

Modeling the Determinants of Customer Mindset Towards Online Food Ordering

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Abstract

Online food ordering has become an essential part of the modern dining experience, offering convenience and time savings for consumers. It allows customers to browse menus, place orders, and make payments through mobile apps or websites. Understanding the factors that shape customer mindset and preferences can help businesses enhance their services, increase customer satisfaction, and foster brand loyalty. The present study aimed to model the factors affecting customers' mindset towards online food ordering. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study utilized structured interviews with 16 users of mobile food ordering applications to gather the necessary data for thematic analysis. MAXQDA software was employed for data analysis, resulting in 71 sub-themes being extracted and categorized into 14 main themes through axial coding. Subsequently, using interpretive structural modeling (ISM), the 14 main themes were analyzed based on their feedback relationships. The results indicate that food quality, food price, and living conditions significantly influence advertisement and ordering experience components.

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1 Introduction

E-commerce is rapidly advancing, and the fast-changing internet environment has created a competitive landscape that presents numerous opportunities and challenges for various businesses. One such opportunity is the use of online food ordering apps (Dirsehan & Cankat, 2021). These apps compete with each other through advertising (Valenti et al., 2023) to capture the attention of end users (Tiwana, 2013). Online food ordering apps can provide valuable customer data to the food industry, allowing them to enhance their services and accelerate customer loyalty (Sharma et al., 2021; Shahnavazi et al., 2021).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, online food ordering apps experienced a massive surge and showed an increasing demand for understanding these phenomena (Kumar & Shah, 2021). They offered a safe alternative for essential shopping, particularly for consumers who were vulnerable during the lockdown. By 2026, it is predicted that consumers will download 143 billion mobile apps from the Google Play store, marking a nearly 15% increase from the 111 billion apps downloaded in 2021 (Statista, 2023).

The impact of online food ordering on the market, especially the grocery retail sector, has drawn the attention of researchers (Alalwan, 2020). While some studies have explored the factors influencing consumers' intent to use online food ordering apps (Kaur et al., 2021), these studies primarily focus on the technology acceptance theories related to these apps (Kapoor & Vij, 2018). In fact, the benefits that these apps provide to food companies remain undefined, and there is a need to understand the outcomes of using online food ordering apps (Dirsehan & Cankat, 2021).

Mindset is one of the key elements in the adoption of innovation and plays a significant role in the use of online food ordering apps (Tandon et al., 2021). Acknowledging this, businesses are looking to identify the factors that shape customer mindsets in order to influence their behaviors (Dweck & Yeager, 2019). Companies that are aware of customers' mindsets regarding various product features, pricing, and promotional strategies hold a competitive advantage over their rivals. Customer mindset is a crucial framework that defines consumer behavior, goals, motivations, and influences social comparison (Japutra et al., 2019).

However, a review of various studies reveals significant gaps in the current knowledge and understanding of customer mindset. Theoretical analysis shows that most research on customer mindset is limited to perceptual, socio-demographic, and personality variables, without addressing the belief formation and cognitive processes that lead to behavioral intent and willingness. Given this gap in practical knowledge, the present study aims to systematically examine the factors shaping customer mindset regarding their inclination toward online food ordering, focusing on the feedback relationships among these factors.

2 Literature Review

Online food ordering apps have emerged as a specific form of e-commerce designed to meet consumer needs (Dirsehan & Cankat, 2021). These apps, by saving time, cost, and energy, have increased consumer willingness to use them and are considered one of the primary reasons behind the flourishing of the food industry (Ramesh et al., 2023).

Online features, including dedicated food apps, have facilitated and improved the methods of selecting and ordering, adjusting menus online, and allowing customers to order according to their preferences (Adithya et al., 2017). With online food ordering, users can easily perform online transactions like purchasing or ordering food, which helps food e-commerce managers ensure better service design and delivery (Nguyen et al., 2021). Consumers have been drawn to these technological innovations due to their convenience, speed, and accuracy (Brewer & Sebby, 2021). In e-commerce, when a product is sold via a digital platform, consumer mindset plays a crucial role in decision-making (Dingee, 2019).

