

Improvement of Online Food Delivery Service Based on Consumers' Negative Comments

HONG Lan^{[a],*}; LI Ya'nan^[b]; WANG Shuhua^[c]

^[a]Professor, School of Economics, Beijing Wuzi University, Beijing, China.

^[b]Postgraduate, School of Economics, Beijing Wuzi University, Beijing, China.

^[c]Professor, Schools of Foreign Languages, Beijing Wuzi University, Beijing, China.

*Corresponding author.

Received 22 February 2016; accepted 10 April 2016

Published online 26 May 2016

Abstract

This paper gathers consumers' negative comments from 10 partner restaurants which have the biggest sales in meals, fruits, beverage and snacks on 3 online food delivery platforms, and then presents the main problems of online food delivery service. Finally, the causes of those problems are analyzed and suggestions to solve the problems are put forward.

Key words: Online food delivery service; Comments; Platforms; Supervision

Hong, L., Li, Y. N., & Wang, S. H. (2016). Improvement of Online Food Delivery Service Based on Consumers' Negative Comments. *Canadian Social Science*, 12(5), 84-88. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/8464>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/8464>

INTRODUCTION

Online food delivery service is an online-to-offline (O2O) service. The online food delivery service platforms get lots of restaurants together, serving as a go-between connecting restaurants and consumers. These partner restaurants display their menus on platforms to appeal more consumers, and consumers can order food online and get them sent to the designated location in a short time.

With the rapid development of Internet and the power of large capital, online food delivery platforms launched preferential programs and discount in 2014 and 2015,

thus there came an explosive growth of users of the online food delivery platforms.

According to the data of Analysys.cn, the volume of online food delivery service transactions exceeded 15 billion yuan in 2014 and reached 45.78 billion yuan in 2015. The latter is almost three times as much as that of the former. In addition, the data of China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC, 2016) shows that the number of online food delivery service users reached 114 million and among which about 104 million users order online food delivery service by mobile phone by December 2015. At the same time, the number of online shoppers in China is 413 million and about 340 million of them do online shopping by mobile phone. In other words, about 1/4 online shoppers are online takeaway service users.

Since the market of online food delivery service is highly competitive, most of online food delivery platforms have been eliminated after the fierce competition. Some VC-backed platforms survived, which hold the major part of the market share. According to the report of sootoo.com, by the end of 2015, Meituanwaimai occupied 32.2% of the market share of online food delivery service; Eleme occupied 27.1% and Baiduwaimai occupied 12.6% of the market share.

Meituanwaimai was founded in 2013, which is now the largest online food delivery platform. By the end of 2015, its service covers about 300 cities in China. It has almost 1 million partner restaurants. Its target users are not only college students, but also white collars.

Eleme, founded in 2009, who has been in fierce competition with Meituanwaimai, is now the second largest online food delivery platform in China. So far its service covers over 300 cities. It has over 500 thousand partner restaurants and 40 million registered users, who are mainly college students.

Baiduwaimai was founded in 2014. Its service covers more than 100 cities at present. It has 30 million users. Its target users are mainly white collars.

1. SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF ONLINE FOOD DELIVERY SERVICE

In order to win the competition and occupy more market share, almost all online food delivery platforms focus on holding the market share rather than on the audit, supervision and management of partner restaurants. This irresponsibility causes many problems. The media has been exposing the serious problems of it since the birth of online food delivery service.

In August 2014, Hangzhou Daily visited 14 popular restaurants registered on the online food delivery service platform at random. Seven of them were found with unsanitary conditions and fictitious addresses. These restaurants were not supervised periodically by online food delivery service platforms nor by the government department concerned.

In October 2014, Zhejiang Satellite TV (ZJSTV) exposed a restaurant named Jiulianzhuang in Hangzhou who had no Business License nor Food and Beverage Service License. In addition to its unsanitary conditions, the staff there had no health-check card.

In November 2014, 24 students from Hebei University of Science and Technology were poisoned by the food ordered from Eleme.

In October 2015, China Central Television 2 (CCTV2) reported that many online food delivery restaurants from Eleme and Meituanwaimai in Chengdu, Sichuan, had no Business License nor Food and Beverage Service License.

