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A Review on Social Media as a New Venue for Promoting Culinary Destinations

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ABSTRACT

Food has become an important tool for destinations to attract tourists to visit them. Food tourism has become one of the most important segments within the travel market. With the development of online information technology, social media platforms are playing an increasingly important role in tourism promotion and digital marketing. This paper reviews a selection of literature on the use of social media platforms by destinations to shape destination images and promote food tourism. It was found that with the rise in the number of social media users, social media has become a new venue for food tourism promotion. But there is still a lack of systematic research generalization and theoretical guidance on how social media platforms can shape positive food destination impressions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, food has become an important tool for a city to attract tourists, and many cities are now using the tags of “food capital” and “food court” to attract tourists to visit them. A significant positive relationship between food image and intention to visit has been demonstrated (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010a). Food tourism is a cultural experience where visitors interact with the destination through food as a medium to create new food experiences, which is also an expression of new tourism motivations (Ellis et al., 2018). With tourists seeking new culinary experiences and trying foods they have never tried before to satisfy their curiosity, and experience the local culture associated with food, interact with the chefs, food is no longer just an ancillary consumption in tourism, but has the potential to become a major influence on tourists' choice of destination (Quan & Wang, 2004) (Su et al., 2020). So food tourism is therefore becoming a sought-after trend.

Social media has changed from being a communication tool to a new way of life. According to statistics, there are 4.62 billion social media users worldwide. This figure corresponds to 58.4% of the world's total population (Hannahcurrey, 2022). The “web 2.0” internet of today features review sites, leading to the so-called socialnomics (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media is a web-based virtual world where users can interact, communicate and present themselves in real-time or asynchronously, and create user-generated content as well as gain value (Carr & Hayes, 2015). Studies (F. Li et al., 2021) have confirmed that social media itself has no value in terms of marketing, the value of social media is generated through interaction and communication between firms and users, or even between users and users. These generated social networks and resources can be utilized to the maximum and used for resource exchange by developing a good strategy. The impact of use and share during social media and the user-generated content generated in the process on consumer decisions and perceptions have been widely studied by scholars (Alves et al., 2016). Social media such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook provide a platform for marketers to communicate with consumers. Through these social media, marketers can collaborate with consumers (through user-generated content) to better spread positive sentiment and increase brand awareness (Smith et al., 2012). The overall evaluation and attitude of consumers towards the brand is determined by the consumer's attitude towards the post (K.-J. Chen et al., 2015).

This paper reviews the vibrancy and vitality of using social media as a new venue for promoting culinary destinations, with a view to finding new paths for the sustainable promotion of food tourism.

2. LITERATUR REVIEW

2.1. Food tourism

Food incorporates a destination's cultural traditions, terroir, historical changes, even the region's unique architectural style, cooking and services. Udon noodles are a traditional food that is considered an intangible heritage in Japan and one of the top three noodle dishes in Japan (S. Kim & Iwashita, 2016). Tourists from Japan and around the world come to Kagawa Prefecture to taste authentic udon noodles. “Sanuki Udon”, the symbol of Kagawa Prefecture, has brought rich benefits to the local food industry and tourism. Malaysia is melting pot with a multi-ethnic society and a rich history of cultural changes of Malaysia that is shared with international visitors through Malaysia heritage food. Malaysia Heritage food also includes an equal mix of Malay, Indian and Chinese flavors. Research has confirmed that the higher the perception and involvement of international tourists in

traditional Malaysia Heritage food, the stronger the tourists' intention to visit Malaysia again (Omar et al., 2015). Choe (Choe & Kim, 2018) have tested the effect of tourists' consumption value of local food in Hong Kong on tourists' behavioral intention based on the consumption value theory. The result shows that the taste and emotional value of local food created a positive attitude towards local food among travelers, thus strengthening their intention to visit Hong Kong again and to recommend their friends to visit Hong Kong. Tsai & Wang (2017) also has found that a positive food image increases the intention of travelers to visit the city.

