1 Reliability Test

In this research, the purpose of the reliability test is to determine the consistency and stability of the questionnaire items (Zikmund, 2003). Therefore, Cronbach's alpha value will be used to measure the reliability, which shows how well the variables are correlated. Besides, Goforth (2015) also mentioned that if the value of Cronbach's Alpha is higher, it shows that the measurements in the group have the same concept and covariance.

Furthermore, this study found that the Cronbach Alpha of the dependent variable (i.e., purchase intention (Y)) was 0.959. The three independent variables Cronbach's Alpha values are above 0.60 (0.939 for the first, 0.944 for the second, and 0.960 for the third factor), as shown in Table 1.0. Cheng et al. (2014) pointed out that Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.610 and above are relatively reliable, and

Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.710 have good reliability.

Table 1.0 indicates that the personalization characteristics of the food delivery platform variable has a good Cronbach alpha value of 0.960. The Cronbach α values of the remaining variables are all greater than 0.9.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on the Constructs and Reliability Results

| Variable | Mea | Standa | Cronbac | Ite |
|----------|------|--------|---------|-----|
| Y: | 3.55 | 0.888 | 0.959 | 4 |
| X1: | 3.61 | 0.932 | 0.939 | 4 |
| X2: | 3.50 | 0.892 | 0.944 | 4 |
| X3: | 3.52 | 0.876 | 0.960 | 4 |

4.2 Multiple Regression

Multiple regression is used to analyze the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Lee et al., 2018). In Table 2.0, the regression equation shows that the explanatory variables account for about 84% of the variance in consumer satisfaction with food delivery platforms. The adjusted r-squared value is 83.5%.

Table 2. Model Summary of Multiple Regression

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. error of the Estimate |
|-------|--------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.917 ^a | 0.840 | 0.835 | 0.361 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Convenience of food delivery platform, Accuracy of food delivery platform information, Personalization characteristics of the food delivery platform
 b. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction

Table 3. Analysis of Variance

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|--------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 245.076 | 12 | 20.423 | 156.317 | 0.000 ^b |
| | Residual | 46.643 | 357 | 0.131 | | |
| | Total | 291.719 | 369 | | | |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), Convenience of food delivery platform, Accuracy of food delivery platform information, Personalization characteristics of the food delivery platform | | | | | | |
| b. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction | | | | | | |

Referring to Table 3.0 above, the significance level p-value from ANOVA is 0.000. Since its value is less than alpha 0.05, it means that the model is significant and robust.

Table 4. Multiple Regression

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | Collinearity Statistics | |
|---|---|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|-------|-------------------------|--------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Tolerance | V.I.F. |
| 1 | (Constant) | 0.237 | 0.095 | | 2.508 | 0.013 | | |
| | The convenience of the food delivery platform | 0.126 | 0.038 | 0.137 | 3.303 | 0.001 | 0.352 | 2.839 |
| | Accuracy of food delivery platform information | 0.277 | 0.044 | .281 | 6.313 | 0.000 | 0.304 | 3.286 |
| | Personalization characteristics of the food delivery platform | 0.539 | 0.044 | .528 | 12.124 | 0.000 | 0.317 | 3.153 |
| a. Dependent Variable: Customer Satisfaction | | | | | | | | |
| b. Predictors: (Constant), Convenience of food delivery platform, Accuracy of food delivery platform information, Personalization characteristics of the food delivery platform | | | | | | | | |

In this study, the estimates show that the explanatory variables, namely convenience of the food delivery platform (X1), the accuracy of food delivery platform information (X2), and personalization characteristics of the food delivery platform (X3) are significant explanatory variables, at the 99% confidence level. Therefore, on average, a 1% increase in the convenience of food delivery platform (X1) causes a 0.126% increase in customer satisfaction, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level, held constant with other

variables. Likewise, on average, a 1 % increase in the accuracy of food delivery platform information (X2) and personalization characteristics of the food delivery platform (X3) causes a 0.277% and 0.539% increase in customer satisfaction, respectively. It has a positive impact at the 0.01 level of statistical significance.

As a rule of thumb, when the tolerance value is less than 0.20, and the variance inflation factor (V.I.F.) is greater than 4, it indicates a

multicollinearity problem (Garson, 2010). Multicollinearity statistics show that the tolerance of convenience of the food delivery platform (0.358), the accuracy of food delivery platform information (0.304), and the personalization characteristics of the food delivery platform (0.317) as shown in Table 4.0. are greater than 0.2. Therefore, it is shown that no multicollinearity problem occurs.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

The testable hypothesis that was developed to achieve the study objectives, are all supported.

H1: Convenience of food delivery platforms has a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction with food delivery platforms.

H2: Accuracy of food delivery platform information positively and significantly impacts customer satisfaction with food delivery platforms.

H3: Personalization characteristics of the food delivery platform positively and significantly impact customer satisfaction with food delivery platforms.

Based on the results in Table 5.0, this hypothesis is supported, as the p-values are all less than 0.000, below the alpha level of 0.01. The convenience of the food delivery platform, the accuracy of the food delivery platform information, and the personalized characteristics of the food delivery platform have a positive and significant relationship with customer satisfaction on the food delivery platform.

Table 5. Summary of Hypothesis

| Hypothesis | Hypothesis | Result |
|------------|--|-------------------------|
| H1 | The convenience of food delivery platforms will have a positive and direct impact on customer satisfaction of food | Supported (at 1% level) |

| | delivery platforms. | |
|----|---|-------------------------|
| H2 | The accuracy of food delivery platform information will positively and directly impact customer satisfaction with food delivery platforms. | Supported (at 1% level) |
| H3 | Personalization characteristics of the food delivery platform will positively and directly impact customer satisfaction with food delivery platforms. | Supported (at 1% level) |

5. Discussion of Findings

5.1 Discussion

H1: Convenience of food delivery platforms will positively and significantly effect customer satisfaction with the food delivery platforms.