Mindset refers to an individual's attitude or mental inclination, which determines how they respond to and interpret situations (American Heritage Dictionary, 2011) and is reflected in their reactions, habits, and behaviors (Searby, 2014). From an external perspective, mindset serves as a tool for understanding and evaluating the range of behavioral and psychological responses of consumers (Papadopoulou et al., 2023). In fact, analyzing consumer mindset can be used to explain their judgment and decision-making (Daneshvar et al., 2020; homayounfar et al., 2018). Consumer mindset can influence their willingness to purchase and strengthen their purchase intention when ordering food online (Cai & Leung, 2020). Several studies have explored consumer mindset and the factors shaping it in the context of online food ordering. Among them: Shahzad et al. (2024) utilized stimulus–organism–response theory to determine consumers' willingness to pay more and behavioral intention to use blockchain technology -enabled mobile food delivery applications. Their findings establish that traceability, transparency, and privacy assurance positively influence consumers' perceived values. Furthermore, IT knowledge positively moderates the relationships between privacy assurance, traceability, and perceived value. Further, perceived value positively impacts WPM and behavioral intention. Humbani et al. (2024) determined the influence of mobile food delivery applications characteristics on satisfaction in a health emergence situation, as well as the interrelationships between satisfaction, trust, and continuance intention.

Fraccascia and Nastasi (2023) in a survey research on Italian consumers examined the consumers' willingness to use mobile apps against food waste. Results show that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use positively affect the willingness to use mobile apps against food waste, while perceived risks by potential users negatively impact such willingness. Burlea-Schiopoiu et al. (2022) investigated the impact that food delivery mobile applications on consumers' behaviour in the pandemic. Results show that food delivery companies should implement customer loyalty strategies, as the users' perceived risk of changing the online food supplier is high. The high degree of visibility of the food delivery applications is positively reflected in the consumers' empathy level and loyalty.

Tandon et al. (2021) utilized the theory of consumption values to examine associations between food delivery apps visibility, consumption values, and purchase intentions. Based on the results, visibility anticipates all consumption values and significantly influenced purchase intentions. Attitude also positively and significantly influenced purchase intentions. Fong et al. (2021) revealed the mechanisms by which culture mindsets predict intention to stay in foreign peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation. The results show that endorsement of growth mindset in culture predicted intention, but with different valence and through different mediators. Dirsehan and Cankat (2021) in their study, first positions the (mobile food-ordering apps) among other mobile food applications regarding their business models. Then, a structural model was developed and tested by focusing on the outcomes of MFOA usage. Their findings indicate that MFOA satisfaction plays a critical role in developing restaurants' brand satisfaction and loyalty. Sharma et al. (2021) examined the antecedents of food delivery apps users' food ordering behavior during the pandemic that can lead to food waste. The results support a positive association of trust and price advantage with attitude, but only of trust with shopping routine. Perceived severity and moral norms did not moderate any associations.

Alalwan (2020) identified the main factors predicting the e-satisfaction with Mobile food ordering apps and customers' intention to reuse such apps in Jordan. Data analysis using structural equation modelling approved the role of online review, online rating, online tracking, performance expectancy, hedonic motivation, and price value on e-satisfaction and continued intention to reuse.

Japutra & Song (2020) investigated the relationships between consumer mindsets, shopping motivations (deal proneness, social comparison, and hedonic motives) and compulsive buying using SEM. Their findings reveal the mechanism through which mindsets affect compulsive buying. Yen et al. (2020) examined the effect of psychological antecedents and individual difference characteristics on intention to purchase Fair Trade products. Results showed that the two dimensions of moral identity, internalization and symbolization, play different roles and have different functions in regards to the intention to purchase Fair Trade products.

Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods: Utilizing the qualitative approach of thematic analysis to identify and deeply understand qualitative factors, and then modeling these factors

using ISM (Interpretive Structural Modeling) for structural and quantitative analysis, providing a comprehensive and multi-dimensional view of the factors influencing customer attitudes.

Considering the valuable researches in the literature, this research seems to have some innovations: (1) utilizing the qualitative approach of thematic analysis to identify and deeply understand qualitative factors, and then modeling these factors using ISM for structural and quantitative analysis, provides a comprehensive and multi-dimensional view of the factors influencing customer attitudes, (2) developing a unique structural model tailored for the Iranian market, specifically addressing Iran's cultural, social, and economic characteristics, can enhance understanding of customer preferences and behaviors in this market. Finally, examining the interactions among different factors through ISM, can help to identify complex and non-linear relationships influencing customer attitudes.

3 Research Methodology

This applied study employs a mixed-method approach to explain how customer mindset influences their inclination to order food online. To develop the research model, the study first uses qualitative thematic analysis to identify the main and sub-themes that affect customer mindset in online food ordering. Next, the primary themes identified in the first step are analyzed using the interpretive structural modeling (ISM) method.

