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Investigating Factors that Affect Consumer Behavioural Intention to Use Online Food Delivery Services (OFDS) in the Western Province of Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Purpose: With the development of information and communication technology, there is an emerging new wave can be seen in the food and beverage industry. That is called online food delivery services (OFDS). It is the new pattern of eating out other than takeaway and eating out. The day by day is going to be changed the lifestyle among urban food and beverage consumers. Hence the objective of this study is to establish a model that investigates the factors and relationships of several factors (Consumer attitude, Subjective Norm. Perceived Behavioural Control Trustworthiness and Ease of Use) with the consumer behavioural intention to use OFDS among consumers who live in the Western Province of Sri Lanka.

Method: This study used the quantitative research approach and explanatory research design to investigate the research objective. The sample size of the study was 235 respondents who are engaging with social media OFDS platforms (pages and groups). A structured questionnaire was used as the data collection tool and a survey method was used to gather data. **Findings:** Multiple regression analysis revealed statistically significant relationships between consumer attitude, subjective norm, and trustworthiness towards OFDS in the Western province of Sri Lanka. Among those factors, trustworthiness was identified as the highest significant factor towards consumer behavioural intention to use OFDS, because it showed a significant and positive relationship after data analysis of the study.

Research Implications: These findings provide support for OFDS providers and future potential businesses to connect with customers more closely via the online platform. Further, both business firms and scholars can take an understanding regarding significant insights into what induces urbanites when engaging with OFDS services.

Keywords: Consumer Behavioural Intention, Online Food Delivery Services (OFDS), Extending the Theory of Planned Behavior, Consumer Attitude

Introduction

In recent years online food delivery service (OFDS) has arisen as a new tendency in the food and beverage industry. From that people have been given an opportunity to order food with a very simple click (Aryani *et al.*, 2022) ^[6]. OFDS is recognized as one of the largest market segments in e-commerce which has gradually increased its market share and profitability (Statista Market Forecast, 2020), (Dospinescu *et al.*, 2020) ^[12]. Globally, the OFDS market has expected to increase from 136.4 billion US to 182.3 billion USD\$ in 2024 (Statista Market Forecast, 2020). In the Sri Lankan context, OFDS is identified as the most beneficial and fast-growing market (Daily FT, 2021). As a result of COVID-19, firms in the food and beverage industry had to convert their businesses from physical to the virtual platform or integrated with both platforms due to safety precautions, restrictions, quarantine and social distancing issues regulated by governments of specific countries (Pal *et al.*, 2021)^[23].

Customer behavioural intention to use OFDS has become a crucial factor to determine the firms' continuous operations. But, the identification of consumer behavioural intention of OFDS is still in the level of infancy and unclear (Ali *et al.*, 2020). According to the researchers' point of view, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is the most significant approach which can be used to explain consumer intention (Al Amin *et al.*, 2021; Bouara *et al.*, 2021)^[2, 8]. The key concept of TPB consists of three major dimensions called attitude (AT), subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavioural control (PBC). This theory allows practitioners to identify the beliefs of a specific group of people (Ajzen, 1991)^[1].

In OFDS literature most of the researchers have investigated factors of technology readiness, and technology acceptance (Anis *et al.*, 2021; Chai *et al.*, 2019; Tanakorn *et al.*, 2021)^[5, 9, 28]. Accordingly, very few studies have identified the importance of other models related to behavioural intention (Mehrolia *et al.*, 2021; Muangmee *et al.*, 2021)^[19, 20]. A few prior studies on

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

consumer behaviour to use OFDS with special reference to COVID-19 have been empirically done by a few countries. (Bouarar et al., 2021; Qian et al., 2021)^[8, 24] but these findings are not compatible across studies. Therefore, investigating this concept is more productive in different cultural contexts like Sri Lanka. In the Sri Lankan context, most of the studies have been developed to discuss factors that affect customer intention on different electronic platforms like e-shopping and e-grocery shopping (Athapaththu & Kulathunga, 2018; Larojan *et al.*, 2020)^{[7,} ^{17]}. Hence, the main purpose of this study is to contribute to the current literature on factors that influence behavioural intention towards OFDS by extending the TPB model. It is worthwhile to identify factors which affect the customer behavioural intention for OFDS after the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it will be highly beneficial to online food marketers in short term as well as the long term to ensure their survival in the online food market.

The objective of this study is to investigate factors affecting the customer's behavioural intention to use OFDS in the western province of Sri Lanka by extending the theory of planned behaviour (TPB).

