

Convenience vs Community: Understanding the Drivers Behind Student Preference for Online Food Delivery over Campus Dining

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This research investigates the critical factors driving university students to choose third-party Online Food Delivery (OFD) applications over traditional physical campus dining facilities. Utilizing a quantitative, cross-sectional research design, empirical data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 120 undergraduate students at Universiti Sains Malaysia. The multiple regression results revealed a unique behavioral phenomenon in which variety of choices emerged as the sole statistically significant predictor of students' venue preferences, yielding a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.285 and a significant p-value of 0.047, while perceived ease of use, social influence, and service quality were not statistically significant. In conclusion, these findings demonstrate that the extensive culinary variety and broad range of choices offered by digital aggregators act as the primary structural pull factor drawing students away from institutional dining facilities. Based on these findings, it is suggested that campus food operators prioritize digital modernization, strategic culinary diversification, and flexible menu rotations to effectively mitigate student migration and remain competitive with external delivery platforms.

Keywords: Campus Dining; Consumer Behaviour; Digital Aggregators; Online Food Delivery; Social Influence; Student Preference; Variety of Choices

INTRODUCTION

Online Food Delivery (OFD) refers to a service that enables restaurants and food service providers to deliver food products directly to customers' locations. In the food and beverage industry, OFD has gained substantial popularity alongside the rapid adoption of e-commerce (Najmie et al., 2024). OFD services offer several benefits, including time efficiency, convenience, and greater accessibility for both businesses and consumers. Moreover, maintaining an online presence has become increasingly important as consumers frequently discover and interact with food businesses through digital platforms. According to Li et al. (2023), online delivery services can provide restaurants with additional revenue opportunities while offering consumers greater convenience.

In recent years, OFD has become increasingly integrated into consumers' daily lifestyles and has contributed to changes in food purchasing and dining behavior. Its adoption accelerated during the Movement Control Order (MCO) implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, when mobility restrictions limited consumers' ability to dine at restaurants. During this period, OFD services provided an alternative channel for food and beverage businesses to continue serving customers and maintaining their operations. For example, Grab Malaysia (2021) announced that its services would continue operating during the MCO to serve communities across Malaysia.

OFD services can generally be categorized into direct online ordering, third-party delivery platforms, and hybrid models. Through direct online ordering, restaurants provide websites or applications that allow customers to place orders directly. Alternatively, restaurants may collaborate with third-party delivery platforms that provide delivery services and enable businesses to reach a broader customer base (He et al., 2019). Hybrid models combine direct online ordering with third-party platforms, providing restaurants and consumers with greater flexibility in ordering and delivery options (Tan & Eng, 2021).

The increasing availability of OFD platforms has also transformed dining behavior among university students. Students frequently face time constraints, academic responsibilities, limited mobility, and changing food preferences, making convenience an important consideration when selecting dining options. Previous research has shown that service quality, price, and ease of use are positively associated with students' satisfaction with online food delivery services (Ray et al., 2021). In addition, access to diverse food choices, digital payment facilities, peer recommendations, and reliable delivery services may further influence students' decisions to use OFD platforms.

Despite the growing use of OFD services among university students, existing studies have largely focused on technology adoption, customer satisfaction, and intention to use food delivery applications. Comparatively less attention has been given to how these factors influence students' preference for OFD in comparison with physical campus dining facilities. This distinction is important because campus dining facilities form part of the university community environment and are expected to provide accessible, affordable, and convenient food services for students. The increasing preference for external OFD platforms may therefore have implications for campus food operators, student dining patterns, and the sustainability of on-campus food services.

Accordingly, this study examines the factors influencing university students' preference for online food delivery over campus dining by focusing on perceived ease of use, variety of choice, social influence, and OFD service quality. The study further examines how ease of use, social influence, and OFD service quality are related to students' perceptions of variety of choice. By examining these relationships, the study aims to

provide a clearer understanding of how digital food delivery platforms are reshaping student dining behavior and to provide practical insights for campus food operators seeking to respond to changing student preferences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived ease of use is a fundamental construct derived from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), referring to the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular digital system requires minimal physical and mental effort. In the context of online food delivery (OFD), perceived ease of use reflects the simplicity and convenience experienced by users when navigating applications, selecting food, placing orders, and completing payments.

