

# *Examine the E-service Quality in Food Delivery Service from the Restaurant in Great Bay Area: A case after COVID-19 Pandemic*

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**Abstract:** After the COVID-19 era, people need to keep social distance to ensure their health due to the requirement of epidemic prevention and control. As a result, many restaurants choose to develop online ordering and offline take-out services in order to reduce direct contact with menus. How to ensure the e-service quality online and offline has become an important topic. The purpose of this paper is to explore the process of customers' intention generation before making online orders through the influence of eWOM and e-services quality on customers' order food delivery intention.

## **1. Introduction**

Recently, the mobility of the population has been limited based on the restrictions of the prevention and control policies of the Greater Bay Area under the epidemic, the decrease in the number of tourists and the decrease of local residents going out [1]. The decline in expected revenue from the restaurant industry has also affected the exchange of goods, services and information [3]. Consumer demand for take-out in the Greater Bay Area has increased dramatically, and contact less consumption has become a secret weapon for businesses and residents to combat this epidemic.

Statistics show that the economic contribution of the restaurant industry to Macau, located in the western part of the Greater Bay Area, has been growing, with an upward trend for the last five years from 2015-2019, but with a significant decline in 2020 [2]. This study provides new insights to explore the service quality of food delivery in the context of COVID-19 through different aspects.

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) is one of the fastest urbanizing regions in China [21][22]. It consists of nine Pearl River Delta cities in Guangdong Province - Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing - and two special administrative regions, Hong Kong and Macau. But the sudden COVID-19 pandemic has also hit this economically developed region hard. This includes the restaurant industry, where many places have adopted lockdown strategies to stop the spread of the virus. Fortunately, with the help of online delivery platforms, many restaurants can continue to operate. The online food delivery sector has been growing at high rates worldwide in the last years. Its revenues have risen from US\$76,193 million in 2017 to US\$122,739 million in 2020 (17.2% average annual growth),

with an expectation to reach US\$164,002 million for 2025. And the technology world has made it easier for us to deliver online via smartphone apps: In mainland China, there are Meituan and Eleme, Macau has Aomi and Mfood, and Hong Kong has Food panda, etc.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, many catering service industries in the Greater Bay Area began to use electronic services to reduce exposure and strengthen protection. Although there are few direct studies and literature on the electronic service quality of food delivery services in the Greater Bay Area, many experts and scholars have conducted in-depth research on food delivery and electronic services after the epidemic. Saqib Ali and Nadeem Khalid (2021) believe that the continuous development of Internet technology has brought about changes in consumer lifestyles and an increase in online shopping. The article analyzes the factors that influence consumers' willingness to adopt online food delivery and ordering services, and aims to investigate the moderating role of situational influence (COVID-19) in affecting such online behaviors. Through multiple levels of research, some researchers have identified factors that affect consumers' behavior and continued willingness to use mobile food delivery applications during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thomas Reardon, Amir Heiman and others(2021) pointed out that COVID-19 and the related lockdown policies in 2020 have had a great impact on the supply chains of food industry companies in developing regions. Many companies "turn to" e-commerce to reach consumers, and "turn to" e-procurement to reach processors and farmers. "Distribution intermediaries" work with food companies to help them deliver and purchase. And in the article explained its importance to the transformation of food companies.

The problems identified in the study are the following four aspects: First, under the influence of COVID-19, merchants need to sterilize all the goods, so the merchants' delivery time increases, the time between order and receipt is longer, and the efficiency needs to be improved. Secondly, due to regional closure restrictions, some communities require residents not to go downstairs to pick up food, and riders need the specific door number of customers to deliver goods, which may have certain security risks and leakage of privacy issues. Third, the personal protection of riders is especially important in the general environment of virus spreading, there is no increased cost for delivery in far distance or dangerous areas, and this risk is not guaranteed for riders. The last and most important aspect is that the electronic return visit is not timely and adequate, no matter which consumption method should put the main position of customers in the first place, there is no timely tracking service customer's consumption experience.

At present, as taste preferences contribute to food choices, most studies on takeout are limited to the food itself, And this paper pay more attention to the e-service quality expectation of the customer in food delivery. The previous study shows that consumers prefer to pay more attention to convenience when using electronic service of food distribution, but our study focuses more on the influence of eWOM on the quality of electronic service of food distribution. Finally, compared with some suggestions put forward by Matthew Keeble et al.(2021) for online food delivery in the UK, this paper will put forward more suggestions for electronic food delivery in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 E-Service quality

Technology has changed everything and e-service quality plays a very important role in every society [4]. E-service quality is how effectively and efficiently a particular online banking service can serve and facilitate online transactions [5]. E-Service Quality is also defined as the ability to effectively and efficiently extend a website [6]. E-Service Quality is the quality or ability of a company to virtually fulfill and promote its services to consumers so that they can meet their

expected service needs [7]. Here, a restaurant is a commercial entity that prepares and cooks food for online orders. On the other hand, the online food delivery company is the intermediary between the restaurant and the customer, ensuring that the food ordered by the customer is delivered to the customer's location as prepared by the restaurant [8]. Therefore, the effective implementation of all components of e-service quality and food quality brings enormous benefits for online food delivery services [9]. E-service quality has a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction. As the electronic quality of service improves, so does customer satisfaction.

