

FACTORS INFLUENCING PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARD ONLINE FOOD DELIVERY SERVICE: THE CASE STUDY OF ELE.ME IN CHINA

Wei Qian Qian¹, Arti Pandey², Tanawat Teepapal³, Jirangrug Samarkjarn⁴,
Komm Pechinthorn⁵

Faculty of International College, Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep, Thailand
Email: 608051410462@mail.rmuk.ac.th, Arti.p@rmuk.ac.th, Tanawat.t@mail.rmuk.ac.th,
Jiranrug.s@mail.rmuk.ac.th, Komm.p@mail.rmuk.ac.th

Abstract : This study investigates the factors that influence purchase intention of O2O food delivery application, Ele.me, in China. The determinants that were used in this study included; price, convenience, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, compatibility, and trust. Descriptive quantitative research was conducted through online survey. The questionnaire was conducted and selected from 418 respondents by using random sampling method. Multiple Linear Regression was applied for hypothesis testing. The result of this study showed that price, convenience, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, compatibility, and trust have significant and positive relationships with consumers' purchasing intentions for Ele.me. Furthermore, the findings revealed that convenience ($\beta = 0.271$, $t = 3.664$, $p < 0.001$) was the most influential factor on consumers' purchasing intention of Ele.me online food delivery. Research suggestions and recommendations were provided.

Keywords: *purchase intention, Online-to-offline (O2O), price, convenience, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, compatibility, trust*

1. Introduction

Online-to-offline (O2O) is an e-commerce business model that has exploded in popularity in China as a result of technological advancements, increased internet penetration, and the rise of social media users. According to China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) showed that the number of Internet users in June 2020 has reached 940 million users (CNNIC, 2020). Traditional Chinese restaurant businesses are being dramatically influenced by new digital platforms such as China's mobile Internet and big data technology developments. Many consumers choose to buy food online because of the simplicity and speed of doing so through a smartphone application (Jing, 2018). The rise of the food delivery O2O platforms is a response to increased consumer demands and a shift in Chinese online purchasing food behaviors (Jung, 2018). The number of food delivery users in China has also reached 664.62 billion yuan in 2020, an increase of 86.69 billion yuan from 2019 (CNNIC, 2020). As a result, the advent of online-to-offline (O2O) platforms has provided opportunities and trends for the Chinese catering and food delivery business, as well as fierce competition between industries (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). Meituan, Ele.me, KFC Home Delivery, Pizza Hut Home Delivery, Haidilao Delivery, Starbucks Delivery, and others were among China's catering and food takeaway e-commerce services. Ele.me, based on monthly active users, was China's largest food delivery O2O platform (Daxue Consulting, 2020).

However, the emerging trend of rapid expansion of food delivery has resulted in many of other issues, including food quality, logistical issues, payment method and privacy concerns (Liu et al., 2019). The majority of relevant research is currently focused on studying and examining the online ordering procedure and operations. As a consequence, the perceived customer responses remain uninvestigated. The objective of this research is to create a useful reference from Ele.me users by looking at the aspects that influence people's decisions about online meal delivery services in order to improve and promote a strategy for the O2O online takeaway platform.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Catering Takeout O2O Mode

2.1.1 O2O concept definition

O2O literally means online to offline, which refers to a new business model that combines offline transactions with the Internet and online virtual economy (Hu, Huang, & Lu, 2019). It is a combination of online and offline transactions. Customers are attracted to using the Internet platform, which facilitates offline transactions and meets the needs of customers (Liu et al., 2019). Therefore, this article defines the O2O model as an e-commerce model that relies on the mobile Internet or the Internet, where consumers browse information online and place an order to purchase, and then conduct offline consumer experience.

2.1.2 O2O catering takeout features

Due to the high frequency of meal and beverage consumption and the total number of consumers, meal and beverage consumption account for a very large proportion of the O2O business model (Meehee, Bonn, & Li, 2018). The combination of mobile consumption and meals and beverages O2O resulted in meals and beverages takeaway O2O. The characteristics of meals and beverages takeaway O2O are as follows.

