

Will You Continue to Use Food Delivery Services During the Transition to the Endemic Phase of the Covid-19 Pandemic?

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ABSTRACT

Malaysia entered the transition to the endemic phase of the Covid-19 pandemic on April 1, 2022. After two years of fighting the pandemic, the transition to the endemic phase is an exit strategy that enables Malaysians to return to a nearly normal life. This paper examines whether customers will continue to use food delivery services now that most individuals are permitted to return to work physically. In addition, this study will also examine whether perceived usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, trust, social influence, and attitude impact customer behavioral intention toward food delivery services and whether attitude mediates the abovementioned relationship. The researchers used Google forms to collect the data. About 200 Malaysians participated in the survey. The findings show that perceived usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, trust, social influence, and attitude influence consumers' behavioral intentions for meal delivery services. Furthermore, the link between perceived usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, trust, social influence, and behavioral intention is mediated by attitude.

Keywords: Attitude, Behavioral Intention, Ease of Use, Enjoyment, Malaysia, Perceived Usefulness, Social Influence, Trust.

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly damaged human health and global economies and businesses that operate in several industries (Hu & Kee, 2022). The pandemic has affected business communities, especially SMEs that strive for survival. The pandemic is a double-edged sword (Kee et al., 2021). Today, Malaysia is in the transition to the endemic phase. SMEs are entangled in the pandemic and find it tough to operate as smoothly as before (Hu & Kee, 2021). However, some businesses are performing well during the pandemic, for example, food delivery and online business. The food delivery service business is on the rise. Aryani et al. (2021) reported that many consumers have opted for online shopping for its various advantages. In addition, most people prefer to use food delivery services during and after the post-Covid-19 pandemic.

Food delivery services refer to using a food delivery app (FDA) to compare the restaurants' menus and prices, review the stores' ratings, and use online payment or cash on the delivery method to purchase the food. Two well-known food delivery platforms in Malaysia are Grabfood and Foodpanda. According to a recent study, 6.86 million Malaysians purchased meal delivery services in 2020 (Tan, Lim, & Yeo, 2021). According to the survey conducted by Rakuten Insight in Malaysia, about 79% of the respondents used food delivery services during the pandemic mainly because dining options in restaurants have been temporally banned due to Covid-19 measurements (Müller, 2022).

Existing studies provide an understanding that meal delivery services are preferable during the pandemic because of various factors, including time-saving and prior online purchase experience (Hooi, Tang, & Lai, 2021). However, as Malaysia has entered the endemic phase, the research team aims to study people's preferences by collecting opinions from the public. Therefore, this study will be based on the people's views on using food delivery services based on perceived usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, trust, social influence, attitude, and behavioral intention. In short, this paper aims to study whether the factors stated will influence the public in using the food delivery services when it has become a choice to purchase food online based on their previous experience in using the food delivery services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Behavioral Intention

Consumer behavior is the study of how consumers make decisions to meet their needs and desires via purchasing and disposing of products and services. Thus, customer behavioral intention on utilizing online meal delivery services is a study of the propensity of consumers to pay for and utilize the meal delivery services (Novita & Husna 2020). Jian et al. (2021) reported many factors influencing consumer behavior, including psychological, social, cultural, personal, and economic factors. In addition, the study indicates that perceived trust, performance expectations, social impact, and timeliness influence customers' behavioral desire to purchase the meal delivery service platform. Finally, it suggests that customer behavioral intention involves views toward a specific technology and the most recent advances. In contrast, customers' acceptance and usage of innovations or food delivery applications are contingent on the technology's utility (Muangmee, Kot, Meekaewkunchorn, Kassakorn, & Khalid, 2021).

In addition, behavior intention is the likelihood that a customer would engage in a given action, including their willingness to pay extra for a specific product or service and word-

of-mouth intention. Willingness to pay more for a product refers to the maximum amount consumers are ready to pay for their preferred services or goods relative to competing brands. Thus, it is theorized that the willingness of consumers to pay more for a product or service is vital to a company's profitability. This study examines the link between influencing elements, such as perceived utility, simplicity of use, enjoyment, trust, social influence, and attitude to customers' behavioral intention to utilize meal delivery services. In addition, this article aims to investigate whether perceived utility, simplicity of use, enjoyment, trust, and social influence might impact customers' behavioral intention through attitude.