In November 2015, Shanghai Consumer Council investigated 100 online food delivery restaurants from 9 platforms. Investigators found that only 19 of them had Business License and Food and Beverage Service License. All the online food delivery restaurants from Eleme were unqualified.

In March 2016, "3.15" evening parties reported that Eleme guided some partner restaurants to provide fictitious addresses, allowed them to conduct business without Business License and Food and Beverage Service License, and even helped them upload fictitious photos of restaurants.

From the above, it can be seen that problems of online food delivery service are serious and occurring frequently. The online food delivery platforms and their partner restaurants act in collusion to harm the interests of consumers seriously, even to threaten their health and safety.

2. THE ANALYSIS OF CONSUMERS' NEGATIVE COMMENTS

Since online food delivery service is almost monopolized by Meituanwaimai, Eleme and Baiduwaimai, this paper

chooses the comments from these three platforms as the subject of analysis.

At present, three kinds of food which are sold well on the platforms including cooked meals, fruits, beverage and snacks, among which cooked meals are the most popular. This paper selects the top 10 registered partner restaurants located in Tongzhou district in Beijing, from these three platforms whose business is in meals, fruits, beverage and snacks as the subject of analysis, and gathers negative comments on their business, which are classified by ingredients, packing, delivery and other service when the statistical analysis is conducted. Ingredients are mainly related to food quality and safety. Packing is mainly related to the completeness and tightness of the package. Delivery is mainly related to the speed and stability of delivery. The number of comments from 3 platforms adds up to 3,556, among which 1897 comments are from Eleme, 982 comments are from Meituanwaimai and 677 comments are from Baiduwaimai. Statistical data of negative comments are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
The Summary of the Negative Comments

	Ingredients	Packing	Delivery	Other	Total
Cooked meals	940	286	616	126	1968
Fruits	503	5	351	91	950
Beverage and snacks	148	145	310	35	638
Total	1591	436	1277	252	3556

Data source: [Http://www.waimai.meituan.com](http://www.waimai.meituan.com), ele.me and waimai.baidu.com

2.1 Negative Comments on Cooked Meals

From Table 1, it can be seen that negative comments are mainly on ingredients and delivery. Ingredients receive 940 negative comments, which occupies about 47% of all the negative feedback; the number of negative comments related to delivery of meals is 616, which occupies about 31%; The 286 negative comments on packing takes up 15% of all the negative feedback.

According to details of comments on ingredients (see Figure 1), about 70% of the consumers complain that vegetables and meat are not fresh, some of which even get deteriorated. Some of the vegetables have been obvious withered or decayed and the meat has gone sour. About 25% of the consumers complain that the rice is leftover or under cooked. About 5% of the consumers doubt that these restaurants use hogwash oil. From the above data, it is clear that the negative comments on ingredients reflect the consumers' concern about food quality and safety

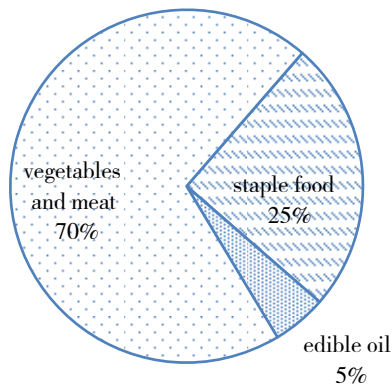


Figure 1
Details of Negative Comments on Ingredients

In terms of delivery, most unsatisfied consumers think that delivery is very slow. When they get the meals they ordered, the meals have been cold; some of them find that their meals are squeezed during delivery, which leads to the decline in quality of their meals.

2.2 Negative Comments on Fruits

According to data of fruits in Table 1, about 53% of negative comments are on the ingredients. In other words, about 53% of those consumers are not satisfied with the quality of fruits. Many of them think that those fruits are not fresh and the fruits are of low quality. Some consumers find some fruits they ordered are rotten. Some other consumers doubt that the so-called imported fruits may be domestic.

About 37% of comments are from delivery. Almost half of consumers complain that fruits are bumped and get damaged during delivery. Others are not satisfied with the speed of delivery and they think delivery is so slow that they have to spend a lot of time on waiting for the fruits they ordered.