- 1) Mobility. Using mobile devices, such as mobile phones or tablet, to purchase meals from a takeaway APP, the consumer can use his or her phone to order a meal from an online shopping network at any place (Zhao & Wei, 2019).
- 2) Convenience. Through online ordering of take-out meals and instant delivery of logistics, consumers enjoy home-to-home services. Under the e-commerce model, people can move from one store to another with a single click on their mobile phones, and from one type of product to another (Mayila, et al., 2018). The process is carried out by the network instead of people, saving people's precious time. Save time and improve efficiency.
- 3) Diversity. Various food and beverage vendors and their products will be displayed on the online platform, which greatly increases the range of choices, so that consumers do not have to go to different places and can enjoy the delicious food of each family at home (Nayan & Hassan, 2020).
- 4) Marketing. Consumers browse payment online, and there will be a lot of consumption data showing their preferences and selection characteristics, such as convenience, perceived usefulness and ease of use, compatibility, and trust, and their relationship with customer purchase intent (Piao, Yang, and Zhang, 2017). Merchants and platforms can use this data to further expand and analyze users.

2.2 Previous Studies and Hypothesis Development

2.2.1 Purchase intention

Ajzen (1991) analyzed the relationship between willingness and behavior, and believed that having a willingness is a necessary condition for taking corresponding actions, and the consumer's purchase intention is also a decision to make a purchase process. Whether in the traditional shopping environment or in the online shopping environment, there is a certain similarity in the influence of consumers' willingness to shop on their buying behavior (Eine & Charoensukmongkol, 2021). Yi et al. (2016) empirically posited that purchase intentions are both positive and negative. A positive encouragement is a positive encouragement to consumer behavior, while a negative one suppresses and discourages the idea and willingness to purchase goods. Moreover, due to the Internet environment, there are more uncertain influence factors such as private information, payment account information, etc., these factors will directly affect the purchase process (Sasatanun & Charoensukmongkol, 2016). And the reasons that directly or indirectly affect the desire to buy may also change drastically from time to time (Zhang, Business, & University, 2019). Agyapong (2018) believe that the design style, simplicity of operation, and safety of online platforms will change consumers' purchasing intentions in the same direction. The easier the online platform is to operate, the more beautiful the design, the safer and harmless the greater the willingness to purchase. Therefore, in the context of online shopping, the analysis and exploration of the factors that affect consumers' purchase intentions is the most important content factor influencing consumers' willingness to purchase in the online shopping environment.

2.2.2 Price

Erickson and Johansson (1985) defined price as the monetary sacrifice that consumers must pay to obtain product benefits. Monroe (1990) believes that price is the amount of money that consumers must sacrifice when acquiring goods. In modern market economics, prices are produced by the mutual influence and balance between supply and demand (Smith, 2014). From the consumer's point of view, price means that consumers must pay a large sum of money for a product; simply put, price is what consumers pay for the product in exchange for it (Furnols et al., 2011). Through e-commerce, consumers can get affordable prices and can enjoy relatively low-priced goods and services (Tarsakoo & Charoensukmongkol, 2019). Compared with products sold in physical stores, products sold online can often save sellers a lot of costs such as rent, employee wages and etc. As a result, when compared to the price of a product in a physical store, e-commerce prices are generally significantly lower. Moreover, due to the convenience of "shop around" on the Internet, the cost for consumers to choose and compare is relatively low. Customers can take advantage of attractive promotions or discounts that are normally available with online ordering. There are additional savings available for certain payment options. As a result, the degree of price discounts has a larger impact on customers' willingness to purchase online. Therefore, this study presents the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a positive relationship between price and consumers' purchasing intention towards Ele.me.