Perceived Usefulness

Perceived usefulness related to online meal delivery services includes time-saving orientation and convenience motivation. From the view of time-saving orientation, consumers who use online food delivery services intend to fulfil their meal needs to save time efficiently. On the contrary, convenience service and goods refer to the service and goods that can be purchased and used easily and conveniently. Hence, consumers will feel motivated to purchase convenient goods and services (Novita & Husna, 2020). Then, a finding indicated that innovativeness is referred to as an individual's predisposition towards experimenting with innovative technologies to become an idea leader and technology pioneer. Consequently, the consumer will have higher perceived usefulness of innovative technology applied in the development of food delivery platforms and be stimulated to try the food delivery services with the latest technology (Saqib, Farooq, & Zafar, 2016). In addition, perceived usefulness refers to how customers think utilizing information systems is efficient and effective. Therefore, a significant relationship exists between perceived usefulness and consumers' behavioral intention and attitude toward using the meal delivery system (Karim, Haque, Ulfy, Hossain, & Anis, 2020). Therefore, we hypothesize:

H1: Perceived usefulness is positively associated with behavioral intention.

H7: Perceived usefulness is positively associated with attitude.

Ease of Use

A platform's ease of use means the level of a platform's user interface that is easily handled by the user, as well as effective and clear visuals of a system that influence consumers' perceptions of the online delivery app's usability and encourage their purchase decisions (Gupta & Duggal, 2020). It also refers to how a certain system can be utilized with minimal effort. According to studies, consumers' satisfaction and convenience of utilizing a given technology or system platform are strongly correlated (Karim et al., 2020). Kee et al. (2022) found that ease of use is one important factor that facilitates digital wallets. Then, the impact of customer experience and app usability on consumer loyalty and attitude towards the meal delivery platform is enormous. An application such as a meal delivery app must be easy to use. Users must be supplied with sufficient information to address their problems and improve the service's usability (Muangmee et al., 2021). In addition, consumers' purchasing intentions and attitudes are highly influenced by the usability and convenience of online meal delivery applications. The time-saving benefit of the applications is the primary factor contributing to their global popularity (Joshi & Bhatt, 2021). Yo et al. (2021) reported that perceived ease of use of the online shopping platform positively relates to customer satisfaction. Therefore, we postulate:

H2: Ease of use is positively associated with behavioral intention.

H8: Ease of use is positively associated with attitude.

Enjoyment

Enjoyment is an essential factor that motivates consumers to try and purchase services and products from the latest technology. In addition, both positive and negative experiences by a consumer will lead to a certain behavior of the consumers and generate a causal link to their behavioral intention and attitude (Jun, Yoon, Lee, & Lee, 2022). Enjoyment is referred to favorable emotions by the consumers that show an essential component of the advantages gained by the consumer in the communication process while using an online delivery application (Cicco, Silva, & Alparone, 2020). In addition, research indicates that the enjoyment and value of using an online meal delivery service substantially impact customers' satisfaction and attitude (Hwang & Kim, 2021). Then, a study revealed consumers' behavioral and purchase intentions would be affected by a meal delivery platform's convenience and enjoyment of using them (Chen, Liang, Liao, & Kuo, 2020). Therefore, we postulate:

H3: Enjoyment is positively associated with behavioral intention.

H9: Enjoyment is positively associated with attitude.

Trust

Perceived trust can affect consumers' behavioral intentions and attitudes. It includes the level of a consumer's faith related to a particular technology usage or platform (Muangmee et al., 2021). Besides, trust is also referred to as the consumers' perception of their confidence in retailers' safety and internet technology. Trust is a collection of opinions about the vendor's dependability, consumers' confidence about the online transactions' security, and the combination of vendors' and transactions' security trustworthiness (Jun et al., 2022). Even though Yo et al. (2021) suggested that perceived trust is not significantly related to customer satisfaction, we argue that perceived trust towards the online shopping platform is critical before customers make a purchase. Hence, we hypothesize:

H4: Trust is positively associated with behavioral intention.

H10: Trust is positively associated with attitude.