Data for the thematic analysis were collected through structured interviews with 16 consumers who used mobile food ordering apps. Subsequently, the main themes were further analyzed using the ISM method, based on the input from three academic experts. MAXQDA software was used for the qualitative thematic analysis, while MICMAC software was employed for the interpretive structural modeling calculations. Following steps describe the steps of Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM):

- **Problem Definition:** Clearly define the problem and identify the factors or variables relevant to the system.
- **Identification of Variables:** List the main factors influencing the system (derived from qualitative analysis, literature, or expert opinions).
- **Establish Structural Self-Interaction Matrix (SSIM):** Develop a pairwise comparison matrix to define relationships between the variables.
- **Develop Reachability Matrix:** Convert SSIM into a binary reachability matrix to show direct and indirect relationships between factors.
- **Level Partitioning:** Partition the reachability matrix to identify hierarchical levels or stages of the variables.
- **Development of Diagraph:** Based on level partitioning, construct a diagraph (graphical representation) showing the relationships between variables.
- **Convert Diagraph to ISM Model:** Transform the diagraph into the ISM model by removing transitive links and creating a clearer structure.
- **Validation and Refinement:** Validate the ISM model through expert feedback or further testing and refine if necessary.

4 Results

4.1 Thematic Analysis

To identify the factors influencing the role of customer mindset in the inclination to order food online, semi-structured expert interviews were conducted. Before the interviews, eight open-ended questions were prepared, and additional questions emerged throughout the interview process. The results were summarized and analyzed using thematic analysis. The approach for thematic analysis was based on the method proposed by Attride-Stirling (2001).

In this research, the interviews continued until theoretical saturation was reached. The criterion for achieving theoretical saturation was the repetition of extracted codes. In the open coding stage, 238 codes were identified. Eventually, through axial coding, 14 main themes and 71 sub-themes were determined.

The key affecting factors on customer mindset in their inclination to order food online, extracted from the interviews using thematic analysis, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Main Themes of Customer Mindset Toward Online Food Ordering

| Dimension | Main Themes |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Individual Factors | Living Conditions |
| | Ordering Experience with App |
| Structural Factors | User Privacy Protection |
| | App Features |
| | App Content Relevance |
| Motivational Factors | Order Rewards |
| | Time-Saving |
| | Customer Mindset |
| Marketing Factors | Advertisement |
| | Food Price |
| | Food Quality |
| | Support Follow-up |
| | App Competitors |
| | Online Food Ordering |

4.2 Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM)

In the first step of the research, a table similar to Table 2 was provided to the experts, who were asked to specify the type of relationship between the variables using the symbols O, X, A, and V (as shown in Table 2). A Structural Self-Interaction Matrix (SSIM) was created based on the dimensions and indicators of the study, comparing them using these four conceptual relationship symbols. The collected data were summarized using the Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) method, and the final SSIM was formed. The logic behind ISM modeling relies on mode frequency, meaning the symbol representing the majority opinion of the experts regarding the type of interaction between the indicators is chosen for the corresponding cells in the final SSIM.

Table 2. Types of Relationships

| Index | Description |
|-------|--|
| V | Variable i influences variable j. |
| A | Variable j influences variable i. |
| X | There is a bidirectional relationship between variables i and j. |
| O | There is no relationship between variables i and j. |

- SSIM Matrix

Using the above mentioned indexes, the causal relationships between the factors are determined, thus forming the SSIM. The relationships obtained are reflected in Table 3, representing the final Structural Self-Interaction Matrix.

Table 3. Structural Self-Interaction Matrix

| | D01 | D02 | D03 | D04 | D05 | D06 | D07 | D08 | D09 | D10 | D11 | D12 | D13 | D14 |
|----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Online Food Ordering (D01) | - | A | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Consumer Mindset (D02) | | - | A | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | A | O | O | O |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Support Follow-up (D03) | | | - | O | O | O | O | O | O | A | X | O | O | A |
| Ordering Experience (D04) | | | | - | A | V | V | A | A | O | O | V | X | O |
| Living Conditions (D05) | | | | | - | O | O | X | X | O | O | O | V | O |
| App Features (D06) | | | | | | - | X | O | O | V | O | X | A | V |
| App Content Fit (D07) | | | | | | | - | O | O | V | O | O | A | V |
| Food Price (D08) | | | | | | | | - | O | O | O | O | V | O |
| Food Quality (D09) | | | | | | | | | - | O | O | O | V | O |
| Order Rewards (D10) | | | | | | | | | | - | O | A | O | X |
| Time Savings (D11) | | | | | | | | | | | - | O | O | A |
| Competitors (D12) | | | | | | | | | | | | - | A | V |
| Advertising (D13) | | | | | | | | | | | | | - | O |
| Privacy Protection (D14) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | - |

The SSIM provides the conceptual relationships between variables based on expert opinions.