2.3 Negative Comments on Beverage and Snacks

According to data about beverage and snacks in Table 1, it is clear that consumers' negative comments are mainly on delivery, which is about 49%. Negative comments on ingredients takes up 23% and negative comments related to packing account for 23%.

According to the study, on negative comments on delivery, most negative comments are on beverage. At present, these beverages sold on online food delivery platforms are mainly made fresh and often unsealed, such as milk tea, coffee and so on. It is very likely for beverage in unsealed cups to spill out during delivery, thus damaging the package. About 58% of consumers unsatisfied with the delivery complain that the beverage they ordered spill from the disposable cups which makes the cups look very dirty when they get their beverage. Some other consumers complain of the slow speed of delivery.

Problems of equality mainly lie in snacks, which occupy about 70%. These unsatisfied consumers think

snacks they ordered are not fresh. A few consumers think the tableware is of low-quality and doubt that those restaurants use cheap cups which are made of industrial plastics.

The proportion of negative comments on other services is only 7%, which means consumers are almost satisfied with them.

2.4 Analysis of the Causes of Problems

As can be seen from the above analysis, the problem of online food delivery service is mainly concentrated on the quality of goods, delivery and packing and so on.

The most serious problem is about ingredients, which are the most concerned problem because it has a direct impact on food quality and safety, which threatens the health and safety of consumers.

According to what were exposed by the media, some online food delivery restaurants operate illegally in order to reduce costs and pursue economic interests. They use inferior and stale ingredients and ignore the kitchen sanitation. Many online food delivery restaurants' kitchens are covered with much lampblack and some restaurants have no fridge to freeze meat, poultry, fish and vegetables. As some comments describe, some consumers felt ill with gastrointestinal bacterial infection found out after eating the ordered food.

On the other hand, because of the vicious competition among the online food delivery platforms and their blind competition for the market, they did not audit the unlicensed "black workshop", even guide them to conduct illegal operations. Moreover, these online food delivery platforms didn't regularly check sanitary conditions of partner restaurants.

In addition, the problem lies in the relative departments' laxity in the enforcement of laws and the lack of supervision over the online food delivery restaurants and platforms. They used to take action until those illegal activities were exposed.

There are four kinds of problems on delivery. Firstly, most online food delivery platforms combine self-delivery with restaurants delivery. Many deliverymen from partner restaurants are short of either professional training or delivery skills. Secondly, the electric bicycle is the major transportation means for online food delivery service which is although high-efficient and environment-friendly, it has poor stability. When cooked meals and beverage are delivered, spill is frequent occurring. In the distribution of fruit, fruit quality is also easy to be affected due to the bumps and squeeze. Thirdly, according to the study on the delivery box, we find that most delivery boxes have poor thermal insulation and cushioning. In the case, some liquid food may spill out. Meals and fruits may be bumped and get damaged easily. Frozen foods melt or hot foods turn cold easily. Fourthly, the delivery time is relatively concentrated. During mealtime, a deliveryman often delivers many orders at one time, which leads to

longer delivery distance and consumers' longer waiting time.

Here comes the problem of packaging. At present, many online food delivery platforms proactively provided disposable tableware for partner restaurants and unify the form of tableware in some areas but not all. So some restaurants may choose low-quality tableware, which not only affects consumers' subjective feeling, but also threatens their health and safety. According to the study, on some online food delivery restaurants, the ordered food is often packed by restaurants' own staff. However, during mealtime, the restaurants not only have lots of orders, but many consumers who enter the restaurants for a meal. Hence they pack food in a hurry and without much care, liquid foods may not be packed closely and it's very likely to spill out during delivery.

3. SOLUTION TO THE ONLINE FOOD DELIVERY SERVICE PROBLEM

As can be seen from the above, problem of ingredients is the biggest threat because the problem of ingredients is about food safety, which is the biggest concern of consumers. The most pressing demand of the day is ensure food safety; only in this way can online food delivery platforms have stable users. At the same time, online food delivery platforms and restaurants spare their efforts to resolve other problems, including delivery, packing and so on. Only in this way can these platforms and restaurants attract more and more consumers.

3.1 The Solution to Food Safety Problem

Those immoral and illegal restaurants are creators of food safety problems, they are hard to do soul-searching and must be asked compulsorily to accept the supervision and punishment from platforms and government departments concerned.