Social Influence

Users pick an online delivery service following the advice of others, particularly those who use it frequently and have a favorable opinion of it (Nestle et al., 1998). Social influence was described as a user's behaviors that may be influenced by the activities of her friends (Wang, Meng, & Li, 2020). Social influence also refers to consumers' willingness to use and try new technologies, such as food delivery services which family members and friends influence. It will positively impact the consumer behavior intention to try and purchase online food delivery services (Muangmee et al., 2021). Hence, we hypothesize:

H5: Social influence is positively associated with behavioral intention.

H11: Social influence is positively associated with attitude.

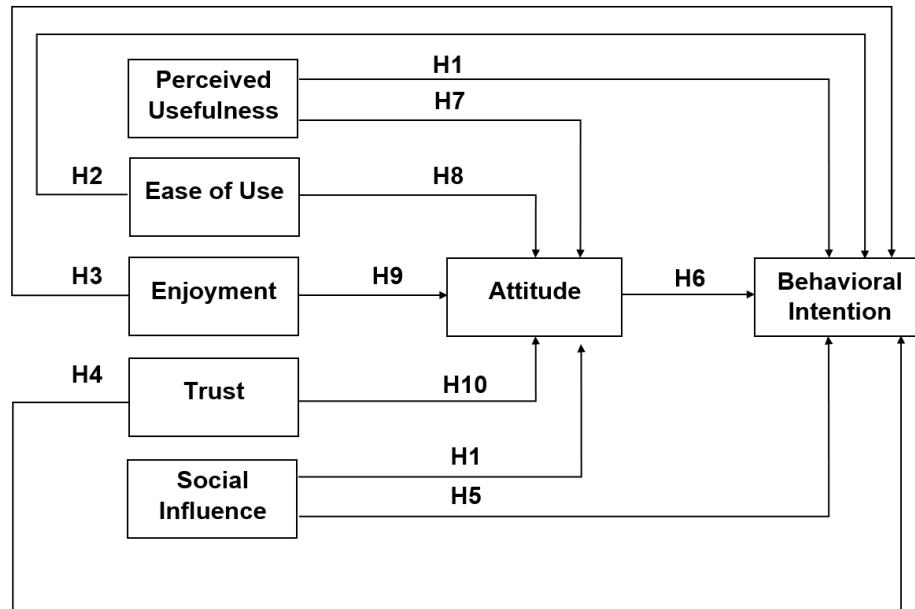
Attitude

Attitude is an evaluation confirmation of an event or object, in this case, services and goods. It reflects the consumers' feelings about the goods and services provided by the food delivery service. Hence, it will lead to consumers' behavioral intention to the food delivery service (Novita & Husna, 2020). A consumer's behavioral intention to select and use a service and help promote the service is significantly influenced by his attitude (Gupta & Duggal, 2020). The informational exchange with the environment or one's own body determines one's attitude. The attitude was described as a mental quality by considering the nature of the human body's informational system and the related distinct

and specialized cognitive centres of awareness, allowing fine-tuning of cognitive functions and features (Gaiseanu, 2021). Accordingly, we hypothesize:
H6: Attitude is positively associated with behavioral intention.

Figure 1 below illustrates our research model. A total of 11 hypotheses were formulated.

Figure 1. The Research Model



RESEARCH METHOD

Targeted customers of online food delivery services in Malaysia were surveyed online using Google Forms to determine their behavioral intention to utilize Malaysia's meal delivery platform. We are applying a Five-point Likert scale; the responder options are ranged from one (Strongly disagree) to five (Strongly agree). The survey was sent to the intended respondents, consumers of online meal delivery services utilizing social media platforms. Through this survey, 200 responses were obtained.

Measures

This study adopted the consumer behavioral intention scale measures from Jun et al. (2021). We applied a sum of 23 items, including "The online food delivery platform is useful in food ordering", "The online food delivery platform is easy to use", and "Using the online food delivery platform is exciting" to test consumers' perceived usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment of meal delivery platforms. Additionally, measures such as "I trust the online food delivery platform", "My friends want me to use the online food delivery platform", "Using the online food delivery platform is a positive idea", and "I will use the online food delivery platform in the future" are applied to test consumers' trust, social influence, attitude and behavioral intention towards online meal delivery platform. Every item was organized based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from one (Strongly disagree) to five (Strongly agree) through the questionnaire. Cronbach's coefficients alpha for perceived usefulness, ease of use, and enjoyment were 0.851, 0.904, and 0.947, respectively. On the contrary, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for trust, social influence, attitude, and behavioral intention were 0.911, 0.920, 0.922, and 0.927.

