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# **The Effect of Ordering Method on Consumer Return Intentions**

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## **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

With the rise of Covid-19, mobile ordering has become one of the most popular ways to get food. At its height, Covid-19 caused restaurants to shut down and forced businesses to move to a more mobile and delivery-friendly plan. Now, venues for concerts, events, and sports have started to offer the option of mobile ordering food to be delivered directly to your seat. Mobile ordering has made the food service industry even more accessible; however, it has also brought to light the issue of tipping. In the past, tipping exclusively occurred at full-service restaurants. The performance of the service staff and the overall dining experience determined the amount a consumer would tip. Now, businesses like Starbucks, McDonald's, and DoorDash ask you to tip before you have received your food when you mobile order. The focus of much of the research on this topic targeted consumer tipping behavior with limited-service restaurants compared to a traditional dining experience rather than mobile apps. Prior research on tipping within limited-service restaurants found that requesting a tip before consumers received food resulted in negative consumer return intentions; however, studies also indicated that this was only significant when the check amount was low (Karabas et al., 2020). Other prior research suggests that using touchscreen interfaces often results in higher consumer engagement across multiple studies (Chung et al., 2018). Overall, the preceding literature points to positive outcomes for consumers who use a method similar to mobile ordering.

We conducted the first study to understand the relationship between consumer return intentions and the platform they use to order food at a sporting event. We hypothesized that the mobile ordering condition would lead to greater consumer return intentions for this study. We also hypothesized that the mobile condition would lead to greater consumer return intentions because tipping intentions would be higher on the mobile condition.

For the first study, we predicted that there would be a statistically significant difference in consumer return intentions between the mobile and concession conditions. We also believed that customers in the mobile condition would have a higher likelihood to tip and tip a higher amount on their order, leading to higher return intentions. In this study, the platform presented to the participants (mobile or concession) is referred to as the condition. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions in the study at the start of the survey. The study presented participants with a scenario where they attended a sporting event and realized they were hungry. Scenario one told participants they wanted to order from the concessions stand, while scenario two told participants that they wanted to use the mobile app to order their food. After reading the

scenario, a photo of a fictitious tipping screen asked participants if they would like to add a tip to their order. After the tipping screen, participants indicated how likely they would be to add a tip to their order based on a seven-point scale. To reduce the likelihood of response bias, participants were given a modified three-point scale (leftmost 3 = Not very likely, rightmost 3 = very likely). Participants then indicated what percentage tip they would add to their order on a five-point scale based on the tip percentage size (0% = 1, 25% = 5). In addition to the questions about tipping, participants indicated how delicious, flavorful, and tasty they expected their food to be on another seven-point scale (1 = Not at all, 7 = Very). Finally, participants indicated whether they would order food again from their respective platforms on a seven-point scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree). We conducted the study using the survey platform Qualtrics with participants from MTurk.

We used R for our analysis to determine if there was a statistically significant relationship between the condition participants were given and their return intentions. By performing an ANOVA, we found that the return intentions of the groups for the mobile and concessions conditions were statistically significantly different, with a p-value of .0306. The mean score for consumer return intentions in the mobile condition was 5.3 while the mean score for the concessions condition was 4.56. We then found that we had a working Hayes PROCESS Model 4 by running PROCESS in R. We found that both tip likelihood and tip percentage were mediators. There was a significant positive effect on the A path from the ordering condition to the tip likelihood mediator indicated by the p-value of .0012. There was also a significant effect of the mediator on consumer return intentions indicated by the p value on the B Path of .0000. For tip percentage, the p-value on the A path from the ordering condition to the tip percentage mediator was .0346. The p-value on the B path from the second mediator to consumer return intentions was .0001. In both cases, the C path was not significant.

While this is still an early study, it is important to acknowledge possible factors that could influence or change these results. While these results may be representative of the sample, they may not be representative of the attitudes and beliefs of the general population. A larger sample size would provide better insight into the attitudes of the population toward tipping and mobile ordering platforms, especially at sports venues.

Throughout our first study, we showed that mobile ordering did increase consumer return intentions in a small sample ( $n = 100$ ). Studies like the one we conducted can add valuable information to the already limited literature on mobile app ordering and tipping. Sports venues can use this information to increase the number of tips they receive and drive revenue across all locations. An increase in tips would also make employees happier, resulting in superior customer service outcomes with more significant profit on the back end.

**Keywords:** *Consumer return intentions, Tips, Tipping, Tip likelihood, Tip percentage, Mobile ordering, Mobile apps*

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

**Garrett Kemp** is a third-year undergraduate student at Mercer University with a concentration in Sports Marketing & Analytics. He has a strong passion for sports and is pursuing a career in Major League Baseball as a data analyst following his graduation from Mercer University. Garrett established Mercer Baseball's sabermetrics and analytics team, which has evolved into Mercer's first Center for Sports Analytics. He hopes to expand the program to all major sports and provide valuable data insights to give Mercer's teams a competitive edge.

**Laura Boman** is an assistant professor of marketing at Mercer University. Laura earned her bachelor's degree from Auburn University, her M.B.A. from Florida Gulf Coast University, and her Ph.D. from the University of Central Florida. Laura's research focuses primarily on how visual cues influence behaviors and evaluations. Specifically, she has studied how visual cues such as brand logos influence purchase intentions and how a reduction of visual cues influences food product evaluation. Laura's research has appeared in the *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, *the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, and many national and global conferences.