

A Review of Online Food Delivery (OFD) Impact on Food Businesses

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ABSTRACT

The emergence and widespread adoption of online food delivery (OFD) platforms have revolutionized how people order and receive food, thus creating both opportunities and challenges for the food business. With this shift from bricks to clicks in the food industry, it is necessary to study the impact of OFD platforms on food businesses. **Objective:** This review paper analyzes existing literature to provide a comprehensive overview of how OFD influences customer preferences, business operations, and the economic performance of the food business. Additionally, it highlights the dual-edged effects of OFD adoption, offering insights and recommendations to various stakeholders to adapt strategically and integrate OFD services sustainably. **Methodology:** The methodology involved a comprehensive review of scholarly articles. **Findings:** The findings reveal that OFD has necessitated significant operational changes in restaurants, such as optimizing workflows and integrating advanced technologies, while high platform fees have impacted profitability, especially for small businesses. Expectations of online customers, including food quality and ensuring timely deliveries have become a critical focus for restaurants. This Review underscores the need for further research to explore long-term impacts providing valuable insights for the food businesses aiming to foster a balanced and beneficial integration of technology in the food industry.

Keywords: Online Food Delivery, Food Business, Impact, Consumer Preference, Business Operations, Economic Performance

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1. Introduction

The digital revolution has significantly altered the food sector, with Online Food Delivery (OFD) services like Uber Eats, DoorDash, Swiggy, Zomato, and Grubhub leading this transformation. These platforms have transformed conventional food service methods, enabling consumers to order meals from their homes with a few clicks effortlessly. The proliferation of OFD has accelerated, driven by technical innovations and evolving customer tastes, which have heightened dependence on these services (Tayal, 2023). The food service landscape has been transformed, presenting opportunities as well as challenges for worldwide food businesses (Li et al., 2020).

This paper thoroughly examines the influence of OFD platforms on the food businesses, concentrating on three key aspects: consumer preferences, operational processes, and financial performance. It aims to analyse the impact of these platforms on customer behaviour, restaurant operational strategies, and financial performance. The study delves into the complex dynamics surrounding the adoption of OFDs, examining how the advantages of wider market reach and enhanced convenience are weighed against the drawbacks of elevated platform costs and operational demands (Shankar et al., 2022; Traynor et al., 2022). This review addresses multiple aspects of incorporating OFD platforms into the food business. It analyses the operational modifications necessary for restaurants, encompassing the

integration of new technology and process enhancements to satisfy online ordering requirements (Nguyen et al., 2021). Additionally, the financial implications of OFD platforms are examined, emphasizing the impact of the fees levied by these platforms on profitability, particularly for small and medium-sized firms. The review also addresses the heightened expectations of online consumers, including the necessity for rapid delivery and food quality, which are essential for sustaining customer satisfaction and loyalty (Suhartanto et al., 2019). The paper seeks to offer significant insights and strategic recommendations for owners of food businesses, operators of OFD platforms, and other stakeholders.

2. Objectives

The paper aims to analyse the following objectives

- a) To examine the impact of Online Food delivery (OFD) platforms on food businesses due to consumer behaviour and preferences.
- b) To analyse how OFD adoption influenced the operational strategies of Food Businesses.
- c) To examine how OFD adoption influenced the economic performance of the Food Businesses.

The paper aims to provide actionable insights that can guide food business owners, managers, and other stakeholders, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, in understanding evolving consumer behavior and operational changes. The results of this review paper are intended to support informed decision-making for OFD platform adoption, workflow optimization, and long-term financial planning in the food service sector.

3. Methodology

This study employs a Narrative Literature Review methodology to synthesize and evaluate the existing research focusing on Consumer Preference, Business Operations, and economic performance. This Review was conducted using several databases, SCOPUS, Google Scholar, Web of Science, and JSTOR, implementing a systematic approach to analyse and collect relevant literature. The studies of the last 10 years, i.e, from 2014 to 2024, were included. Papers only in the English Language were selected, which are peer-reviewed or conference papers. In total, 54 papers were full-text reviewed and analysed, out of which 30 papers were included in the final analysis.