2.2.3 Convenience

Convenience refers to the ease, convenience, and speed with which consumers can obtain a certain product or service. Not only the convenience of purchase, but also the convenience of distance, time, use, cost, convenience, etc. According to previous research on convenience by other scholars, it can be found that convenience is very important to consumers (Munshi, Hussain, Ahmed, & Idress, 2020). Cheung, Man, and Lai (2000) concluded that convenience conditions will significantly affect the user's intention and behavior. Berry, Seiders, and Grewal (2002) put forward the concept of service convenience, positioning it as "the consumer's perception of the time and effort spent when buying or using products and services". If it is convenient to order meals on a certain website, save time and energy, and consumers can easily find goods or services that meet their needs, then consumers will tend to order meals on that website. Food delivery O2O platform relies on computers, smartphones, and tablets to operate over the internet network. The development of Internet technology will improve the personalization and accuracy of e-commerce takeaway O2O, which can better meet the needs of users (Chen, 2004). Convenience circumstances are defined in this article as the numerous advantageous conditions that will encourage the usage of e-commerce takeout O2O consumers for Ele.me. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: There is a positive relationship between convenience and consumers' purchasing intention towards Ele.me.

2.2.4 Compatibility

The O2O compatibility platform allows users to easily and fully receive relevant purchasing information, go to related product purchase pages, or purchase products directly on the web page, considerably improving the user's impression and convenience of use while ordering meals. (Nayan & Hassan, 2020). Based on the self-efficacy theory, many scholars have demonstrated the positive impact of compatibility and connectivity on perceived ease of use under the mediation of self-efficacy (Agrebi & Jallais, 2014; Kim & Lee, 2014; Rehman, Bhatti, Mohamed, & Ayoup, 2019). Agrebi and Jallais (2014) conducted a survey of over 1,400 German mobile phone users, and the results indicated that perceived compatibility is the most important factor influencing customers' willingness to use mobile phone to make a payment. Kim and Lee (2014) used innovation diffusion theory and planned behavior theory to investigate customers' attitudes toward virtual banks, finding that when compatibility is higher, users' attitudes toward virtual banks become more active. E-commerce commodities and online services can be customized to individual consumers, and personalized products and services can be adapted to match consumers' specific demands (Ji, Pang, & Bao, 2007). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: There is a positive relationship between compatibility and consumers' purchasing intention towards Ele.me.

2.2.5 Perceived ease of use

Perceived ease of use refers to the degree of ease consumers can feel when ordering food online (Markun, Kom, & Freddy, 2019). It can directly affect consumers' behavioral

intentions. Under typical conditions, regardless of the consumer's attitude prior to using the online ordering system, if the consumer believes that using the online ordering system can improve the consumption experience, the customer will acquire an intention to use this consumption method. (Markun, Kom, & Freddy, 2019). Perceived ease of use can influence an individual's behavioral intention to adopt new technology and, as a result, how that individual uses that technology in both direct and indirect ways. Perceived ease of use has no obvious direct impact on purchase intention, but has an indirect effect on purchase intention under the intermediary effect of perceived usefulness. According to Fenech (2001) studied the influencing factors of online consumer purchasing behavior and found that there is a positive correlation between the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of online consumers and online shopping attitudes. Thus, the following hypothesis is posited:

H4: There is a positive relationship between perceived ease of use and consumers' purchasing intention towards Ele.me.

2.2.6 Perceived usefulness

According to Davis et al. (1989), perceived usefulness refers to customers' evaluations of the experience's outcome. Davis (1989) also defined perceived usefulness as an individual's belief that employing new technology will help them perform better. Perceived usefulness in this study refers to the benefits that consumers can gain by using food deliver O2O platform to order meals are described as perceived usefulness. Customers may easily acquire vital product information and discover the meal they require due to the details with pictures and descriptions on the food delivery page, as well as user's rating feedback and comments. As a result, users' search and waiting times are shortened, and they might even compare prices and read reviews (Huang & Mao, 2019). Ji, Pang, and Bao (2007) argue that the commodities and online services provided through e-commerce can be tailored to individual consumers, and personalized products and services can be customized to meet the individual needs. When a person believes that using online ordering will improve their consumption experience, they will be more likely to use it (Fyl, Hky, & Hhc, 2020). Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use have been frequently used in previous research to predict customer purchase intentions in social media networks (Lin & Kim, 2016). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: There is a positive relationship between perceived usefulness and consumers' purchasing intention towards Ele.me.