According to [Kee et al. \(2025\)](#), application characteristics such as perceived ease of use and structural convenience play an important role in enhancing customer experience and overall satisfaction. The development of digital food services has also contributed to the integration of web- and mobile-based ordering systems. [Jalis et al. \(2023\)](#) indicated that food delivery applications have become increasingly common in Malaysia alongside the growing use of smartphones. Similarly, [Zainal Abiddin and Khairuddin \(2022\)](#) explained that mobile technology facilitates online-to-offline integration by connecting food businesses with consumers through digital platforms.

Digital payment systems further enhance the convenience of OFD applications. [Wong Pooi Hang et al. \(2025\)](#) found that the adoption of cashless payment methods among Malaysian students has influenced spending behavior and platform interactions by reducing transaction barriers and simplifying payment processes. Compared with physical campus dining, OFD applications allow students to browse and order food without traveling to dining facilities or waiting in queues. Therefore, greater perceived ease of use may increase students' preference for OFD over campus dining.

H1: Perceived ease of use has a significant positive influence on students' preference for online food delivery over campus dining.

Variety of Choice

Variety of choice refers to the availability of different food options, cuisines, restaurants, and menu alternatives through OFD platforms. The availability of diverse food choices can influence consumers' evaluations of food services because it provides greater flexibility in selecting products according to individual preferences.

Traditional campus dining facilities may offer a more limited range of vendors and menu options than digital food delivery platforms. [Putri et al. \(2025\)](#) indicated that continuous product innovation and menu adaptation to consumers' tastes and lifestyles can contribute to the attractiveness of food and beverage businesses. Similarly, [Keeble et al. \(2020\)](#) demonstrated that the use of food delivery services differs across consumer groups according to sociodemographic and lifestyle characteristics.

OFD platforms provide university students with access to numerous restaurants and food alternatives through a single digital platform. [Lok et al. \(2024\)](#) identified access to diverse food options and perceived convenience as important factors associated with behavioral intentions toward food delivery applications in Malaysia. [Wang et al. \(2021\)](#) also demonstrated the extensive availability of food options through online food delivery platforms, although the nutritional quality of these options may vary.

The ability to access diverse cuisines, restaurants, and menu alternatives may therefore distinguish OFD platforms from campus dining facilities. Students who perceive greater variety through OFD platforms may be more likely to choose these services when their preferred food options are unavailable on campus.

H2: Variety of choice has a significant positive influence on students' preference for online food delivery over campus dining.

Social Influence

Social influence refers to the extent to which an individual's decisions and behaviors are affected by social reference groups, including friends, peers, family members, and online communities. Within university environments, students frequently interact with peers and digital content that may influence their food-related decisions.

[Kee et al. \(2025\)](#) highlighted the role of social interactions in shaping customer experiences within food delivery services. Digital platforms also provide access to reviews, recommendations, and other forms of user-generated information that may affect consumer perceptions. [Sim et al. \(2025\)](#) further demonstrated that digital marketing and online interactions can influence consumers' exploration and purchasing behavior.

Among university students, food ordering may also occur as a social activity in which peers exchange information about restaurants, menu options, promotions, and dining experiences. Such interactions can influence awareness and evaluation of OFD alternatives. Consequently, stronger social influence may increase students' preference for OFD over campus dining.

H3: Social influence has a significant positive influence on students' preference for online food delivery over campus dining.

Online Food Delivery Service Quality

OFD service quality refers to consumers' evaluations of the performance and reliability of food delivery services throughout the ordering and delivery process. It includes aspects such as delivery speed, reliability, order accuracy, customer support, transaction convenience, and the overall service experience.