According to the survey results, there is a significant and positive effect between the convenience of food delivery platforms and consumer satisfaction. Zeng (2015) study concurs with the findings of this study whereby convenience of the e-platform also impacts customer satisfaction.

H2: The accuracy of food delivery platform information will positively and significantly effect customer satisfaction with the food delivery platforms.

This hypothesis is accepted. There is a significant and positive effect between the information accuracy of the distribution platform and consumer satisfaction. Liu's (2015) study concurs with the findings of this study whereby information accuracy of the e-platform also impacts customer satisfaction..

H3: Personalization characteristics of the food delivery platform will positively and significantly effect customer satisfaction with the food delivery platforms.

According to this study, there is a significant and positive effect between the personalization characteristics of delivery platforms and consumer satisfaction. The personalized features of food delivery platforms will affect customers' choices. Chang (2014) conducted a preliminary study emphasizing customized service and service environment experience further confirming the results of this study.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The research shows that these three independent variables have a critical positive correlation in influencing customer satisfaction. The personalized characteristics of food delivery platforms are the most critical factor affecting customer satisfaction. According to the survey, only 6.55% of respondents were unsatisfied with the personalized features of delivery platforms. In addition, among the 370 respondents, 46.62% are satisfied with the personalized function of the delivery platform, and 46.83% stated that the personalized function of the delivery platform is satisfied. Consumers are satisfied with the personalized features of the delivery platform. Managers should therefore pay attention to this variable.

Secondly, the accuracy of food delivery platform information also affects customer satisfaction. The survey showed that only 7.63% of the respondents were dissatisfied with the accuracy of the information on the food delivery platform. This may be because a few merchants on the food delivery platform falsely advertise and mislead consumers to purchase, resulting in inaccurate information on the food delivery platform. When reviewing the qualifications and applications of food delivery platform merchants, it is even more necessary to do an essential investigation. In addition,

among the 370 respondents, 46.56% of consumers believed that the accuracy of the food delivery platform information was relatively satisfactory, and 45.81% of the consumers believed that the accuracy of the food delivery platform information was fairly satisfactory and very satisfied. Therefore, it can be shown that consumers are satisfied with the accuracy of the food delivery platform information. Managers should also focus on this variable.

In addition, the convenience of food delivery platforms is also part of the factors that affect customer satisfaction. The survey showed that only 6.68% of the respondents were dissatisfied with the convenience of the food delivery platform. In addition, among the 370 respondents, 39.53% of consumers thought that the food delivery platform's convenience was relatively satisfactory, and 53.79% of the consumers thought that the food delivery platform's convenience was relatively satisfactory and very satisfied. Therefore, consumers are satisfied with the convenience of the food delivery platform. Managers should pay attention and allocate resources to this variable.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

This study examines the key factors influencing customer satisfaction in the food delivery industry. Four hundred questionnaires were distributed, of which 370 were valid and 30 were invalid. According to the 48th "Statistical Report on Internet Development in China" released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC, 2021) in Beijing, as of June 2021, the number of users of food delivery in China has reached 469 million. With such a large user population, 370 questionnaires cannot represent the choices of all food delivery users. This study's finding needs to be more generalizable to the larger community.

Secondly, this study's had limited data collection locations, which focused on Huaxi District, Guiyang City, and Guizhou Province. The questionnaire distribution scope is limited and only covers some areas in China. However, more accurate data analysis requires a wider sampling area and more respondents. In addition, the regions where the questionnaires were issued belong to second and third-tier cities in China, there is a particular gap in the level of urban development and consumption, and the results of the survey may vary due to differences in living costs, income levels, education levels, and accessibility. Therefore, the sample of this questionnaire needs to be more representative.

Thirdly, this study only focuses on three variables developed based on TPB theory. Therefore, future researchers can further examine more factors that affect customer satisfaction in the food delivery industry. Furthermore, these factors may change from time to time as more food delivery services emerge.

Finally, there may be shortcomings in how the questionnaires use the Internet, which can affect the progress of data collection, as spam protection may block emails from unknown senders. In addition, Google Sheets will be blocked in a specific areas. Respondents may also need to understand these questions as different people interpret the questions asked differently.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Study

The researchers suggest the following improvements for future researchers who plan to conduct similar studies on critical factors in customer satisfaction in the food delivery industry in China. First, the researchers suggest expanding the survey to the whole country to obtain more precise information to develop China's food delivery industry further. In addition, different regions in China differ in terms of population size, ethnicity, educational

background, income level, and use of food delivery platforms. In addition, this will also increase the sample size, ensure the integrity of the results, and make the collected data more convincing, since the research target population is a crucial factor affecting customer satisfaction with food delivery platforms.

Secondly, many data collection methods can be carried out to collect data, such as interviews which can be used in future research as an alternative to the questionnaire survey. Besides, it is also strongly recommended to have questionnaires delivered by hand or face-to-face surveys, which will consume a lot of time. This ensures a higher response rate because the researcher could quickly obtain a higher response rate, even though its more time consuming. Also, answering on site will make the results more accurate and reliable due to supporting aid from the researcher in clarifying questions and unanticipated problems.

Future research may build on this study to develop a complete theoretical model linking the factors influencing customer satisfaction in the food delivery industry. Each food delivery platform cooperates, operates, and integrates into a food delivery alliance. The government should conduct further research to identify and develop domestic and international markets so that food delivery platforms can become more competitive thus providing many opportunities for merchants and consumers.

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