2.2.7 Trust

Experts in different disciplines, such as management and economics, have explored and analyzed the variable of trust (Phungsoonthorn & Charoensukmongkol, 2019). They came from various perspectives and came up with various definitions (Phungsoonthorn & Charoensukmongkol, 2019). The current consensus of trust is the basis of any transaction or exchange relationship (Stummer et al., 2015). Rotter (1967) found that trust is born in the interaction between individuals. If the individual perceives that the other party has good intentions and acts harmlessly, then one realizes that the trust of oneself is on the other side (Ratasuk & Charoensukmongkol, 2019) . Goyal et al. (2013)

believes that consumer trust is the consumer's own belief in the trusted person, and this belief has a positive impact on the trust intention. Cho and Sagynov (2015) believe that in e-commerce transactions consumer trust is the trust in the entire process of online transactions from the beginning of browsing information to the final offline receipt for consumer experience, that is, the trust in every process and link of purchase under the social network environment. Trust significantly directly affects consumers' online shopping motivation (Lai, Huang, Lu, & Chang, 2013). When consumers believe that food ordering websites and merchants will abide by their promises and provide reliable food and services, they have a certain degree of trust in the way they consume online food ordering. Consumers can evaluate a catering business in advance based on the opinions of their family and friends as well as the company's reputation on the internet. If consumers trust online ordering, they will increase their willingness to online ordering. In view of this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: There is a positive relationship between trust of customers and consumers' purchasing intention towards Ele.me

3. Theoretical Framework

The objective of this study is to investigate influencing factors on the purchase intention of takeout O2O catering in Ele.me application, we present the research model with hypothesis in Figure 1.

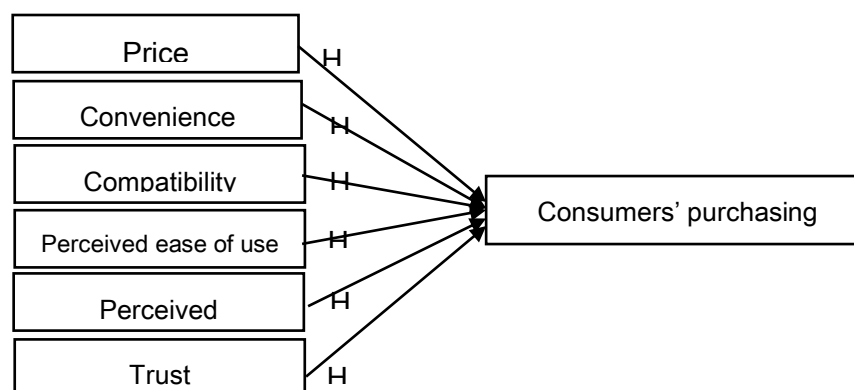


Figure 1: Research Model

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Participants and data collection

The quantitative approach was employed in this study to determine the relationship between variables. This study employed random sampling technique to ensure that the sample has equal chance of being selected from entire of population. The target population are respondents who have experience in buying food online from Ele.me. There are no age or gender restrictions for respondents. This study employed random sampling technique to ensure that the sample has equal chance of being selected from entire of population. The majority of the data for this study was derived from star-shaped online questionnaires. In this study, 420 questionnaires were distributed and 418 questionnaires were returned, with an effective rate of 99.5%.

4.2 Measurement Scales

The scales applied in this research were adapted from previous research and modified to employ valid measurement instruments; price 4 items (Lee, Sung & Jeon, 2019), convenience 6 items (Candel, 2001 and Costa, 2013), perceived usefulness 4 items (Roh and Park, 2019), perceived ease of use 6 items (Lee, 2009 and Ray et al., 2019), compatibility 4 items (Teo and Pok, 2003), trust 5 items (Lin and Lu, 2010) and purchase intention 5 items (Roh and Park, 2019). There were seven variables constructed using 5-point Likert scales ranging from strongly disagreement to strongly agreement (Kim, 2011). Moreover, three academic experts reviewed the questions and their content appropriateness to ensure content validity of the study. The questionnaire's scale was tested in a pilot study to determine its reliability.