Therefore, the study focuses on the following research questions;

• What are the factors that affect the customer's behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province of Sri Lanka?

From a managerial perspective, understanding these factors is important to OFDS providers to analyze consumer behaviour of OFDS. That understanding will be helping them to enhance consumer behavioural intention to use OFDS repetitively by providing consistent services to the consumers. The present study observed the conceptual model by using the TPB model with two new dimensions. Therefore, the results of this work will be provided with a theoretical contribution to OFDS literature in a well-detailed manner. In the Sri Lankan context, OFDS can be identified as a still new pattern of food consumption. Since of the unparalleled circumstances, this study will lead experts, marketers and policymakers and other relevant persons to introduce potential marketing strategies for OFDS. Moreover, understanding customer behavioural intention is really helpful to food-related shops and restaurants to analyze the food market to generate more sales and profits as well as ensure the sustainability of the business in any challenging situation.

Literature Review

Nowadays many people have moved from buying food physically to online food ordering with the availability of smartphones and internet facilities (Anis *et al.*, 2021)^[5]. On the other hand, restaurants have been given another way of doing business. It's able to reduce the burden coming from its operations side. For example, reducing staffing, and additional service costs (Kaewmahaphinyo *et al.*, 2020)^[15]. According to Athapaththu & Kulathunga (2018)^[7] consumer behavioural intention refers to the probability of customers buying something and it is also identified as the ultimate stage of the consumer buying process. It indicated how much willingness or effort they are planning to be applied (Hooi *et al.*, 2021)^[13]. According to discuss with OFDS because it is positively impacted the actual adoption of

OFDS at a significant level (Bouarar et al., 2021)^[8].

TPB model is one of them which is used to explain in detail individuals' behavioural intention to engage in a certain behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) ^[1]. The TPB indicates that behavioural achievement depends on both motivation and ability (Ajzen, 1991)^[1]. Under the core concept of TPB, it is discussed three major dimensions namely attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. Attitude is one of the key determinants of the TPB model. Ajzen (1991)^[1] explained that attitude is the appraisal of individuals' behavioural beliefs and outcome evaluations, by acknowledging that Bouarar et al (2021)^[8] referred to attitude towards OFDS as the level to which a person's favourable or unfavourable assessment or judgment of the behaviour of OFDS. Chen et al (2020)^[10] found that customers' attitudes significantly influence their purchase intention of food delivery platforms and related services. Amin et al (2021)^[2] also pointed out that customers' attitudes are positively affected by consumers' continuous intention to use OFDS in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

H1: Customers' attitudes positively affect consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province of Sri Lanka

The subjective norm is the most significant determinant in the TPB model. According to Ajzen (1991) ^[1], it is determined by the social pressure coming from different social groups such as family, friends, relatives, and work colleagues. By acknowledging that Hooi *et al* (2021) ^[13] argued that community pressure motivates customers to adopt OFDS. According to Chen *et al* (2020) ^[10], the subjective norm has a significant and positive influence on the purchase intention of OFDS. Bouarar *et al* (2021) ^[8] also stated the same results. It reflected that subjective norm positively affects the customer intention to use OFDS during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H2: Customers' subjective norm positively affects consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province of Sri Lanka

According to Ajzen, (1991)^[1] Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) means consumers' individual perception regarding the ease or difficulty of carrying out a certain behaviour. It is influenced by some external factors including ability, resources, and opportunity. It is determined by the consumers' experience and future expectations (Chen *et al.*, 2020)^[10]. According to Amin *et al* (2021)^[2] behavioural control is positively influenced by consumer behaviour and continuous intention to use mobile food delivery applications during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Bouara *et al* (2021)^[8] reflected that behavioural control has a non-significant influence on OFDS during the pandemic.

H3: Customers' perceived behaviour control effects on consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province of Sri Lanka.

On an online platform, there are no physical interactions between buyers and sellers (Mayer *et al.*, 1995) ^[18]. Especially in the online platform, trust is very essential because customers are always experiencing different kinds

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

of uncertainties and risk issues (Athapaththu & Kulathunga, 2018)^[7]. Nguyen *et al* (2019)^[21] found that website trust applies a direct and positive influence on consumer intention towards online food purchasing Muangmee *et al* (2021)^[20] confirmed that trust significantly influences the behavioural intention to use OFD apps during COVID-19. Bouarar *et al* (2021)^[8] reflected the same positive relationship.