4. Determinants of Consumer Preferences in OFD

The advent of Online Food Delivery (OFD) platforms has transformed consumer behavior by prioritizing convenience, variety, and speed. OFD platforms allow users to order food from a wide range of restaurants with just a few clicks on their mobile phones, significantly enhancing convenience (Chakraborty, 2024; Teo et al., 2024). Consumers have access to a diverse range of restaurants and food items, expanding their dining options beyond local eateries to include various cuisines and specialty dishes (Chakraborty, 2024). The demand for quick and timely delivery has become a critical factor in maintaining customer satisfaction, with consumers expecting their orders to arrive promptly (Huang & Siao, 2023).

- a) **Convenience:** Convenience is the foremost factor driving consumer preference for OFD platforms. Unlike traditional dining experiences, which require time and effort to visit physical restaurants, OFD offers consumers the ability to browse, order, and receive food from a wide range of options with minimal effort (Tsai et al., 2023). The ability to place orders from any location and have them delivered to one's doorstep is a

unique proposition of these platforms. In addition to convenience in ordering, platforms also offer features such as scheduled deliveries, customization of meals, and real-time tracking of orders, all of which enhance the user experience. The ease and flexibility provided by OFD services have redefined convenience, positioning it as a foremost factor in customer satisfaction (Ambad et al., 2022; Binti Azman et al., 2021).

- b) *Variety*:** One of the greatest advantages of OFD services is the extensive variety of food options available to consumers. Platforms like Zomato, Swiggy, Grubhub, etc. allow customers to explore a broad spectrum of cuisines, offering both street food and gourmet dishes at their fingertips. This diverse culinary selection enables consumers to experiment with new foods, often encouraging more adventurous eating habits (Traynor et al., 2022). For food businesses, this wide-ranging exposure brings opportunities to reach broader demographics and attract new customers who might not have discovered them through traditional means (Li et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2021). However, this increased variety also leads to heightened competition among restaurants on the platform (Huang & Siao, 2023). Smaller establishments, in particular, face challenges in differentiating themselves and maintaining visibility in a crowded marketplace (Teo et al., 2024).
- c) *Speed*:** The speed of delivery is a critical aspect of consumer satisfaction in OFD services. Consumers expect their food to be delivered promptly, and delays can lead to negative experiences that may damage a platform's or restaurant's reputation (Teo et al., 2024). To meet these expectations, restaurants and delivery services must optimize their operations and logistics (Chan et al., 2023). Consumers now associate prompt delivery with reliability, which directly influences their loyalty to a particular platform or food business (Chakraborty, 2024). To mitigate delays, many platforms have integrated real-time tracking systems that allow consumers to monitor the progress of their orders, adding a layer of transparency to the process (Li et al., 2020).

5. Effect of OFD due to Consumers on Food Business

- a) *Increased Focus on Food Quality*:** With consumer preferences shifting towards the convenience and speed of OFD, food quality remains a key factor of overall satisfaction. Food quality is a crucial determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty in the restaurant industry. High food quality can positively influence customer satisfaction and future purchase intentions. (Hsu, 2021; Mohamad Salleh et al., 2024). Food businesses that fail to deliver high-quality meals consistently risk losing repeat customers, even if they excel in other areas like pricing or speed of delivery (Das & Ghose, 2019). As a result, maintaining food quality during transit and ensuring that it meets customer expectations upon arrival has become a crucial challenge for many restaurants operating within the OFD space (Das & Ghose, 2019; Traynor et al., 2022).
- b) *Enhanced Service Quality*:** Service quality extends beyond food and encompasses the professionalism and efficiency of delivery personnel (Nivornusit et al., 2024). The overall service experience, including interactions with delivery staff, packaging, and responsiveness to complaints, significantly influences customer satisfaction (Teo et al., 2024). For food businesses, ensuring a positive customer experience at every stage of the delivery process is essential for fostering long-term loyalty. Moreover, many platforms now offer customer feedback systems that allow users to rate the food and the delivery service. Therefore, service quality impacts customers' purchase intentions (SAN & DASTANE, 2021). This further emphasizes the need for restaurants and delivery partners to maintain high professionalism and efficiency.

