

Chapter 15

Online Food Ordering in Vietnam: An Examination of Customer Evaluations

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Vietnamese customers' feelings and thoughts about the online food order service recently developed in the country. Through interviews of 21 female customers in the capital city of Hanoi, two categories of customer feelings were identified: positive and negative. The reasons for or causes of these feelings were distributed across the five steps of the order and consumption process: pre-order (information and options), order (order, payment, and cancellation processes), delivery (staff attitude and waiting time), use (food quality and quantity), and post-use (complaint and complaint response). Based on these findings, theoretical implications about online food order services in particular and e-commerce in general are discussed. In addition, practical implications for restaurants, food deliverers, and app developers are proposed.

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, if one didn't want to or couldn't cook a good meal, one might need to go to a restaurant. That would often involve the change and improvement of one's clothing and appearance and the use of a vehicle, which might require a given amount of extra time and effort. Today, many people are liberated from all of these extras thanks to the development of online food order services such as GrabFood and

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Uber Eats (Naccache, Côté, & Coelho, 2018). Other consequences of such developments can also be highlighted. For example, many restaurants are now established to specifically cater to those customers who don't want to go to a real dining outlet. They are literally just kitchens whose main function is to produce takeaways (Nagumo, 2019). Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, together with the traditional business websites, may be used as intermediators between the restaurants and the customers. Food reviewers and users also take part in the consumption process with their reviews and comments about the food and the related services (Kim & Jang, 2019). A whole new chain of food consumption, which is different from any other previous models, has been formed. To facilitate its future development, academic research of the current situation of this novel situation is certainly necessary.

As mentioned earlier, participants in the new chain of food consumption are numerous. However, those on the supply or support side, such as food producers, food deliverers, food reviewers and food order platforms, apparently outnumber those on the demand side, the customers. The livelihoods of many people on the one side are depending on the attitudes of the only, so far, important stakeholder on the other side: the customers. Understanding customers' evaluations of the suppliers' and supporters' products and services, thus, is particularly significant.

Research into customer evaluations, however, is complicated. For example, researchers may focus their efforts on the identification of customers' cognitive perceptions of the physical and psychological attributes of food service such as atmosphere, cleanliness, facilities, and menu (Nguyen, Nisar, Knox, & Prabhakar, 2018). Alternatively, they may choose to describe customers' affective perceptions of or their feelings toward the service, for example, disgust, happiness, pleasure, and surprise (Ouyang, Behnke, Almanza, & Ghiselli, 2018). Nevertheless, customer evaluation is not necessarily structured in such a mechanical manner. Instead, customer evaluation is a fusion of cognition and affect, in which each cognitive element can be further explained by certain attached feelings, and each affective element may be the result of several cognitive processes (Lin, 2004; Silvia, 2005). Such an integrative approach (Holak & Havlena, 1992; Jeuring & Peters, 2013), however, is largely missing in the research on consumer evaluation, in general, and on consumer evaluation of food service, in particular.

The purpose of this study is to explore customers' evaluations of the suppliers and supporters in the new food consumption chain using a fusion approach. Specifically, each element in the chain is simultaneously examined with both the cognitive and affective inputs contributed by the customers. Outcomes of this study can provide multidimensional insights for the stakeholders on the supply and support side to improve their products and services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online Food Order Service

Online food order service is booming in many countries in recent years (Chandrasekhar, Gupta, & Nanda, 2019; Naccache, Côté, & Coelho, 2018; Sun, 2019). In addition to some global or regional applications or apps such as Grab and Uber, others are specifically developed for one country or market, for instance, Baidu and Eleme in China. Customers are interested in using these new services since they offer many conveniences, for example, better price, reasonable quality, and ease of use, among others (Chandrasekhar, Gupta, & Nanda, 2019; Ray, Dhir, Bala, & Kaur, 2019; Yeo, Goh, & Rezaei, 2017).

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