H4: Customers' trust positively affects consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province of Sri Lanka

WorldCat.Org, (1962) describes it as a degree to which the technology is to be understood, learn and operate in the stages of order process, order tracking, and filtering menu in the interface (Roh & Park, 2019)^[25]. According to Ramayah and Ignatius (2005), if web interfaces and mobile services are required little effort to enter, customers can be willing to use online services. Some studies have shown the same positive relationship in the OFDS context as well (Alaimo *et al.*, 2020; Nguyen *et al.*, 2019; Roh & Park, 2019)^[3, 21, 25]. But Chai *et al* (2019)^[9] pointed out that perceived ease of use has no direct and significant impact on the behavioural intention to use food delivery services in Malaysia when adopting urbanites towards OFDS.

H5: Consumers' ease of use affects consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province of Sri Lanka.

Methodology

The primary data source to gather data for this study is cross-sectional survey method. The study attempted to use the survey method because it is cost-effective, easy to administer and helps to connect with a high population regardless of geographical boundaries. This research framework is developed based on prior studies (Figure 3.4.1).

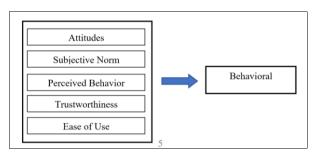


Fig 3.4.1: Conceptual Framework

H1: Customers' attitudes (AT) positively affect consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province of Sri Lanka

H2: Customers' subjective norm (SN) positively affects consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province of Sri Lanka

H3: Customers' perceived behaviour control (PBC) effects on their behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province of Sri Lanka

H4: Customers' trustworthiness (TR) positively affects consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province of Sri Lanka

H5: Customers' ease of use affects consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province of Sri Lanka.

This study focuses on its target population engaging with online food ordering within the Western province. In Sri Lanka, lots of OFDS operate within the Western province only (The Island, 2021). E-commerce statistics stated that the Western Province is a growing marketplace with 50% of the largest online order share (Sunday Observer, 2020). Furthermore, the digital literacy rate of the population and internet usage in the Western provinces is much higher than in other areas (Samsudeen & Selvaratnam, 2019) ^[26]. Since the non-availability of data regarding OFDS users in Sri Lanka, this study is necessary to conduct by using a non-probability sampling technique and a convenient sampling method. According to Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R (2016) ^[27] the study focuses to collect data from 385 respondents who have taken membership in social media OFDS groups.

Data Analysis and Findings

The core survey was carried out using 385 respondents through the google form method. The survey was especially focused on persons who are actively engaged in social media platforms. From 385 questionnaires, 28 questionnaires were removed because those were against the rules of thumb of the study. Another 9 questionnaires had to be removed as they were incomplete.

The initial part of the questionnaire gathered data regarding the persons' backgrounds. Information was collected representing the most important criteria which are crucial to determine respondents' background details related to the behavioural intention of OFDS. When considering gender, the sample consisted of eighty-two (34.9%) male respondents and hundred and fifty-three (65.1%) female respondents. Among them, nineteen (8.1%) responders are below 20 years. One hundred and fifty-eight (67.2%) belong to 21-30 years. Fifty-three (22.6%) respondents are 31-40 years and the remaining five (2.1%) are above 40 years.

According to the sample, one hundred and twenty-four (52.8%) respondents belong to the Colombo district. Fortyfour (18.7%) of respondents belong to the Kalutara district while sixty-seven (28.5%) are Gampaha residents. According to the category of monthly household income, only one respondent (0.4%) has income below Rs.20,000. Fifteen respondents (6.4%) are earning income between Rs.20,000-40,000. Seventy-nine respondents (33.6%) have income between Rs.40,000-60,000 and one hundred and forty respondents earn income above Rs.60,000. Among all respondents, one hundred sixty-two respondents' marital status is single (68.9%) and the rest of the seventy-three respondents (31.1%) are married. One hundred and seventysix respondents (74.9%) are working persons and the other seventy-three respondents (25.1%) were not working when the sample was collected.

According to the sample, the Ordinary Level (OL) is the highest educational level for nine respondents. One hundred and forty-two respondents mentioned their highest

educational level as Advanced Level (AL) and the rest of the eighty-four respondents mentioned they were graduates. The sample represents fifteen respondents (6.4%) who prefer to order food monthly using online applications. One hundred and fifteen respondents (48.9%) prefer ordering food during 2-6 months. One hundred and five respondents (44.7%) prefer ordering food during 7-12 months. All the responses were collected and considered as experienced regarding online food ordering.

