

Chapter 4: Views on online food purchasing scenarios

- Amazon
- Olio
- Facebook Marketplace
- Too Good To Go
- Big Three Aggregators (for example, Uber Eats, Deliveroo and Just Eat)

Below, we draw out participants perceptions of these online food purchasing platforms with regards to risk, and their course of action if they needed to complain about any problems.

4.1 Amazon (pre-packed Ben's Original rice)

Participants generally perceived this scenario to be low risk. They assumed this food would be packaged and sealed, with a low risk of damage or contamination.

Participants generally trusted and understood why Amazon would be used to buy food online. They associated Amazon with convenience and efficiency, even if some said they had not, and would not consider using it themselves. The importance of familiarity and the businesses' reputation was highlighted here again, where participants mentioned preferring to buy food from recognised, established brands and sellers through Amazon, as they trusted that these products would be authentic.

Across groups, participants pointed to Amazon as a reputable company with good customer service: expressing confidence that they would be reimbursed quickly if there were any issues with the food. Some said they felt the same level of confidence buying food in this way as they would when buying food from a well-known supermarket brand.

4.2 Olio (home-made cupcakes)

Participants liked the overall idea behind Olio and how it was intended to combat food waste and support local businesses.

However, across groups, participants expressed concern about the hygiene and cleanliness standards of individual sellers. Participants specifically mentioned not being confident about the exact ingredients being used. They were also worried about the risk of contamination and its implications for those with dietary and/or hypersensitivities. Participants consistently mentioned the risk associated with the seller being a 'stranger'. However, participants across the groups said that they would be more confident to buy food in this way if the seller was someone they knew or had been recommended by someone they trusted.

Participants mentioned a range of different actions they might take if they had a problem with an order. These included contacting the seller directly and asking for their money back, contacting Olio directly to report the seller, or leaving a bad review. However, across groups, participants agreed that they would not take action unless it was a serious issue. This was because they were positive about the impact that Olio and those selling through the platform were trying to have on food waste and the environment.

4.3 Facebook Marketplace (pre-cooked chicken and rice meal)

Across groups, participants agreed that it was high risk to buy food through Facebook Marketplace.

The food depicted in this scenario was also consistently described by participants as high risk. However, as with Olio, if the food was lower risk, and/or if the seller had been recommended by someone they knew, some participants said they would consider purchasing food in this way. These participants either bought food online more frequently and/or had used Facebook Marketplace to buy food before.

However, on the whole, participants did not trust that sellers would adhere to the appropriate food safety and hygiene standards. They were particularly wary of individual sellers using Facebook Marketplace to sell items through, again citing these as 'strangers'.

Due to a perceived lack of regulation enforced by Facebook, participants thought sellers on Facebook would lack accountability. Despite the sellers using the platform to sell food online, participants did not feel they would be able to raise any issues with Facebook directly, because the platform was not focused on food. While participants mentioned contacting the seller directly and/or leaving a bad review if there was an issue with the food purchased, participants felt they would be ultimately unprotected by the platform. There was general agreement that the best course of action would be simply to avoid buying from that seller again.

4.4 Too Good To Go (pre-made sandwiches from a local café)

Across groups, participants generally reacted positively to this scenario, and were more confident buying from an established business than they were from individual sellers. Participants felt that food and hygiene standards would be adhered to for food prepared and purchased in this way.

However, participants across groups agreed that they would feel less confident buying higher risk food types like dairy, eggs, or fish which a business has not sold by the end of the day (as per Too Good To Go's model).

Participants said that if they had problems, they would either contact the seller or the app platform directly. However, participants generally said they were unlikely to take any action against the seller in these instances, given the reduced cost of the food that they had purchased.

4.5 Aggregators (takeaway pizza)

Participants generally trusted the safety of food bought from restaurants through the main aggregators, especially where the food was coming from restaurants that were familiar to them. Participants generally expected food bought in this way to have been prepared in line with food hygiene standards.

However, there were different perspectives on the extent to which food would be transported appropriately, particularly among those who did not buy food online frequently. These concerns focused on whether aggregator delivery drivers would transport food hygienically and at the right temperature.

Participants assumed there was a lack of regulation around this for aggregator delivery drivers. However, the main concern appeared to be that food would arrive late and/or cold, rather than

any significant concerns with food safety specifically.

Participants agreed that the responsibility to address any issues with food bought in this way would depend on the specific situation. For example, participants felt that the aggregator (via their role in maintaining the standards of their delivery drivers) would be responsible if there was an issue with the food arriving late or cold, but the seller would be responsible if there was an issue with the quality or safety of the food.