RESULTS

Table 1. Respondent Profile's Summary (N=200)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	124	62.0
Male	76	38.0
Ethnicity		
Arab	1	0.5
Chinese	105	52.5
Indian	39	19.5
Malay	51	25.5
Punjabi	2	1.0
Siamese	2	1.0
Age		
Boomers: Born: 1946 - 1964 (Age: 58 - 76)	7	3.5
Gen X: Born: 1965 - 1980 (Age: 42 - 57)	27	13.5
Gen Z: Born: 1997 - 2012 (Age: 10 - 25)	141	70.5
Millennials: Born: 1981 - 1996 (Age: 26 - 41)	25	12.5
Education Level		
Bachelor's Degree	151	75.5
Degree	1	0.5
Diploma	24	12.0
Master's Degree	9	4.5
PhD	3	1.5
Primary School	1	0.5
Secondary-School	11	5.5
Monthly Household Income		
RM 10,971 and above (T20)	14	7.0
RM 4,850 and below (B40)	118	59.0
RM 4,851-RM 10,970 (M40)	68	34.0
Position		
Employed	33	16.5
Homemaker	5	2.5
Self-employed	16	8.0
Student	145	72.5
Unemployed	1	0.5
Living Area		
City	85	42.5
Rural	14	7.0
Town	101	50.5
Frequency of Using The Food Delivery Services		
At least once a month	50	25.0
At least once every three months	17	8.5
At least once every two months	15	7.5
Once a day	9	4.5
Once a week	31	15.5
Only used once	20	10.0
Several times a day	7	3.5
Several times a week	51	25.5

Table 1 shows the summarised respondents' demography. 62% of the respondents are female, and half are Chinese (52.5%). Besides, most of the respondents are Generation Z, 10 – 25 years old (70.5%), and 75.5% of the total respondents were highly educated as their educational level is a bachelor's degree. 59% are from the B40 category, and 72.5% are students. Approximately half of them live in the town area (50.5%), and 25.5% use online food delivery services several times a week.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics, information on dependability, and zero-order correlations between variables. All variables tested show strong reliability ranging from .85 to .95.

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

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Perceived Usefulness	.851						
2. Ease of use	.518**	.904					
3. Enjoyment	.573**	.560**	.947				
4. Trust	.639**	.434**	.618**	.911			
5. Social Influence	.441**	.174*	.573**	.483**	.920		
6. Attitude	.643**	.508**	.731**	.619**	.547**	.922	
7. Behavioral Intention	.607**	.501**	.654**	.552**	.412**	.723**	.927
Number of Items	3	3	4	3	3	3	4
Mean	4.40	4.42	4.06	4.16	3.75	4.20	4.37
Standard Deviation	0.68	0.71	0.90	0.77	1.03	0.78	0.72

Note: $N = 200$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The diagonal entries represent Cronbach's coefficients alpha.

Table 3. Regression Analysis

Variables	Behavioral Intention	Attitude
1. Perceived Usefulness	.172*	.231***
2. Ease of use	.071	.095
3. Enjoyment	.205*	.386***
4. Trust	.044	.119
5. Social Influence	.048	.150**
6. Attitude	.427***	
R^2	.574	.625
F Value	45.604	67.235
Durbin-Watson Statistic	2.009	2.070