[Peemanee and Wongsahai \(2021\)](#) found that usage convenience, transaction convenience, and post-purchase convenience are associated with repeat purchase decisions in food delivery services. [Fikry et al. \(2024\)](#) also emphasized the importance of factors affecting customer satisfaction with online food delivery applications. Similarly, [Jalis et al. \(2023\)](#) highlighted the relevance of service-related factors in students' utilization of OFD services.

In digital environments, service performance may influence consumers' evaluations of the overall platform experience. [Gan et al. \(2024\)](#) demonstrated that platform-related factors are associated with customer satisfaction in online shopping environments, while [Lok et al. \(2024\)](#) identified factors associated with customers' behavioral intentions toward food delivery applications in Malaysia. Accordingly, students who perceive OFD services as reliable and efficient may develop a stronger preference for these services over campus dining.

H4: OFD service quality has a significant positive influence on students' preference for online food delivery over campus dining.

Perceived Ease of Use and Variety of Choice

In addition to its proposed direct relationship with student preference, perceived ease of use may influence how students access and evaluate the variety of choices available through OFD platforms. Digital food delivery applications typically organize numerous restaurants, cuisines, and menu items within a single interface. Therefore, the accessibility of these alternatives depends partly on how easily users can navigate and explore the platform (Homburg & Wielgos, 2022).

Features such as search functions, menu categories, filters, and simplified navigation can reduce the effort required to identify and compare available food alternatives. The convenience associated with digital platforms can therefore facilitate students' exploration of different restaurants and menu options. Based on this relationship, greater perceived ease of use is expected to be positively associated with students' perceptions of variety of choice.

H5: Perceived ease of use has a significant positive influence on variety of choice in online food delivery platforms.

Social Influence and Variety of Choice

Social influence may also contribute to students' perceptions of variety by exposing them to food alternatives through peers, recommendations, social media, and online interactions. Students may discover restaurants, cuisines, menu items, or food trends through information shared within their social networks.

Digital interactions can further expand consumers' exposure to available products and services. Sim et al. (2025) demonstrated that digital marketing activities can influence consumers' exploration behavior, while Kee et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of customer experiences and interactions within food delivery services. In the context of university students, recommendations and shared dining experiences may therefore increase awareness of the range of choices available through OFD platforms (Talib et al., 2022).

H6: Social influence has a significant positive influence on variety of choice in online food delivery platforms.

OFD Service Quality and Variety of Choice

OFD service quality may also be associated with students' perceptions of the variety available through digital food delivery platforms. A broad range of food alternatives becomes more accessible and valuable when the platform provides reliable ordering, payment, and delivery services. Therefore, service performance may support students' ability to access and evaluate different food options offered through the platform (Saleh et al., 2024).

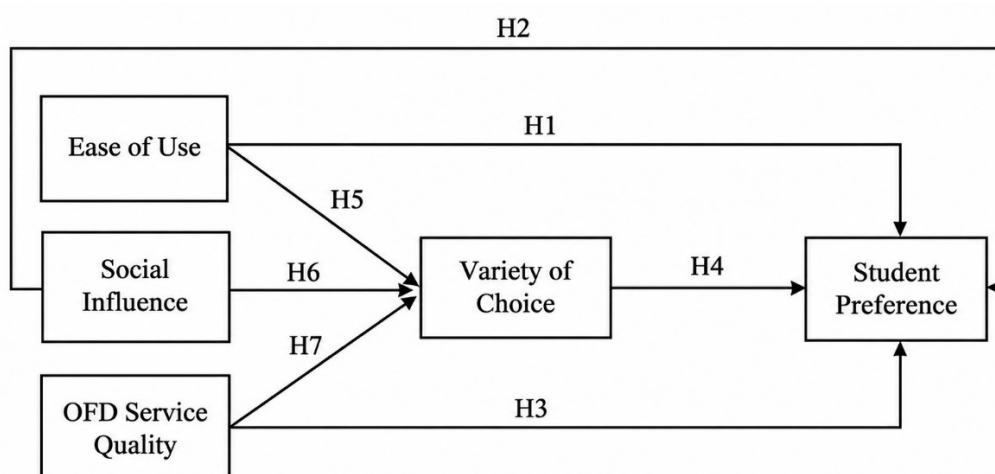
Previous research has emphasized the importance of convenience and service-related factors in food delivery experiences (Jalis et al., 2023; Peemanee & Wongsahai, 2021). Reliable platform and delivery services can facilitate access to different restaurants and menu alternatives, potentially strengthening consumers' perceptions of the variety available through OFD platforms. Accordingly, higher OFD service quality is expected to be positively associated with variety of choice.

