As lifestyles become increasingly fast-paced, more and more consumers are turning to food delivery platforms for convenient meal options. With a premium placed on time efficiency, the speed of delivery has become a critical determinant of consumers’ willingness to place orders. We examine how the presentation of delivery time affects consumer ordering behavior. Leveraging a unique dataset from a large online food delivery platform in China and employing a difference-in-differences (DiD) approach, we find that customers presented with flexible delivery time windows increased their order frequency by 14.4% and their spending by 12.2%, compared to those provided with exact delivery time points. The observed effect is more pronounced among younger customers and those with higher spending power. We reveal that providing flexible delivery time windows sets an expectation for prolonged wait time among customers, which in turn reduces anxiety over potential delays and ultimately improves the perceived reliability of the delivery service. These insights afford practical guidance for food delivery platform operators aiming to enhance customer satisfaction and experience.

**ABSTRACT**

**BIOGRAPHY**

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