3.1.1 Measures of Online Food Delivery Platforms

Firstly, every online food delivery platform must take responsibility for the audit of partner restaurants' qualification. That is to say, all online food delivery restaurants must have offline restaurants, business license and food and beverage service license, and their staff must have health certificate. Platforms must ensure all partner restaurants operated legally and prohibit illegal restaurants from entering.

Secondly, every online food delivery platform should set up the system of evaluation and that of bonus-penalty. To be specific, the platforms need to conduct evaluation on the restaurants' business qualification, health status, ingredients supply the source, staffing level, condition of facilities, cooking level, consumer evaluation and so on. All platforms should conduct spot checks and make assessments according to the standard. If a restaurant is not up to the minimum standard, the relevant platform

should urge the unqualified restaurant to improve itself. The relevant platform should carry out severe punishment on the restaurants operating illegally and report them to the government departments concerned. Of course, online food delivery platforms should reward a restaurant for high quality. For example, a high quality restaurant may be promoted free of charge on the home page in the given time.

3.1.2 Measures of the Government Departments Concerned

The governmental departments concerned should supervise the qualification of the online food delivery business. In business qualification, the Industrial and commercial management department issues and audits the Business License. Food and drug supervision and administration department issues and audits the Food and Beverage Service License. These supervisory department not only need to be strict in issuing and auditing license and permit, but also pay attention to regular inspection on restaurants during operation.

In specific food supervision, the newly revised *Food Safety Law* lays down that food and drug supervision and administration department implement supervision and administration to food production and business operation. *The Measures for the Supervision and Administration of the Internet Food and Drug Business (Draft)* also make it clear that food and drug supervision and administration departments take responsibility for the Internet food and drug supervision and management. So to speak, who should be responsible for the supervision and management of the online food delivery service has been relatively clear.

However, the problem is that the cooperation among departments lack. They often shirk responsibilities in ambiguous zone of the law. So a cooperation platform should be built for the departments to share information, carry out joint law enforcement to decrease the cost of law enforcement and improve the efficiency of law enforcement.

In addition, all departments should strengthen propaganda to help consumers learn and use laws to stand up for their rights and interests. For example, these supervision departments should force the online food delivery platforms to show consumers methods of safeguarding their rights in the prominent position of their home page.

3.1.3 Self-Protection of Consumers

Consumers must strengthen their self-protection consciousness. Many consumers choose to bear it when their rights and interests are in fringed. At best, they complain by making negative comments on the platform rather than safeguarding their rights with legal weapons. In this case, self-correcting is hard for illegal restaurants, and they even get worse. So in order to create a good environment for online delivery, consumers need to

consciously protect their legitimate rights and interests. Not only do they need to use the network platform, the media, but also make good use of legal weapons to protect their rights.

3.2 Solution to Other Problems

Firstly, if it is feasible, online food delivery platforms should provide uniform and eligible tableware to ensure the tableware safety and increase the proportion of self-deliverymen to ensure the efficiency of delivery as well.

Secondly, online food delivery platforms should strengthen the training of self-deliverymen and ask them to check the correspondence of food to online orders, and whether the packing is normal before delivery. In addition, the deliverymen should be required to choose optimal routes and keep the riding stable during the delivery.

CONCLUSION

Online food delivery market in China is immature yet; some obvious problems can be seen from consumers'

negative comments. In order to solve these problems, we can neither rely merely on the self-discipline of online food delivery restaurants nor the supervision and management of online food delivery platforms. Only by taking laws as the criterion, with the joined efforts of the online food delivery platforms and restaurants, the government departments concerned, consumers and all parties in the society, can these problems be solved and a good online take away environment is created.

REFERENCES

- Analysys.cn. (2015). *Research report on online food delivery market in China*. Retrieved from <http://www.pintu360.com/article/553da6b59540a12a3a13fccf.html>
- Analysys.cn. (2016). *Research report on online food delivery market in China*. Retrieved from <http://www.useit.com.cn/thread-11705-1-1.html>
- CNNIC. (2016). *Statistical report on internet development in China (January 2016)*. Retrieved from <http://www1.cnnic.cn/IDR/ReportDownloads/>