H7: OFD service quality has a significant positive influence on variety of choice in online food delivery platforms.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical and empirical literature discussed above, this study proposes seven relationships among perceived ease of use, variety of choice, social influence, OFD service quality, and student preference for online food delivery over campus dining. Perceived ease of use, variety of choice, social influence, and OFD service quality are examined in relation to student preference, while perceived ease of use, social influence, and OFD service quality are also examined in relation to variety of choice. The proposed relationships are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the factors associated with university students' preference for online food delivery (OFD) over campus dining. Data were collected at a single point in time using a structured questionnaire. The study examined the relationships among perceived ease of use, variety of choice, social influence, OFD service quality, and student preference.

The proposed model examined seven relationships. Perceived ease of use, variety of choice, social influence, and OFD service quality were examined in relation to student preference. In addition, perceived ease of use, social influence, and OFD service quality were examined in relation to variety of choice.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of undergraduate students at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). Undergraduate students were selected because they have access to both OFD services and campus dining facilities, allowing them to evaluate their experiences and preferences regarding these dining alternatives.

A total of 120 undergraduate students participated in the study. The respondents provided information regarding their perceptions and experiences related to OFD services and campus dining facilities. The sample included students from different age groups, years of study, residential arrangements, and monthly allowance categories.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to undergraduate students at Universiti Sains Malaysia. The questionnaire was designed

to collect information regarding the factors associated with students' preference for OFD over campus dining.

The questionnaire covered five main constructs: perceived ease of use, variety of choice, social influence, OFD service quality, and student preference. The responses obtained from the 120 respondents were subsequently used for descriptive, reliability, correlation, and regression analyses.

Research Variables

This study examined five research constructs. Perceived ease of use refers to students' perceptions of how simple and convenient OFD applications are to use, particularly in terms of application navigation, ordering processes, and payment procedures. Variety of choice refers to the availability of different food options, cuisines, restaurants, and menu alternatives through OFD platforms.

Social influence refers to the influence of peers, friends, social media, online reviews, and other social factors on students' food-ordering preferences. OFD service quality refers to students' perceptions of the performance and quality of food delivery services, including delivery reliability, speed, and overall service experience. Student preference refers to students' preference for using OFD services rather than physical campus dining facilities.

In the proposed model, student preference served as the outcome variable for H1–H4. Variety of choice served as the outcome variable for H5–H7.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and provide an overview of the research variables. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of the measurement items. Pearson correlation analysis was also performed to examine the associations among the research variables.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the proposed relationships. The first regression model examined the effects of perceived ease of use, variety of choice, social influence, and OFD service quality on student preference. This model was used to evaluate H1, H2, H3, and H4. The second regression model examined the effects of perceived ease of use, social influence, and OFD service quality on variety of choice and was used to evaluate H5, H6, and H7.