- *Reachability and Transitivity matrixes*

In the second step, the initial reachability matrix should be created by converting the structural self-interaction matrix into zeros and ones. After obtaining the initial reachability matrix, internal consistency must be established. For example, if variable 1 leads to 2 and variable 2 leads to 3, then variable 1 should also lead to 3. If this condition is not met in the reachability matrix, the matrix must be adjusted, and such relationships must be corrected and established. This consistency is achieved by adding secondary relationships, which may not have initially existed, to the initial reachability matrix. In Table (4), cells marked with *1 represent relationships that have been established in the consistent matrix.

Table 4. Transitivity matrix

| | D01 | D02 | D03 | D04 | D05 | D06 | D07 | D08 | D09 | D10 | D11 | D12 | D13 | D14 | Driving Power |
|----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------------|
| Online Food Ordering (D01) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Consumer Mindset (D02) | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Support Follow-up (D03) | 1* | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Ordering Experience (D04) | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1* | 1* | 1 | 1 | 1* | 11 |
| Living Conditions (D05) | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1 | 1 | 1* | 1* | 1 | 1 | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1 | 1* | 14 |
| App Features (D06) | 1* | 1* | 1* | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1* | 1 | 0 | 1 | 9 |
| App Content Fit (D07) | 1* | 1* | 1* | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1* | 1* | 0 | 1 | 9 |
| Food Price (D08) | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1 | 1 | 1* | 1* | 1 | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1 | 1* | 14 |
| Food Quality (D09) | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1 | 1 | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1 | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1 | 1* | 14 |
| Order Rewards (D10) | 1* | 1* | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1* | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Time Savings (D11) | 1* | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Competitors (D12) | 1* | 1* | 1* | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1* | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1* | 1 | 0 | 1 | 8 |
| Advertising (D13) | 1* | 1* | 1* | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1* | 1* | 1 | 1 | 1* | 11 |
| Privacy Protection (D14) | 1* | 1* | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Dependence Power | 14 | 13 | 12 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 12 | 8 | 5 | 10 | |

For construct C_i , the reachability set (outputs or influences) includes the constructs that can be reached through construct C_i . The antecedent set (inputs or effects) includes the constructs through which construct C_i can be reached. After determining the reachability set and the antecedent set, the intersection of the two sets is calculated. The first construct for which the intersection of the two sets equals the reachability set

(outputs) will be the first level. After determining the level, the construct at that level is removed from all sets, and the input and output sets are redefined to determine the level of the next construct. For example, since Factor D01 has an intersection set of D01, which is the same as its output set, it is placed at the first level and removed from the table. Subsequently, with Factor 1 removed, the intersection set of Factor D02 will match its output set. Thus, it will be placed at the second level and removed from the table. The result of this process is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Initial Matrix of Final Leveling