5. Results

Among these 418 respondents, 222 (53.11%) were male and 196 (46.89%) were female who participated in the survey. There were 58 (13.88%) were under 20 years old, 168 (40.19%) in the group of 20-30 years old, 126 (30.14%) in the group of 31-40 years old, and 50 (11.96%) in the group of 41-50 years old. In terms of occupation, enterprise employee account for 208 (49.76%), students 102 (24.40%), individual operator 56 (13.40%), and others 52 (12.44%). On the average income, 80 (19.41%) of respondents earn less than 2,000 RMB, 66 (15.79%) earn between 2,000–3,000 RMB, 154 (36.84%) earn between 3,000–5,000 RMB, and 118 (28.23%) earn more than 5000 RMB. Moreover, all of the respondents were experienced with Ele.me, with a frequency of using Ele.me less than 4 times per month 152 (36.36%), 4–10 times per month 192 (45.93%), 11–20 times per month 46 (11%), and more than 20 times per month 28 (6.7%).

5.1 Validity of the Scales

In terms of construct validity, this research paper uses the KMO test and the Bartlett sphere test (Nayan & Hassan, 2020). The KMO test value of this survey is 0.855, and the corresponding probability significant value (P-value) of this test is less than 0.001 as validity of a measure. In measuring the reliability of the scale, this study uses Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to test the inherent reliability of the survey questionnaire (Cronbach, 1951). Nunnally (1978) argued that a minimal reliability score of alpha 0.60 or above is sufficient. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of all variables in this study was higher than the threshold of 0.7, indicating that the questionnaire has good reliability for measurement (Menon & Sujatha, 2021). A correlation analysis was conducted on all variables to explore the relationship between the variables. Pearson correlation coefficient is used to express the strength of the correlation (Samuels & Gilchrist, 2014). As results, there were significant positive relationship between price (0.350), convenience (0.764), compatibility (0.752), perceived ease of use (0.428), perceived Usefulness (0.752), and trust (0.734), and purchase intention. Descriptive statistics and internal consistency among studied variables are listed in Table 1, and a correlation matrix among studied variables are listed in Table 2.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and Internal Consistency Reliability

Construct	Mean	SD	Alpha α	Number of Items
Price	3.84	1.00	0.88	4
Convenience	3.89	0.90	0.90	6

Compatibility	3.94	0.76	0.71	4
Perceived ease of use	3.87	1.02	0.91	5
Perceived Usefulness	3.89	0.94	0.84	4
Trust	3.90	0.83	0.77	4
Purchase Intention	3.82	0.70	0.77	5

Note: $n = 418$

Table 2: Correlations Matrix

Pearson Correlation (N = 418)							
Variables	Purchase Intention	Price	Convenience	Compatibility	Perceived ease of use	Perceived Usefulness	Customer Trust
Purchase Intention	1.00						
Price	0.350**	1.00					
Convenience	0.764**	0.180**	1.00				
Perceived Usefulness	0.752**	0.141*	0.860**	1.00			
Perceived ease of use	0.428**	0.102	0.194**	0.170*	1.00		
Compatibility	0.752**	0.209**	0.696**	0.734**	0.528**	1.00	
Trust	0.734**	0.549**	0.725**	0.697**	0.209**	0.632**	1.00

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

5.2 Hypotheses testing

Multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the factors that influence the respondents' intention to purchase O2O online meal delivery services. It can be seen from table 3 that the coefficient of determination was ($R^2 = 0.753$) showing that 75.3% of purchase intention was illustrated by price, convenience, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, compatibility and trust. The results presented the study model is significant at the F statistics ($F = 86.303$) and ($Sig = 0.000$) at level of ($\alpha = 0.05$). This means that the overall model is significant. The results of t test, Beta values and significant show that price, convenience, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, compatibility and trust were affecting attendee's purchase intention.

