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Online food delivery: A systematic synthesis of literature and a framework development

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to systematically review the extant literature on online food delivery. The literature on online food delivery is synthesised in terms of theories, contexts, methods adopted and analytical techniques used. The literature review suggests that online food delivery research has transitioned from website-based food delivery to online to offline, mobile application-based food delivery, and drone-based food delivery. Further, based on the synthesis, we have developed a conceptual framework that shows the frequently reported antecedents, mediators, moderators, and consequences in online food delivery literature. Moreover, by identifying overlooked areas of online food delivery research, some insightful future research directions have been proposed to further advance this research domain. This review contributes to the hospitality literature, specifically to the food delivery literature.

1. Introduction

The thin margin is one of the predominant characteristics affecting the restaurant industry, and hence, restaurant operators tend to seek opportunities to increase their profit and market share (Rivera, 2019). One such opportunity is development of food delivery system (Kimes, 2011). Food delivery space has witnessed several technological advancements and triggered consumer demand which attracted both restaurants and third parties to deliver foods (Muller, 2018). Restaurants may deliver food items using their own website/application (e.g. Domino's, Pizza Hut and KFC) or via third party aggregators (e.g. Foodpanda, Swiggy, Zomato and Uber Eats). Development of e-commerce has largely contributed to changing food consumption patterns, and more and more consumers prefer to use online platforms to order foods (Hwang et al., 2019a). Online food delivery has emerged as a popular trend in e-commerce space, and serves as a tool to reach a larger number of consumers in a cost effective manner (Ray et al., 2019).

Online food delivery (OFD) refers to online channel that consumers use to order food from restaurants and fast-food retailers (Elvandari

et al., 2018). In OFD system, consumers have a better choice in terms of restaurants and food items (Pigatto et al., 2017). By adopting OFD, restaurants and fast-food retailers can increase their reach among consumers in a cost-effective manner while consumers can order the meal of their choice without spending much time and efforts (Ray et al., 2019). In the recent past, OFD has witnessed several technological advancements. For instance, restaurants have transitioned from offline into online platforms by developing their own websites and allowing customers to order food using restaurants' own website (Yeo et al., 2017). Further, due to the increasing use of smartphone applications, restaurants have launched their apps which also serve as online food ordering platforms for consumers (Ray et al., 2019). However, due to operations and/or financial reasons, not all restaurants use their own delivery channels for food delivery (Hwang et al., 2020). Hence, restaurants opt for third-party platforms and food aggregators to facilitate online food delivery, helping them to reach out to a wider market in a cost-effective manner (Williams et al., 2020). Foodpanda, Swiggy, Zomato and Uber Eats are a few examples of third-party food delivery platforms (Lo et al., 2020). However, such platforms, i.e., third-party food delivery services,

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