The appeal of online food hubs... and how OFN customers use them

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OFN gathering 2020
Potential impact on:
- Carbon emissions reduction
- Biodiversity
- Soil erosion
- Animal welfare
- Supporting local economies
Scaling up adoption of food hubs

- Survey - 595 responses:
  - 196 OFN customers
  - 26 former customers
  - 373 non-users
- Quantitative data for statistical analysis, as well qualitative data from feedback
Current shopping behaviour

• 39% place an order every week from hub, 27% order once a fortnight

• Customers buy on average 13% of their weekly food shop from the hub
Product range

- customers buy a wide variety of products if they are available
- 38 requests for cupboard stock, 26 for non-food items
- food hub users are more likely to be flexitarian, vegetarian or vegan
- generally happy with the quality/freshness: 45 positive comments vs 18 negative ones
Product pricing

• 16% say it’s too expensive, 84% say it’s about right

• 2 themes: 1. it’s expensive, but worth it (23)
  2. it’s expensive, would like to buy more but constrained by income (12)

• **household income:** those with lower incomes still choose to buy from online food hubs, despite perceived higher prices

• **product information:** 32 requests for more info about products/producers

• **customisation of orders** (32): wider range of price points, adding individual items to regular order, refillable containers
Appeal of online food hubs

• Highest scoring attributes:
  • **Individual benefits**: access to better quality food, convenience of ordering online & home delivery
  • **Public benefits**: supports local businesses, helps protect the environment
  • **Identity and values**: transparency in food supply chain, fits well with their values and beliefs

• Broad agreement between hub users and non-users – good news, suggests food hubs have a wider appeal beyond the core customers

• Non-users think it takes more effort, and may need convincing on compatibility with daily life
Finding new customers

• 47% of non-users first heard about food hubs through social media

• word of mouth - hub users spoke to an average of 12 people about food hubs in past 6 months. 64% of are close friends

• non-users said there is a 54% likelihood they would use an online food hub in the next year (on average)
mi nim al  pl astic pa cka ging i s us ed
the  highest a nimal we lfar e standar ds wer e  used
the  food is he althy
the  farme r ha s be en pa id a fair price
the  food is not hig hly processed
the  food wa s g rown locally
it i s cl ear wher e al l the  in gr ed ien ts have  com e fr om
the  food wa s g rown using  org anic fa rming  me thods
the  food ca n be home-deliv ered
the  food was grown using organic farming methods
it is clear where all the ingredients have come from
the food was grown locally
the food is not highly processed
the farmer has been paid a fair price
the food is healthy
the highest animal welfare standards were used
minimal plastic packaging is used

Shopping preferences of food hub users vs non-users
Thank you for listening!

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Discussion questions

1. What data/information do you think would be useful in order to scale up the use of online food hubs?

2. Any questions I should have asked?
Can (digital) *disruptive innovations* which offer *novel attributes* help stimulate *end-user demand* for a low carbon transition?
Consumer innovations – potentially disruptive!

offer novel attributes to consumers, digitally mediated
Carbon emission reduction?

Not just about food miles!
Different modes of Home Delivery
Harvesting to order = less waste
Low carbon production, less of... refrigeration, heated greenhouse, synthetic inputs, machinery
Social networks and information diffusion

“The slow pace of diffusion is often a result of network structures”

- Highly homophilious
- Highly clustered

Valente (2010)
Social networks and information diffusion

Highly heterophilious

Low clustering

Valente (2010)