- c) **Competitive Pricing Strategies:** Pricing remains a key factor in consumer decision-making when using OFD services. With many platforms offering a wide range of choices, customers are likely to order when promotions such as discounts and free delivery are included. These types of promotional pricing strategies help to retain customers (Chakraborty, 2024). Competitive pricing can attract price-sensitive consumers and drive repeat purchases, particularly for promotional deals or discounts. However, food businesses must offer attractive prices to attract more customers through these delivery platforms (Teo et al., 2024).
- d) **Effective Promotional campaign:** Promotions and discounts play a pivotal role in attracting new customers and retaining existing ones. According to (Tan & Eng Kim, 2021) effective promotional campaigns can enhance customer satisfaction and encourage repeat orders. Whether through first-time user discounts, festival promotions, or loyalty programs, strategic discounting allows businesses to stand out from competitors on the platform.
- e) **Convenience and Ease of Use:** For consumers, the ease of using OFD platforms through an intuitive app interface, a streamlined checkout process, or the availability of multiple payment options enhances their overall experience. As highlighted by (Cho et al., 2019) Businesses that ensure smooth, hassle-free ordering processes will see higher satisfaction rates and potentially better customer retention.
- f) **Trust and Accurate Information:** Building and maintaining trust with consumers is essential for long-term success in the OFD ecosystem. Providing accurate information about menu items, pricing, delivery times, and availability fosters trust between consumers and both the platform and the restaurant (Cho et al., 2019). Additionally, cooperation between vendors and app operators to ensure consistent service delivery is vital for maintaining customer loyalty.

The rise of OFD platforms has fundamentally reshaped consumer preferences in the food industry, emphasizing convenience, variety, and speed as primary motivators. These shifts have required food businesses to adapt their operational strategies to align with evolving customer expectations. By focusing on food quality, competitive pricing, and service excellence, food businesses can navigate the challenges posed by OFD services while leveraging the opportunities for growth and customer engagement.

6. Effect of OFD on Business Operation

Online Food Delivery (OFD) services have significantly risen in recent years, driven by increased consumer demand for convenience and variety. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this trend as consumers sought safe and convenient dining options from home (Shankar et al., 2022). Online food delivery (OFD) has reshaped the operational landscape of food businesses by introducing new business models and altering consumer expectations. Integrating digital platforms has driven food businesses to adopt more dynamic logistical and operational strategies, particularly in managing demand surges, inventory, and supply chains. One study highlights how third-party logistics services, have increased efficiency but also introduced dependencies on external providers, which can affect a restaurant's control over delivery speed and food quality (Khan, 2020).

Moreover, the rise of consumer expectations due to the ease of access and increased competition on these platforms has forced businesses to rethink their operational strategies. Customer reviews and quick service have become critical factors in maintaining competitiveness. A study indicated that the digital nature of OFD platforms has introduced a customer-centric approach, pressuring restaurants to optimize not only increased convenience

but also discounts (Senthil et al., 2020). Smaller businesses, in particular, should be actively involved in incorporating the latest technologies into their business operations that help in developing their competitive advantage (Fauzi, n.d.).

Furthermore, the efficiency of kitchen workflows has become increasingly important as food businesses must align their internal operations with the stringent timeframes set by delivery platforms to ensure food quality upon arrival. Therefore, the use of the Restaurant Management System (RMS) should be considered as it improves business operation and management and helps meet customer expectations (Ishan et al., 2022). The transition has also stimulated innovation, demonstrated by the development of "cloud kitchens," which prioritize delivery and eliminate the necessity for expensive physical dining spaces (Ma et al., 2021). The influence of OFD on food company operations presents operational issues and opportunities for creative, streamlined business models.

The rise of online food delivery (OFD) platforms has significantly transformed the operational workflows and strategic approaches of food businesses. One of the primary effects has been the need for workflow management enhancements, where restaurants streamline their order processing systems and integrate advanced technologies to handle the increased demand more efficiently. This includes introducing an inventory management system to their business so that there is a balance between stockout and wastage, and First In First Out (FIFO) method should be adopted to maintain the quality of the food (Das & Ghose, 2019). Technological integration plays a crucial role in this transformation, with businesses adopting mobile apps, real-time tracking systems, and automated order management to enhance their competitiveness in the digital market which also leads to changes in operational budget, operational layouts, process adjustment, and menu options (Traynor et al., 2022).