The first regression model can be expressed as follows:

Student Preference = f (Perceived Ease of Use, Variety of Choice, Social Influence, OFD Service Quality)

The second regression model can be expressed as follows:

Variety of Choice = f (Perceived Ease of Use, Social Influence, OFD Service Quality)

The statistical significance of the regression coefficients was used to determine whether each proposed hypothesis was supported or not supported.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the conceptual framework, the following hypotheses were examined:

H1	Perceived ease of use has a significant positive influence on students' preference for online food delivery over campus dining.
H2	Variety of choice has a significant positive influence on students' preference for online food delivery over campus dining.
H3	Social influence has a significant positive influence on students' preference for online food delivery over campus dining.
H4	OFD service quality has a significant positive influence on students' preference for online food delivery over campus dining.
H5	Perceived ease of use has a significant positive influence on variety of choice in online food delivery platforms.
H6	Social influence has a significant positive influence on variety of choice in online food delivery platforms.
H7	OFD service quality has a significant positive influence on variety of choice in online food delivery platforms.

RESULTS

Respondent Demographic Profile

Table 1. Summary of Respondent's Demography (N=120)

Response	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Female	82	68.3
Male	38	31.7
Age		
18 - 20	20	16.7
21 - 24	88	73.3
25 and above	12	10.0
Year of Study		
Year 1	33	27.5
Year 2	45	37.5
Year 3	20	16.7
Final Year	22	18.3
Primary Residence		
Off-campus Accommodation	50	41.7
On-campus Dormitory	70	58.3
Monthly Allowance		
RM500 and below	35	29.2
RM501 – RM1000	40	33.3
RM1001 – RM2000	23	19.2
RM2001 and above	22	18.3
Frequency of OFD Use		
Daily	11	9.2
Once a week	41	34.2
2 – 3 times a week	43	35.8

Once a month	25	20.8
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Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 120 respondents who participated in this study. Of the total respondents, 82 (68.3%) were female and 38 (31.7%) were male. Most respondents were between 21 and 24 years old (73.3%), followed by those aged 18–20 years (16.7%) and 25 years and above (10.0%). Regarding the year of study, 37.5% of respondents were in Year 2, 27.5% were in Year 1, 18.3% were final-year students, and 16.7% were in Year 3. In terms of residence, 58.3% lived in on-campus dormitories, while 41.7% lived in off-campus accommodation.

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlation Analysis

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Coefficients Alpha, and Zero-order Correlations for All Study Variables Note:

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Perceived Ease of Use	-				
2. Variety of Choice	0.767**	-			
3. Social Influence	0.565**	0.709**	-		
4. OFD Service Quality	0.669**	0.738**	0.717**	-	
5. Student Preference	0.470**	0.561**	0.527**	0.511**	-
Number of Items	4	4	4	4	4
Mean	13.32	12.69	14.3083	14.6500	13.8417
Standard Deviation	3.25133	3.35166	3.55697	3.38968	4.32502
Cronbach's Alpha	0.921	0.893	0.866	0.869	0.930

Note: N = 120. Values represent Pearson correlation coefficients. Cronbach's Alpha values are reported in the reliability row. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, reliability results, and Pearson correlation coefficients for the research variables. The Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.866 to 0.930, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 and indicating satisfactory internal consistency across the constructs.

The Pearson correlation analysis showed that all four variables were positively and significantly correlated with Student Preference. Variety of Choice had the strongest correlation with Student Preference ($r = .561$), followed by Social Influence ($r = .527$), OFD Service Quality ($r = .511$), and Ease of Use ($r = .470$).

Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis examining the effects of Perceived Ease of Use, Variety of Choice, Social Influence, and OFD Service Quality on Student Preference for OFD over campus dining. The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 15.863$, $p < .001$). The model yielded an R^2 value of 0.356 and an adjusted R^2 value of 0.333, indicating that the four predictor variables collectively explained 35.6% of the variance in Student Preference. The Durbin–Watson statistic was 1.804.