The data analysis process consists of three steps, those are measuring the sample profile, testing the goodness of the data, and the hypothesis. To measure the sample profile, the current study used the frequency analysis method. The validity and reliability of measurements are directed to test the goodness of data. Thus, it is focused to test factor analysis, construct reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha values and also discriminant validity. After that, the multiple regression analysis is used to test the hypothesis and determine the significance between identified factors and consumer intention to use OFDS in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. Further, all analyses were constructed by the software called Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21.0.

The following table pointed out the overall result of the multiple regression analysis.

Table 1: Overall result of th	e multiple regression analysis

Hypotheses	Result
H1: Customers' attitudes positively affect consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province, of Sri Lanka	Supported
H2: Customers' subjective norm positively affects consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province, of Sri Lanka	Supported
H3: Customers' perceived behaviour control affects consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province, of Sri Lanka	Not supported
H4: Customers' trustworthiness positively affects consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province, of Sri Lanka	Supported
H5: Customers' Perceived Ease of Use affects consumer behavioural intention to use online food delivery services in the Western Province, of Sri Lanka.	Not supported

Discussion and Conclusion

The study focused to investigate factors which influence consumer behavioural intention to use OFDS in the Western province of Sri Lanka. So, the study collected data from the respondents in Colombo, Kalutara and Gampaha districts using social media platforms. Respondents were selected based on their experience with OFDS. According to the findings of this research study, it found that consumers' trustworthiness, attitudes, and subjective norms significantly influence consumer behavioural intention to use OFDS. Consumers' perceived behavioural control and ease of use did not show a significant and positive relationship with consumer behavioural intention towards online food delivery services. Among all the analyzed factors, consumers' trustworthiness illustrated the highest impact on consumer behavioural intention to use OFDS in the Western province of Sri Lanka.

The findings indicate how the result of the study is going to be important to the theory and practice of OFDS. In the Sri Lankan context, OFDS has also been identified as a growing business potential for food marketers. Many business firms have adopted this new way of food ordering and delivering. The findings specified that customers' trust is the most significant factor to determine consumer behavioural intention to use OFDS in the Western province of Sri Lanka. Therefore, it recommends providing a safeguard for all transactions that customers have done through the electronic platform and also checks the system vulnerabilities accordingly. The results also indicate that customers' positive attitudes generate an influence towards OFDS. It means customers' negative attitude towards OFDS will be created a bad effect on the consumer behavioural intention. In the Sri Lankan context, OFDS are pricy due to the high delivery charges. Therefore, service providers should provide convenience to the customers by protecting service value. It reflected that there should have a balance between what customers pay for the service and what customers get in return.

The current study was used to examine factors that influence consumer behavioural intention to use OFDS in the Western province of Sri Lanka. Since this study was limited to only three districts called Colombo, Kalutara and Gampaha in future it suggests taking samples from other areas where OFDS is available to represent the sample. Especially, due to the high increment of online services and smartphone usage among Sri Lankan people, it will be interesting to investigate how behavioural intention on OFDS occurs in other urbanizing areas in Sri Lanka. This study has considered the customers' side only. So, future researchers can focus on suppliers' side responses to analyze factors that influence OFDS and how it contributes to expanding their businesses in the competitive business world. Due to the time limitations, this study has collected responses from 385 respondents only. Therefore, it proposed to increase the sample size since it covers a larger population. The study applied the TPB model which includes three variables called attitude (AT), subjective norm (SN) and perceived behavioural control (PBC); Hence, it further suggests applying different models in future research such as the Technology acceptance model (TAM), Acceptance of technology model (UTAUT), Health belief model, Technology readiness model, Unified theory of use, etc. Additionally, the present study has applied only two variables to extend the TPB model due to time constraints. Those variables are trustworthiness and ease of use. In the present world, there can be different variables caused to determine the behavioural intention towards OFDS in Sri Lanka. Therefore, future studies can apply diverse variables such as performance, food quality, service quality, perceived benefits and risk timeliness which were not tested in the current study. Also, the study suggests finding new areas using this study.

The business world is going through a new technological era by removing barriers to the physical environment. Food business firms and food suppliers are also searching for new ways to attract their consumers as well as expand their businesses. Due to the enhancement of technology and the current busy schedule of people, both the younger and older generation is going to attempt for using online platforms rather than relying on traditional ways of food consumption. This study provides an outline for managers and owners of International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

OFDS businesses to identify the areas they should concern more about when they transition their food businesses from in-person business to online business.

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