Table 3. Regression analysis of price, convenience, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, compatibility, trust and purchase intention

Construct	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	SE	β		
(Constant)	0.321	0.154	-	2.082	0.039*
Price	0.090	0.033	0.127	2.758	0.006**
Convenience	0.212	0.058	0.271	3.664	0.000***
Compatibility	0.126	0.061	0.137	2.058	0.041*
Perceived ease of use	0.147	0.031	0.214	4.812	0.000***
Perceived Usefulness	0.188	0.058	0.252	3.212	0.002**
Trust	0.136	0.058	0.161	2.364	0.019*

Note: R = .867, R² = .753, F= 102.84, Sig= 0.000. * Dependent Variable: Purchase intention.

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001

Six hypotheses of the proposed model received supporting results and were verified after testing. Table 3 shows the results of the multiple regression analysis, which indicated that six hypotheses were supported. According to the above analysis results, showed that price (β = 0.127, t = 2.76, p < 0.05), convenience (β = 0.271, t = 3.664, p < 0.001), Compatibility (β = 0.137, t = 2.058, p < 0.05), perceived ease of use (β = 0.214, t = 4.812, p < 0.001), perceived usefulness (β = 0.252, t = 3.212, p < 0.01), and trust (β = 0.161, t = 2.364, p < 0.01) have a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase intention.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this research is to explore the factors that can influence purchase intention to order takeout O2O catering through the Ele.me app. The primary objective of this study was to examine the relationship between the independent variables of price, convenience, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, compatibility, and trust, and the dependent variable of consumers' purchasing intention for Ele.me. application. Our finding indicated that the basic attributes of users have the characteristics of youthfulness, mainly white-collar workers and students, and have high academic qualifications, which is consistent with the latest takeout O2O industry report's statistical data (CNNIC, 2020). Our empirical finding indicated that price, convenience, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, compatibility, and trust has positively relationship and highly significant effect on consumers' purchasing intention for Ele.me. application. The results provide all the support for the hypothesis. Moreover, the result indicated that convenience (β = 0.271, t = 3.664, p < 0.001) was the most influence factor toward consumers' purchasing intention of Ele.me online food delivery service. This outcome was consistent with previous findings (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991; To, Liao, & Lin, 2007; Markun, Kom, & Freddy, 2019, Furnols et al., 2011). This finding suggests that compatibility of O2O platform can basically meet the needs of users, considerably improving the user's impression and convenience of use while ordering meals.

Our findings implied many relevant suggestions. Firstly, online merchants should improve the cost-effectiveness of meals and the description of order information in the application. Thus, online merchants should start by exploring consumers' needs and interests, formulating a reasonable price, ensuring quality, and trying to improve the "cost-

effectiveness" of the meals in order to enhance consumers' willingness to consume. Secondly, online merchants should enhance the consumer experience and improve consumer subjective norms. In the process of online ordering service, online merchants should strengthen the offline delivery speed, carry out various offline promotional activities, establish a good service image, and form a good "word-of-mouth effect." Thirdly, online merchants should ensure the punctuality of delivery and improve their drivers' manner and attitude. To increase customer satisfaction, O2O Platform operators should improve their on-time order delivery and service minded attitude. Finally, online merchants could increase sales and marketing through multi-channel promotion and publicity to increase people's knowledge and understanding. Merchants can truly show consumers the various processes, from order placement to delivery, so that consumers can have a deeper understanding. It should also interact with consumers through multiple channels to understand and solve problems that arise, and listen to consumer suggestions for possible future development and improvements.

7. Research Limitations

There is no shortage of research on purchasing intentions under the O2O model, but research on the specific product types of take-out meals and drinks is rare, which contributes a little to the research in this field. Although most of the research hypotheses in this article are supported, there are still many shortcomings such as bias of quality of online survey data and generalized limitations of research results. Furthermore, since Chinese e-commerce has grown rapidly, the responses of customers in this study may not represent the long-term trend (Zhang, Business, & University, 2019). In the future, we could implement longitudinal studies and add other variables to determine their influence on purchase intention. In the current academic field, the O2O mode of research has just started, and there are still many research topics and research content to be developed.

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