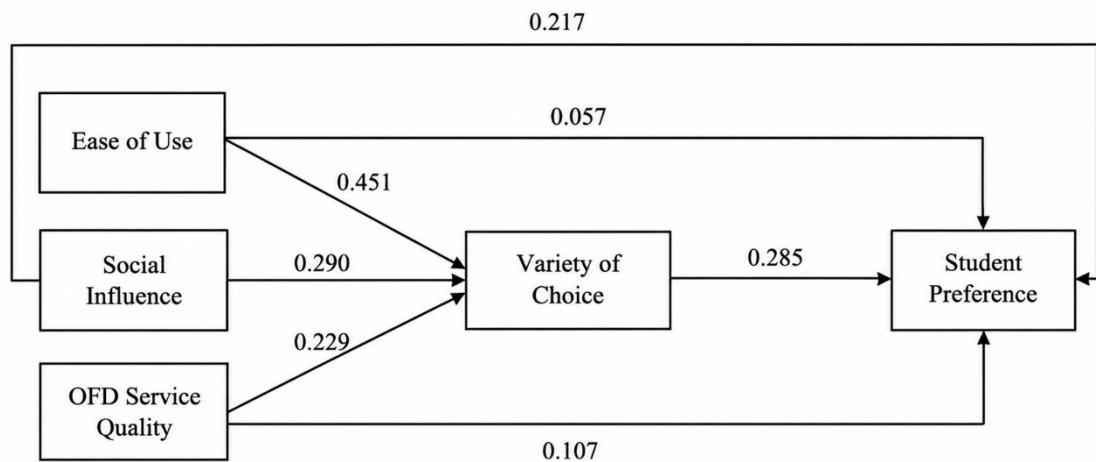
Among the four predictors, Variety of Choice was the only variable that had a statistically significant positive effect on Student Preference ($\beta = .285$, $t = 2.012$, $p = .047$). Therefore, H2 was supported. Perceived Ease of Use did not have a significant effect on Student Preference ($\beta = .057$, $t = .477$, $p = .634$); therefore, H1 was not supported. Social Influence was also not statistically significant ($\beta = .217$, $t = 1.862$, $p = .065$); therefore, H3 was not supported. Similarly, OFD Service Quality did not have a significant effect on Student Preference ($\beta = .107$, $t = .852$, $p = .396$); therefore, H4 was not supported.

Table 3. Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	Perceived Ease of Use $\rightarrow$ Student Preference	.057	.477	.634	Not Supported
H2	Variety of Choice $\rightarrow$ Student Preference	.285	2.012	.047	Supported
H3	Social Influence $\rightarrow$ Student Preference	.217	1.862	.065	Not Supported
H4	OFD Service Quality $\rightarrow$ Student Preference	.107	.852	.396	Not Supported

Note: $R^2 = .356$; Adjusted $R^2 = .333$; $F = 15.863$; Durbin–Watson = 1.804; $N = 120$.

Figure 2. Hypothesised Model



Hypothesis	Path	β	Result
H1	Ease of Use $\rightarrow$ Student Preference	0.057	Rejected
H2	Variety of Choice $\rightarrow$ Student Preference	0.285	Supported
H3	Social Influence $\rightarrow$ Student Preference	0.217	Rejected
H4	OFD Service Quality $\rightarrow$ Student Preference	0.107	Rejected
H5	Ease of Use $\rightarrow$ Variety of Choice	0.451	Supported
H6	Social Influence $\rightarrow$ Variety of Choice	0.290	Supported
H7	OFD Service Quality $\rightarrow$ Variety of Choice	0.229	Supported

Figure 2 presents the hypothesized relationships among Ease of Use, Variety of Choice, Social Influence, OFD Service Quality, and Student Preference for Online Food Delivery. Of the seven hypotheses examined, four were supported. Among the direct predictors of Student Preference, only Variety of Choice had a significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.285$), supporting H2. Ease of Use ($\beta = 0.057$), Social Influence ($\beta = 0.217$), and OFD Service Quality ($\beta = 0.107$) did not have significant relationships with Student Preference; therefore, H1, H3, and H4 were not supported.