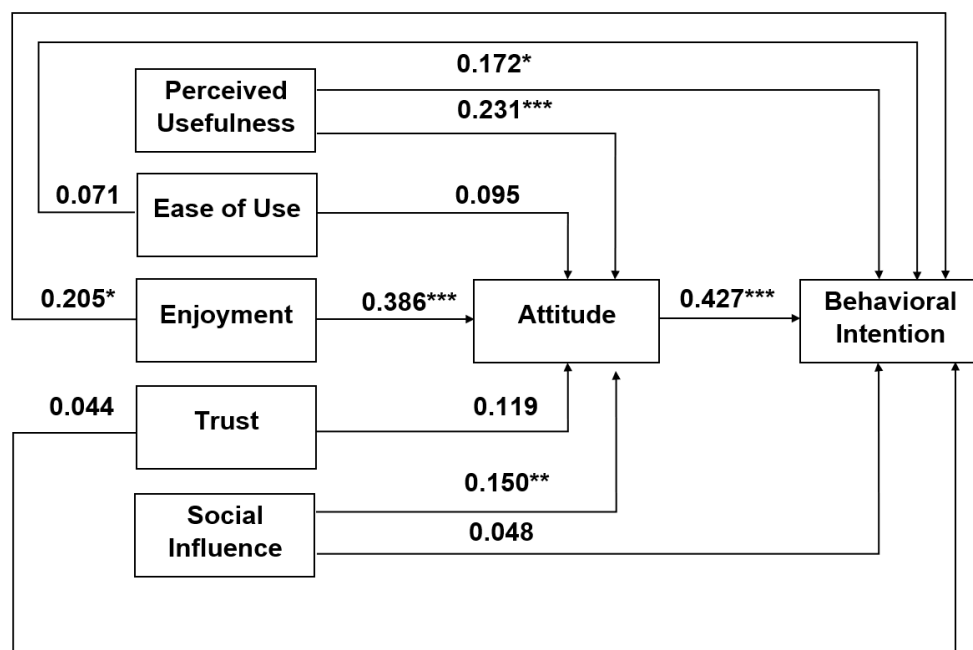
Note: $N = 200$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

As presented in the Table above, behavioral intention is the dependent variable, while perceived usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, trust, social influence, and attitude will be the independent variable. The hypothesis developed were assessed using regression analysis. The output indicated that perceived usefulness, enjoyment, and attitude significantly and positively related to behavioral intention. As a result, H1, H3, and H6 are proven. The R^2 value of the output is 0.574. It shows that 57.4% of behavioral intention changes are affected by perceived usefulness, enjoyment, and attitude. Attitude shows a beta value of 0.427, the most influencing factor impacting the dependent

variable. In contrast, enjoyment showed a beta value of 0.205, and perceived usefulness showed a beta value of 0.172. On the contrary, ease of use, trust, and social influence show an insignificant effect on behavioral intention. Hence, H2, H4, and H5 are not supported.

Additionally, the output indicated that perceived usefulness, enjoyment, and social influence could influence behavioral intention through attitude. Attitude is referred to the consumers' feelings about the goods and services provided by the food delivery service platform. The result shows that the dependent variable of attitude and independent variables of perceived usefulness, enjoyment, and social influence are positively related with β values of 0.231, 0.386, and 0.150, respectively. Therefore, H7, H9, and H11 are supported. Enjoyment possesses the highest β value of 0.386, which means enjoyment affects the attitudes the most, followed by perceived usefulness of 0.231 and social influence of 0.150. On the other hand, ease of use and trust is not significantly related to attitude. Hence, H8 and H10 are not supported. The summary of the output with the hypothesized model is shown below.

Figure 2. Hypothesized Model



DISCUSSION

Variables impacting customers' behavioral intentions to continue using the online meal delivery services in Malaysia's endemic phase of COVID-19 were investigated by this study. The research's outputs prove that enjoyment and perceived usefulness significantly impact customers' behavioral intention to continue using the food delivery services. Both enjoyment and perceived usefulness were variables that directly affected the behavioral intention. Besides, perceived usefulness, enjoyment, and social influence impacted behavioral intention, where attitude came in and served as an intermedia variable. Therefore, this study found that enjoyment, perceived usefulness, social influence, and attitude influence customers' willingness directly to purchase meal delivery services. Additionally, the analysis results demonstrate that the presented model in this study can explain the motivation to continue purchasing online meal delivery

services during the COVID-19 endemic phase in Malaysia. Three out of five suggested variables (enjoyment, perceived usefulness, social influence) were recognized as significant in motivating customers' behavioral intention to continue purchasing meal delivery services.

After comparing the attitude's antecedents, enjoyment was the most significant factor influencing attitude that drives customers to continue using the online meal delivery service platforms. Furthermore, among the factors influencing behavioral intention, enjoyment was the most influential factor that affected customers' intention to continue purchasing online meal delivery services. This result is similar and related to online movie watching during the pandemic era (Basuki et al., 2022). Besides, this finding is consistent with prior research on purchase and reuse vendors, showing that enjoyment significantly influences customers' intention to continue using the food delivery services (Masri, Ruangkanjanases, & Chen, 2021).