The competitive dynamics of the food industry have also shifted with the integration of third-party online food delivery (TPOFD) platforms, which offer restaurants access to new markets but introduce challenges such as service quality issues, challenges in in-house operations, information technology (IT) challenge, etc (Traynor et al., 2022). These changes due to OFD led to additional costs such as hiring trained staff to adapt to technological changes, packaging material, and maintaining digital infrastructure (Bonfanti et al., 2023). On the contrary, food business owners must weigh the benefits of increased market access and operational efficiency against the cost and complexities of changed business models due to the advent of OFD (Fauzi, n.d.).

7. Effect of OFD on the Financial Performance

By adopting Online Food Delivery (OFD) systems, food businesses have experienced a substantial impact on their financial performance, which has resulted in both positive and negative effects. Consumer income significantly affects the financial performance of food businesses (Nivornusit et al., 2024). Restaurants partnering with third-party food delivery services can leverage platform resources such as drivers and digital infrastructure, thereby minimizing associated costs (Chen et al., 2022) and enhancing long-term financial performance (Liu et al., 2023). Conversely, a study conducted by (Collison, n.d.) indicates that while OFD increases sales volume, it also reduces traditional brick-and-mortar sales. Enhanced liquidity is one of the immediate advantages noted by restaurants that have adopted OFD services. The increased frequency of daily transactions has facilitated businesses in optimizing their cash flow, hence enhancing financial agility and facilitating the fulfilment of short-term financial obligations (Van Veldhoven et al., 2021). Nonetheless, although liquidity enhances, the impact on profitability is inconclusive. Despite certain restaurants witnessing revenue growth, the substantial operational expenses linked to OFD membership, such as third-party commission

fees, could offset these benefits. This indicates that although OFD platforms increase sales, their impact on profitability is dependent upon the restaurants' management of the associated expenses (Ibrahim et al., 2022; Van Veldhoven et al., 2021). According to (Fernández-Miguélez et al., 2020) restaurants with a high value of online reviews will be more profitable.

Moreover, the influence of OFD on a restaurant's solvency and its ability to meet long-term financial commitments is less significant. On the other hand, OFD services provide a clear pathway for market expansion and revenue growth, offering access to a broader customer base without requiring substantial investment in physical infrastructure (Huang & Siao, 2023).

Despite these advantages, **high commission fees** charged by third-party delivery platforms continue to pose a major financial challenge. These fees, significantly erode profit margins, making it essential for restaurants to engage in careful financial planning and cost management to ensure sustained profitability (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Many businesses find that the costs associated with participating in OFD platforms necessitate trade-offs in pricing or the quality of service, therefore restaurants must adopt a self-service(SS) strategy when restaurants have high market potential (Niu et al., 2021).

8. Research Gap

Despite the rapid growth and extensive utilization of online food delivery (OFD) platforms, the current literature regarding their impact is limited, especially about their effects on food businesses within particular geographical regional settings. This shortage underscores many crucial domains requiring additional investigation:

a) Regional Emphasis on Emerging Markets: Although there is considerable study on OFD platforms, investigations targeting specific regional markets, particularly in developing countries, are limited. Distinct regions demonstrate diverse socio-economic dynamics that may differentially affect the adoption and impact of OFD services.

b) Longitudinal Impact Studies: The literature mostly documents the immediate or short-term effects of OFD platforms on business operations and consumer behavior. However, there exists a significant lack of longitudinal studies that investigate the lasting impacts over time, essential for comprehending long-term economic sustainability and the changing dynamics of customer behavior in response to technological advances.

c) Emphasis on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): Current research frequently generalizes the effects of OFD platforms across all business sizes. There is an urgent necessity for comprehensive study concentrating on SMEs, which have distinct challenges as well as opportunities.

9. Practical Implications

a) For Food Business Owners:

- **Operational Adaptation:** Restaurants must adapt by optimizing workflows and utilizing technology to meet the growing demand for fast, high-quality delivery services. Smaller establishments can benefit from partnerships with third-party logistics services to manage delivery operations more effectively. Combining hybrid models that combine third-party delivery services and in-house delivery options helps businesses achieve cost efficiency. Creating a specialized “delivery menu” that focuses on high profit margin easy-to-manage, and simple-to-pack items should be considered to minimize operational cost and maximize profit margins.