In contrast, Ease of Use ($\beta = 0.451$), Social Influence ($\beta = 0.290$), and OFD Service Quality ($\beta = 0.229$) had significant positive relationships with Variety of Choice, supporting H5, H6, and H7, respectively. Overall, Variety of Choice was the only significant direct predictor of Student Preference.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide insights into the factors associated with university students' preference for online food delivery (OFD) over campus dining. The results

indicate that the relationships among perceived ease of use, variety of choice, social influence, OFD service quality, and student preference differ in their statistical significance. Among the four factors examined as predictors of Student Preference, Variety of Choice was the only significant predictor. This finding highlights the importance of food diversity in explaining students' preference for OFD services over campus dining.

Perceived Ease of Use and Student Preference

Perceived Ease of Use did not have a significant positive effect on Student Preference ($\beta = .057$, $p = .634$); therefore, H1 was not supported. This finding suggests that although students may appreciate simple navigation, convenient payment methods, and straightforward ordering processes, these characteristics alone do not determine their preference for OFD over campus dining.

This result may indicate that ease of use has become a basic expectation among university students who are already familiar with smartphones, mobile applications, and digital transactions. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of ease of use and convenience in digital food delivery services (Jalis et al., 2023; Zainal Abiddin & Khairuddin, 2022). However, the present findings suggest that being easy to use does not necessarily differentiate OFD sufficiently from other dining alternatives to directly shape students' preferences. Thus, ease of use may facilitate OFD usage without being the primary reason students prefer OFD over campus dining.

Variety of Choice and Student Preference

Variety of Choice had a significant positive effect on Student Preference ($\beta = .285$, $p = .047$); therefore, H2 was supported. This was the only significant direct predictor of Student Preference in the regression model, indicating that students place considerable importance on the availability of diverse food options when choosing OFD over campus dining.

This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that digital food delivery platforms provide consumers with access to a broad range of restaurants and food alternatives. Lok et al. (2024) identified access to diverse food options as an important factor associated with behavioral intentions toward food delivery applications in Malaysia (Effendi et al., 2025). The availability of numerous restaurants, cuisines, price ranges, and menu alternatives through OFD platforms provides students with greater flexibility in selecting food according to their individual preferences.

The finding is particularly relevant when OFD is compared with campus dining. Campus dining facilities may have a more limited number of vendors and menu options, whereas OFD platforms provide access to numerous external food providers through a single application. Consequently, food variety represents an important competitive advantage of OFD platforms and may explain why students choose these services over campus dining.

Social Influence and Student Preference

Social Influence did not have a significant effect on Student Preference ($\beta = .217$, $p = .065$); therefore, H3 was not supported. Although students may receive recommendations from friends, peers, social media, and online reviews, these social factors did not directly determine their preference for OFD over campus dining.

This result suggests that students' final dining decisions may depend more strongly on the characteristics of the available food options than on social recommendations. Digital interactions and peer recommendations may increase students' awareness of restaurants or menu alternatives, but such exposure does not necessarily result in a

direct preference for OFD. Therefore, social influence may play a supporting role in students' food-related decision-making rather than functioning as a primary determinant of their preference between OFD and campus dining (Mangat, 2021).

OFD Service Quality and Student Preference

OFD Service Quality did not have a significant effect on Student Preference ($\beta = .107$, $p = .396$); therefore, H4 was not supported. This result indicates that delivery speed, reliability, packaging quality, and other aspects of service performance do not independently determine students' preference for OFD over campus dining.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of service-related factors in OFD experiences. Peemanee and Wongsahai (2021) highlighted the relevance of service convenience to repeat purchase decisions, while Jalis et al. (2023) identified service-related factors in students' use of OFD services. Nevertheless, the present findings suggest that acceptable service quality may be regarded as a basic expectation rather than a distinctive factor influencing students' choice between OFD and campus dining. Students may expect OFD providers to offer reliable delivery and adequate service as standard features, while the availability of diverse food options provides a more distinctive reason for choosing OFD.