In a highly competitive tourism market, a strong and unique culinary image can help a destination marketer or local government organization stand out in destination promotion. Impressive local food, never-before-experienced food and dishes, and attentive dining service all make for memorable travel experiences. Some culinary events may entice travelers to visit a destination again in order to have experienced of the food or service again (Stone et al., 2018). Some destinations food production sites attract visitors to experience and engage with local food culture up close through themed exhibitions and food culture events. It has strengthen the attractiveness of the destination, increased the interaction between visitors and the destination, and provided a better travel experience (Garibaldi & Pozzi, 2018). Montanari and Staniscia (2009) has reported on the combination of food tourism and agricultural development, combining local high-quality terroir with flourishing cuisine in Italian Apennines, using food tourism as a grip to further promote the development of local agriculture and enrich the income sources of local farmers. Also of interest is the growing number of major international conferences exploring gastronomic tourism. Food tourism has been further conceptualized by scholars and is gaining traction with many tourism researchers. It has also given destination management organizations excellent new ideas for exploring local tourism resources (Ellis et al., 2018b).

2.2. Social media in Tourism Industry

Social media network is defined as a site where personal data can be made public or semi-public, connections and contact lists can be established with other users, and information about connected or unconnected users can be viewed. Since the launch of SixDegrees.com in 1997 (Boyd & Ellison, 2007), social media has flourished, with hundreds of millions of users worldwide. In the early stage of world wild web, so called "wed 1.0", is lack of communication and interaction (Viswanathan et al., 2019). By contrast, Web 2.0 featured by two-way interaction and user engagement (Toledano, 2017). Social media includes consumer review sites, social networking sites, content community sites, internet forums and location-based social media, and is based on the internet and communication technology to build social interaction with text, audio, pictures, and video. It is a new way for people to link to society and an online environment built on the contribution and interaction of participants.

In recent years, user's activity on social media has grown exponentially (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014a). With the development of social media, its impact on the tourism and hospitality industry is gradually revealed. The impact of social media on tourism is becoming increasingly significant and has become a high-profile research topic. Social media has started to change the way travelers and tourists search for information about destinations (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014b). KAL (Korean Airlines) Tour used to build a better corporate image by hosting events on two social media platforms (Park & Oh, 2012), Twitter and Facebook. In the meantime, the company's management developed targeted marketing strategies on social media according to the target population. KAL Tour's social

media marketing has been a huge success, not only in raising awareness but also in generating significant profits for the company.

Content on social media influences tourists' travel motivation, destination choice, hotels and restaurants selection. Social media platforms have been used as a tool for branding destination images and promoting destinations (de las Heras-Pedrosa et al., 2020). The role of mainstream social media platforms such as Sina Weibo Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Flicker in marketing tourism destinations in China, Indonesia, Italy and so on has been widely studied. With the development of network technology, the information of social media has changed from the traditional mainstream of text and picture information (Zhao et al., 2018a) (Tseng et al., 2015) to the mainstream of video information (Lu & Lu, 2019).

Video on social media is divided into two types: live streaming, which is more real-time and realistic, and short video, which is more efficient in terms of information and have a better viewing experience for users (Li & Hayes, 2023). Live videos on social media can convey experiences that feel more authentic, making destinations more attractive and creating an enticing impression of the destination image (Huertas, 2018). Researchers have confirmed that the content conveyed by short food videos on social media platforms can enhance the perceived image of the destination and increase the attention of potential visitors to the destination's image (Li et al., 2020). Videos are also an effective tool that can be used to enhance the interest of potential travelers (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009).

Videos on social media platforms can also be used as a tool for destinations to market local cuisine. Xu (Rinka) and Pratt (2018) studied the impact of social media influencers on destination visit intentions and found that when social media influencers are consistent with consumers' desired self-image, they can lead to higher visit intentions for endorsed destinations. Al-Gasawneh and Al-Adamat (2020) believes that social media interactions can moderate visitors' image of a destination and thus influence travel intentions. He believes that social media can reduce the perception of risk and help build trust in the destination. Using social media platforms to better promote tourism destinations is a current issue of concern for city management organizations.

3. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach through a literature review to examine the role of social media in promoting food tourism destinations. The secondary data for this study is sourced from scholarly articles, journals, research reports, and books relevant to the topic. A systematic search is conducted across online databases such as Google Scholar and Scopus, using keywords like "social media" and "food tourism promotion." The selected articles, published within the last decade, focus on strategies for promoting culinary tourism through social media platforms.