Therefore, the significant influence of enjoyment on customers' behavioral intention indicated that the customers' experience would influence whether they will continue to purchase online meal delivery services. This is due to following the government policy of the endemic phase of COVID-19, giving customers more choices to purchase the food, including dine-in and takeaway. Therefore, the online food delivery platform needs to consider the customers' user experience regarding timings, the accuracy of orders, and the deliveryman's attitude. If these factors can be strengthened and stabilized, it will further expand the user base of the online food delivery industry, even if customers are allowed to go out.

The second most crucial factor affecting customers' behavioral intention is perceived usefulness, directly affecting behavioral intention or through attitude as an intermediary factor. This factor is consistent with previous studies, indicating that customers use online food delivery services when perceived as useful (Hong, Choi, Choi, & Joung, 2021). Therefore, although enjoyment is the most influential factor in customers' intentions, perceived usefulness is deemed to fulfil customers' essential satisfaction. For example, the industry needs to enhance and maintain the core value of online food delivery services, including time-saving, convenience, and menu diversification. As a result, the perceived usefulness will determine the industry's sustainability, while both perceived usefulness and enjoyment will motivate the customers to continue using the food delivery services.

Lastly, the social influence was a statistical factor influencing attitude but did not find that it substantially influenced behavioral intention directly. This shows that social influence does not directly affect the customers' behavioral intention but will affect the customer's attitude as an intermedia factor and eventually influence the customers' behavioral intention. As a result, food delivery platforms might need to consider enhancing the function of social recommendation to motivate current users to recommend the online food delivery services to their social circle to increase the number of users.

The research contributed to the existing studies on consumers' behavioral intention to utilize online meal delivery platforms during Malaysia's endemic period. The first implication of our findings on food delivery service is that the platforms shall be conscious and focused on consumers' factors such as enjoyment, perceived usefulness, social intention, and attitude, which significantly influence their demands toward the industry. Therefore, the food delivery service companies are advised to adopt the recommendations and ideas suggested in the research discussion, which will make their

food ordering efficient and aid in developing consumer-friendly applications for food delivery services. As indicated by the research's result, the food delivery platform should be an exciting and excellent idea that appeals to the consumers since these variables are positively related to their behavioral intention.

The finding shows that consumers' trust and the platform's ease of use have a negligible impact on behavioral intention. Nevertheless, the food delivery services platform shall keep persistent endeavor in maintaining consumers' perceived ease of use and trust towards their platforms while allocating adequate resources and supports in the most influencing factors mentioned earlier. For instance, the platforms should invest in developing a reliable online payment system as by 2020, 50% of the people worldwide are expected to have access to online payment systems (Li, Miroso, & Bremer, 2020). By conservatively allocating the resources to develop the food delivery platform, the companies can minimize their business risk during the endemic phase of COVID-19 in Malaysia. Therefore, this study proposed a comprehensive model to investigate market demand for online meal delivery platforms during Malaysia's endemic phase.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, food delivery services are still crucial during the endemic phase in Malaysia. Consumers will still prefer food delivery over dining-in if the proven influencing factors towards consumers' behavioral intentions are satisfied. This is uniform with our findings, where perceived usefulness, enjoyment, social influence, and attitude are the primary factors influencing Malaysian consumers' behavioral intention towards food delivery services during the transition to the endemic phase. The food delivery platforms should enhance their customer's experience by strengthening the deliveryman's attitude, time-saving and convenience factors, and the social recommendation feature. Hence, they can effectively affect consumers' behavioral intention through their enjoyment, perceived usefulness, social intention, and attitude to ensure consistent consumers' demand for food delivery services during the endemic period in Malaysia.

LIMITATION

This research has several limitations. The study is conducted online using a Google Form while we are still in the midst of a pandemic. Hence, the majority of respondents were Generation Z, which limits its generalizability. Additionally, limited access to information is one of the research constraints. We have limited access, especially to the food delivery companies in Malaysia and better understand the consumers' behavioral intention towards their products and services. Therefore, future research should include additional variables, such as conducting interviews with the management of food delivery companies in Malaysia to improve results and use our findings as a foundation for examining consumers' perceptions.

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N/A

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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