Perceived Ease of Use and Variety of Choice

The model also identified a positive relationship between Perceived Ease of Use and Variety of Choice ($\beta = .451$). This relationship had the largest coefficient among the relationships involving Variety of Choice, suggesting that an easy-to-use platform may facilitate students' ability to explore the range of food alternatives available through OFD applications.

Simple navigation, search functions, menu categories, and accessible ordering interfaces can enable students to browse restaurants and compare food alternatives more efficiently. Thus, the role of ease of use may extend beyond simplifying the ordering process by helping students access and recognize the variety offered by OFD platforms. This finding provides additional insight into why ease of use may remain relevant even though it did not directly predict Student Preference.

Social Influence and Variety of Choice

A positive relationship was also identified between Social Influence and Variety of Choice ($\beta = .290$). This finding suggests that interactions with peers, recommendations, social media content, and online communities may increase students' awareness of the range of food alternatives available through OFD platforms.

Students may discover new restaurants, cuisines, menu items, and food trends through recommendations or information shared by others. Digital marketing and online interactions may similarly expose students to alternatives they had not previously considered. This interpretation is consistent with Sim et al. (2025), who demonstrated the relevance of digital marketing to consumers' exploration and shopping behavior. Therefore, social influence may contribute more strongly to students' awareness of available food choices than to their direct preference for OFD over campus dining.

OFD Service Quality and Variety of Choice

The relationship between OFD Service Quality and Variety of Choice was also positive ($\beta = .229$). This finding suggests that service performance may contribute to how students perceive and access the range of food alternatives available through OFD platforms.

The availability of numerous restaurants and menu options becomes more useful when the platform can provide reliable ordering and delivery services. A broad selection of food may provide limited value if consumers cannot access these alternatives through an efficient service system. Therefore, service quality may complement the variety offered by OFD platforms by supporting students' ability to obtain food from different providers.

Overall Findings and Implications

Overall, the findings highlight the central role of Variety of Choice in shaping students' preference for OFD over campus dining. While Perceived Ease of Use, Social Influence, and OFD Service Quality did not significantly predict Student Preference directly, Variety of Choice emerged as the only significant direct predictor. This finding suggests that access to diverse food options is a key consideration in students' dining decisions.

Practically, OFD providers should maintain diverse food and restaurant options, while campus dining operators should improve menu variety, introduce regular menu rotations, and accommodate different student preferences. Theoretically, the findings demonstrate that factors commonly associated with digital service adoption may not directly determine students' dining preferences, highlighting the importance of food variety in understanding changing consumer behavior within university communities.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the factors influencing university students' preference for Online Food Delivery (OFD) over campus dining, focusing on Perceived Ease of Use, Variety of Choice, Social Influence, and OFD Service Quality. The findings revealed that Variety of Choice was the only significant positive predictor of Student Preference, while Perceived Ease of Use, Social Influence, and OFD Service Quality had no significant direct effects. This indicates that access to diverse food options is a key factor driving students' preference for OFD over campus dining.

The findings contribute to the understanding of changing consumer behavior within university communities and provide practical implications for campus dining operators. To remain competitive with OFD platforms, campus food providers should diversify menu offerings, introduce regular menu rotations, and provide convenient ordering and payment options that respond to students' changing preferences. Future research should examine larger and more diverse university populations and incorporate additional factors such as price, promotions, health consciousness, satisfaction, and dietary preferences.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations. First, the sample was limited to 120 undergraduate students from Universiti Sains Malaysia, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other university populations and contexts. Second, the study was conducted within a single university environment, where differences in campus facilities, food availability, pricing, and competition from OFD providers may influence students' dining preferences.

Furthermore, the cross-sectional design captures students' perceptions at only one point in time and therefore cannot explain changes in dining preferences over time. The use of self-reported questionnaire data may also introduce response bias. Future studies should involve larger samples across multiple universities, consider longitudinal designs, and examine additional factors that may influence students' preference for OFD over campus dining.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors have declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the study, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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