## 2.2 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM), often referred to as online reviews, online testimonials, or online opinions, is becoming increasingly important with the advent of new technological tools. Some studies define eWOM as "all informal communication directed to consumers through Internet-based technologies that relates to the use or characteristics of a particular good or service or its seller." They further state that it also includes communication between producers and consumers and between consumers: a) Scope of communication: one-to-one (e-mail), one-to-many (review sites), many-to-many (virtual communities) b) Levels of interaction: asynchronous (e-mail, review sites, blogs) to synchronous (chat rooms, newsgroups, instant messaging). Previous studies have defined an e-Word of mouth as "a positive or negative statement about a product or company by a potential, actual, or former customer that is made available to a wide range of individuals and organizations via the Internet [12]." Today, customers can e-mail their thoughts, opinions, and feelings about a product or service directly to the relevant organization or post them on a blog [13]. In this way, eWOM opens up more options for customers to gather information about products and services from other customers. In short, the electronic environment is a revolutionary place to gather reliable information.

## 2.3 Order food delivery intention

The ban on eating at home has made the unpopular takeout industry incredibly popular in Hong Kong, or as it is now, forced to operate at home, forcing everyone to order takeout, whether they are studying or working in Hong Kong.

Regarding the fierce competition from takeout platforms, Chu Chin Yin Yin is optimistic that there is still room for growth in the takeout market. He also revealed that a campaign to promote merchant platforms was launched in August this year, and more than 500 merchants have already joined the campaign [16]. Lam Kwong, vice president of the Macau Food and Beverage Association, noted that the ability of take-out platforms to stabilize their market share lies not with the merchants but with the habits of the public, including the possibility of preferential subsidies for first-time users of the platform [17].

As the epidemic continues to take hold, some people are spending more time cooking at home and have lost their appetite for takeout. The takeout market has grown significantly in the Mainland as many restaurants have transitioned to takeout service.

After the offering period, people generally evaluate platforms based on the ease of use of the interface, the richness of information, i.e., the degree of merchant involvement, and the variety of electronic payment methods [19].

## 3. Methodology

This research uses the quantitative method will be the major methodology and a questionnaire survey will be conducted to test the E-service quality.

Respondents to the questionnaires must: The population in this research is Came from the Greater Bay Area、 People with take-out needs、 Use online platform.Collect information at the Greater Bay Area social media

For the research, the paper use Convenience Sampling Collect questionnaires. Because this method collect data from whoever is available or can be recruited to participate in a study. So this paper target people who living in Greater Bay Area and often use the online take-out platform are selected to conduct use social software like:Weibo;Wechat;etc. Conduct online questionnaire survey. questionnaire survey. Because the total population of Greater Bay Area is 56,118,400. The researchers only need to collect the sample size less than 1%, which to confirm the accuracy of the survey results. The sample size will be chosen around 350~400 valid data.

#### **4. Outcomes**

Through the questionnaire survey, it is found that regardless of gender, age, occupation, and income, most consumers pay more attention to the service level of food delivery platforms. In the choice of platform stores, they will be more inclined to choose stores that are closer and deliver meals faster; and evaluation, production environment and sales will also affect consumer purchases; in terms of privacy, most online platform takeaway consumers They are more concerned about their privacy, and active platform customer service also promotes external sales. In addition, electronic word-of-mouth is also an extremely important part of most consumers. Most of them will choose merchants with high electronic word-of-mouth to place orders. E-service quality is also a very important part, the vast majority of consumers will place orders again on platforms that have had a good service experience.

#### **5. Implications**

The research implications of this paper can be divided into three areas:

First, by studying the quality of e-service of takeaway in the Greater Bay Area, the problems can be improved when they are improved to improve the quality of service, increase the efficiency of the platform and increase customer satisfaction.

Secondly, this study helps to promote innovation. In the age of information technology innovation and development are the real core competencies, and the data analysis of the platform is used to update and innovate from different perspectives and methods.

Thirdly, this study is meaningful because it can raise public awareness of takeaway e-services and satisfy consumers' right to know.

#### **6. Conclusions**

This study has some limitations. First of all, in this study, the impact of eWOM on electronic service quality is directly or indirectly through electronic satisfaction variables, but there are some other variables (such as reliability, responsiveness, compensation and so on) that affect eWOM. This research did not discuss these topics. Secondly, when studying the impact of electronic service quality on customers' purchasing intentions, it is not ruled out that merchants may interfere with customers' judgments through acts such as false positive reviews.The development status of the food delivery industry under the influence of the epidemic in the future.In the face of predicament, anxiety is not the way to solve the predicament. Through this epidemic crisis, catering people really have time to calm down and think. Changes are common. While the epidemic has brought a blow to the catering industry, it has also brought new ideas and enlightenment to catering people.

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