- **Focus on Customer Experience:** Improving both food quality and delivery experience is essential for maintaining customer satisfaction. This includes adopting delivery-friendly packaging that preserves food quality during transit and training delivery staff to offer professional service. unique selling propositions, such as specialty dishes, internationally or locally sourced ingredients, or sustainability practices, should be adopted.
- **Reviewing Financial Performance:** By tracking dimensions such as liquidity, profitability, and solvency, businesses can make an informed decision to change their strategies. For instance, if platform fees reduce profit margins, business owners might explore options such as adjusting pricing, negotiating terms with the platforms, or implementing cost-saving measures to maintain financial stability.

b) For OFD Platform Operators:

- **Fee Structure Adjustments:** To ensure the sustainability of smaller and medium-sized restaurants, OFD platforms should explore more flexible fee structures, possibly reducing commission rates or offering tiered pricing based on order volume or business size.
- **Collaborative Initiatives:** Platforms can collaborate with restaurants to improve service quality by sharing data insights, allowing restaurants to tailor their offerings and operations to more effectively meet customer preferences. Platforms can provide tech support, training, and data insights to food businesses, particularly SMEs to improve their performance and satisfaction of food business owners.

10. Findings

Online Food Delivery (OFD) systems have profoundly transformed the food businesses, drastically transforming consumer interaction with food services. These advances improve convenience by enabling seamless ordering from many locations, hence streamlining the consumer experience and broadening their culinary options. The broad range of options offered by OFD platforms has encouraged greater consumer exploration of diverse cuisines while simultaneously increasing competition among food businesses. This competition particularly affects smaller businesses, which struggle to maintain visibility and competitiveness. The demand for fast delivery has become a crucial factor in consumer satisfaction. OFD platforms have implemented advanced technologies such as real-time tracking to reduce the negative impacts of delivery delays and build consumer loyalty through reliable communication. The operational modifications necessitated by OFD implementation are substantial.

Restaurants must adopt technology-driven solutions, such as restaurant management systems and inventory management systems, to enhance kitchen operations and meet the demand for timely and reliable service. The rise of cloud kitchens reflects an important shift from traditional dining models, emphasizing a delivery-focused approach to improve operational efficiency. Financially, while OFD platforms have created new markets leading to increased transaction volumes and improved liquidity, they also levy fees that can considerably impact business profitability. The financial burden is particularly severe for small and medium-sized businesses, which face difficult trade-offs between competitive pricing and sustaining high service quality to secure profitability. Consumer behavior has transformed, prioritizing food quality and service excellence. Factors such as flavour, freshness, and appearance are crucial for client satisfaction. The quality of delivery workers and the responsiveness of platforms to customer complaints are essential in building client loyalty. Therefore, the incorporation of

OFD platforms in Food Businesses indicates a broader transformation in how the food service industry operates in the digital era. These platforms are not just a logistical solution but are reshaping customer engagement, staffing models, menu design, and even real estate decisions (e.g., Cloud kitchen). In developing countries, OFD can act as a growth engine for micro and small food businesses, but only if digital inequality, delivery infrastructure, and regulatory challenges are managed well.

11. Conclusion

Opportunities and challenges are both presented by the introduction of platforms for OFD. In the long run, OFD platforms facilitate the transformation into a digital-first food service model, impacting everything from staffing needs to real estate decisions. The rise of cloud kitchens and AI-driven analytics brought by OFD platforms suggests a redefinition traditional food business model. Understanding these changes is important for food business owners aiming to stay competitive in food business industry. Although OFD platforms make it easier for businesses to expand and engage with their customers, they also necessitate significant adjustments to how they conduct their operations and take their strategic approaches. More research should be conducted in the future to investigate these processes, with a particular focus on long-term sustainability and the different effects that these processes have on different market groups, such as small and large businesses. For stakeholders to successfully navigate through the complexity of the OFD ecosystem, it will be essential for them to conduct this continuous analysis.

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