| Factor | Input Set | Outout Set | Level |
|--------|--|--|-------|
| D01 | D01, D02, D03, D04, D05, D06, D07, D08, D09, D10, D11, D12, D13, D14 | D01 | 1 |
| D02 | D02, D03, D04, D05, D06, D07, D08, D09, D10, D11, D12, D13, D14 | D01, D02 | 6 |
| D03 | D03, D04, D05, D06, D07, D08, D09, D10, D11, D12, D13, D14 | D01, D02, D03, D11 | 5 |
| D04 | D04, D05, D08, D09, D13 | D01,D02,D03,D04,D06,D07,D10,D11,D12,D13, D14 | 6 |
| D05 | D05, D08, D09 | D01,D02,D03,D04,D05,D06,D07,D08,D09,D10, D11,D12,D13,D14 | 7 |
| D06 | D04, D05, D06, D07, D08, D09, D12, D13 | D01, D02, D03, D06, D07, D10, D11, D12, D14 | 5 |
| D07 | D04, D05, D06, D07, D08, D09, D12, D13 | D01, D02, D03, D06, D07, D10, D11, D12, D14 | 5 |
| D08 | D05, D08, D09 | D01, D02, D03, D04, D05, D06, D07, D08, D09, D10, D11, D12, D13, D14 | 7 |
| D09 | D05, D08, D09 | D01, D02, D03, D04, D05, D06, D07, D08, D09, D10, D11, D12, D13, D14 | 7 |
| D10 | D04, D05, D06, D07, D08, D09, D10, D12, D13, D14 | D01, D02, D03, D10, D11, D14 | 4 |
| D11 | D03, D04, D05, D06, D07, D08, D09, D10, D11, D12, D13, D14 | D01, D02, D03, D11 | 5 |
| D12 | D04, D05, D06, D07, D08, D09, D12, D13 | D01, D02, D03, D06, D07, D10, D11, D12, D14 | 5 |
| D13 | D04, D05, D08, D09, D13 | D04, D06, D07, D10, D11, D12, ,03D01,D02,D13, D14 | 6 |
| D14 | D04, D05, D06, D07, D08, D09, D10, D12, D13, D14 | D01, D02, D03, D10, D11, D14 | 4 |

The initial pattern of the levels of the identified constructs is shown in Figure 1. In this diagram, only meaningful relationships of the elements of each level with the elements of the lower level, as well as the internal meaningful relationships of the elements of each row, are considered.

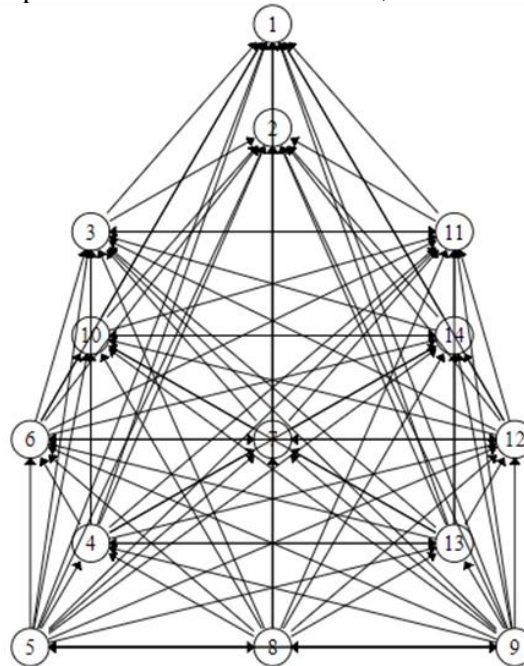


Figure 1. Factors Affecting Customer Attitudes Toward Online Food Ordering

Based on the model, it was determined that the components of food quality, food price, and living conditions affect the components of advertisement and ordering experience. These components, in turn, influence the components of app features, app content relevance, and competitors. Subsequently, the aforementioned three components affect privacy protection and order rewards. Then, these components impact time savings and support follow-up, ultimately leading to the formation of consumer mindset and the possibility of online food ordering.

- *MICMAC Analysis*

In this section, The MICMAC (Matrice d’Impacts Croisés Multiplication Additionnel) matrix is a tool used to analyze and visualize the relationships between factors affecting customer attitudes toward online food ordering in a system. It helps to identify the most influential factors and their impacts on each other. In the MICMAC matrix, the different zones are categorized based on the variables' influence and dependency. Here is a summary of the categories:

- *Autonomous Zone*: Low influence and low dependency
- *Dependent Zone*: Low influence and high dependency
- *Independent Zone*: High influence and low dependency
- *Linking Zone*: High influence and high dependency

Based on the influence and dependency score, MICMAC matrix is established as the following:

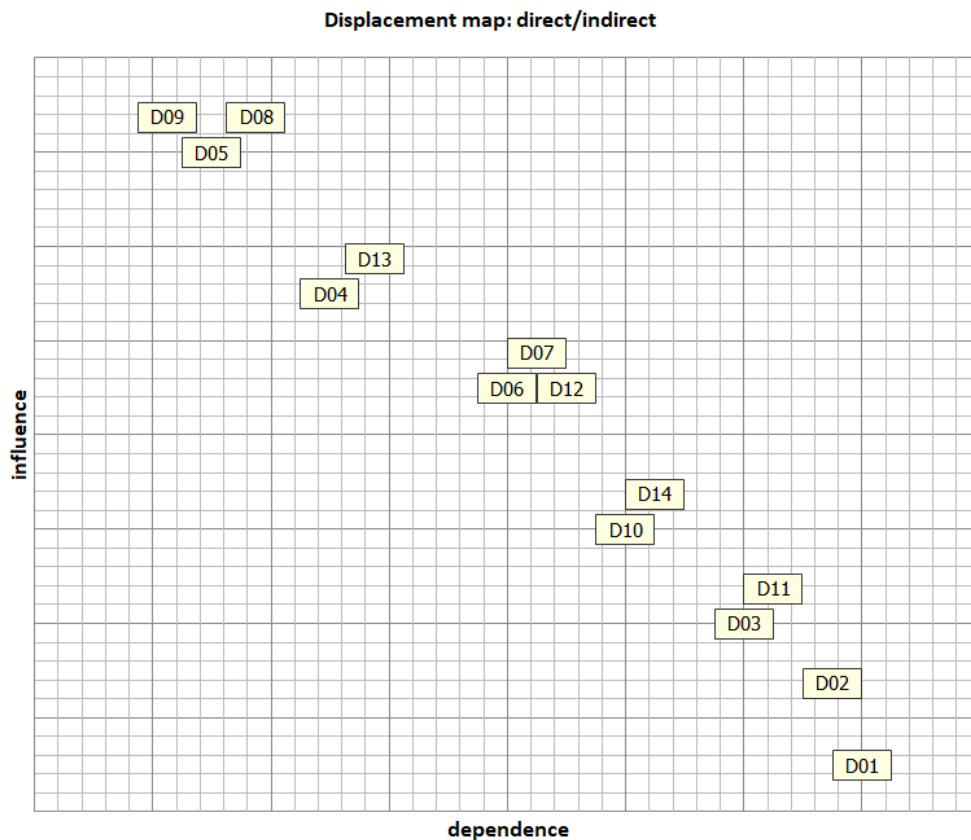


Figure 2. MICMAC Matrix

Based on Figure 2, the variables are categorized as follows: Order Experience (D04), Advertising (D13), Living Conditions (D05), Food Price (D08), and Food Quality (D09) are classified as Independent Variables due to their high influence and low dependency. Conversely, Online Food Ordering (D01),

Consumer Mindset (D02), Support Follow-up (D03), Time Savings (D11), Order Rewards (D10), and Privacy Protection (D14) fall into the Dependent Variables category, characterized by low influence but high dependency. App Features (D06), App Content Suitability (D07), and Competitors (D12) are identified as Linking Variables, exhibiting similar levels of influence and dependency. Notably, no variables are positioned in the Autonomous Zone, suggesting that all variables have some degree of interaction and influence.

5 Conclusion

The study reveals that food quality and living conditions are positioned as independent variables with high influence and low dependency, impacting advertising and order experience. These factors further influence app features, content suitability, and competitors, which in turn affect privacy protection and order rewards. Subsequently, these variables impact time savings and support follow-up, ultimately leading to consumer mindset and online food ordering. The positioning of online food ordering at the first level aligns with findings from Tiwari et al. (2022) and Ruoying and Shiwei (2020). Similarly, consumer mindset at the second level is consistent with results from Kai and Liang (2020) and Yen et al. (2017). Support follow-up and time savings, positioned at the third level, are in line with Sajeef et al. (2021), Selmasi et al. (2020), and Ramesh et al. (2023). Order rewards and privacy protection at the fourth level align with findings from Elahi et al. (2021), Li et al. (2022), and Zhang et al. (2022). App features, content suitability, and competitors, found at the fifth level, match results from Subanath et al. (2017), Wok et al. (2011), and Tiwana (2013). Order experience and advertising at the sixth level correspond with Park (2022) and Valenti et al. (2023). Finally, living conditions, food price, and food quality at the seventh level align with Lin et al. (2014) and Suhartanto et al. (2019). This structured analysis underscores the intricate relationships between variables influencing online food ordering and provides a comprehensive understanding of their roles and impacts.

Based on the findings, it is recommended that future research delve deeper into the dynamic interactions between independent variables like food quality and living conditions and their downstream effects on advertising and order experience. Additionally, further investigation into how app features and content suitability can be optimized to enhance privacy protection and order rewards is suggested. Businesses should focus on refining support follow-up mechanisms and time-saving features to better meet consumer needs. Understanding the impact of these factors on consumer mindset and online ordering behaviors could offer valuable insights for developing more effective marketing strategies and improving overall user satisfaction.

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