Content analysis is then applied to identify key themes such as the role of influencers, the effectiveness of visual strategies, and the impact of social media on tourists' decision-making processes. The findings from various studies are synthesized to provide a broader understanding of the most effective promotional strategies. Additionally, the research critically evaluates different approaches from prior studies, comparing their strengths and limitations. To ensure the validity and reliability of the results, triangulation is employed, offering a comprehensive insight into how social media can be effectively utilized to promote food tourism destinations.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Destination and food Image in social media

Ahmed (1991) defines the destination image as the tourism image of a destination is the mental depiction that visitors have of a particular destination. The destination image is what the visitor sees and feels as a visitor when thinking of the destination as a place to pursue leisure. He thinks: *“A strong and clear state tourist image can increase consumer confidence in its tourist attractions and consumer predisposition to purchase them.”* Dann (1996) considers that destination impressions are formed by three interrelated components: cognitive, evaluative, and conative. While Baloglu and McCleary (1999) believes that destination images consist of perceptual/cognitive evaluations and affective evaluations. The source and type of information, age and education influence the formation of perceptual/cognitive evaluations, while age, education and social-psychological motivation to travel combine to influence affective evaluations.

The food of a region often contains the local customs and history of the region. The image of a region's food is also often used to confirm the authentic culture and traditions and uniqueness of the destination (Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000). Food images can also define and reinforce regional identity and identify and distinguish cultural themes (Frochot, 2003). In order to increase the competitiveness of the destination, many regions and even countries focus on the creation and promotion of a food impression that is attractive to tourists (Henderson, 2009).

Okumus et al. (2018) studied destination marketing approaches in the Qingdao, Jinan, and Qufu regions and conducted a content analysis of text, images, videos, and websites related to marketing in these three cities. Destination marketing organizations were found to use social media sites to promote the destinations, but the websites contained little content, lacked updates, and did not provide space for tourist interaction. This makes the three cities not taking the advantage of the strengths and characteristics of local cuisine in this aspect of marketing and promoting the destinations. Ghazali and Cai (2013) suggests that the information sources on different social media platforms influence the motivation of visitors, while the motivation of visitors to a destination influences firstly the perceived image, secondly the unique image and finally the emotional image. While Kim's (S.-E. Kim et al., 2017) research found that the relevance of content information in social media information sources was related to both cognitive image and affective image formation, while interesting and value-added information was related to affective image, and completeness and non-content information web design influenced cognitive image formation. At the same time confirms the cognitive image-affective image-connative image influence model. Some researchers have used content analysis (Y. R. Li et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2018; Marine-Roig, 2019; Garay, 2019; Sun et al., 2021) to analyze the impact of social media on the perception and formation of destination impressions. Tourists are keen to share their travel experiences in the form of text or images on social media, and this user-generated content (UGC) influences the formation of destination impressions of other tourists. However, these studies do not mention the impact of short video content in social media on the formation of destination images. Llodra-Riera et al. (2015) evaluated how user-generated content (UGC) on social media can influence travel motivations and thus visitor impressions of destinations. Xuxu (Xu (Rinka) & Pratt, 2018) studied the impact of social media influencers on destination visit intentions and found that when social media influencers are consistent with consumers' desired self-image, they can lead to higher visit intentions for endorsed destinations.

Social media platforms have proven to be efficient, powerful tools for shaping and

promoting destination images. How destination marketing and management organizations can better use social media platforms to provide visitors with effective information retrieval channels, positive interaction, and communication platforms. Leverage social media platforms to promote and advertise destination culture, food, customs, marketing discount information, etc., thereby creating a positive destination impression and attracting visitors to the destination. It is a hot topic of current research.

4.2. Social media in promoting food tourism

Although there are many studies on the use of social media platforms to promote destination marketing strategies, research on the use of social media to promote food tourism still needs to be enhanced. With the boom in social media, the development of research related to food tourism, and the continuous in-depth exploration of destination marketing, scholars have increasingly focused their attention on taking social media platforms as a new venue for promoting culinary destinations. In this paper, by reviewing the existing research on the application of social media in food tourism, this paper systematically reviews the existing research results in order to provide a breakthrough point for future researchers to conduct in-depth research. Table 1 below contains a list of examples of past research related to the application of social media to promote food tourism destinations.

Table 1. Previous studies exploring the use of social media in promoting food tourism destinations.

Author(s)	Tourist Destinations	Sample Characteristic	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Findings
Young H. Kim (2009)	West Texas	16 web site of destination marketing organization	Qualitative and Quantitative (numerical comparison)		Web marketing is an effective and low-cost destination marketing tool, but the use of social networking sites to promoted food information and food tourism is still in the development stage.
EunHa Jeong (2011)	United State	Students at a mid-western university in the US	Quantitative (survey questionnaire)	confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) + structural equation modeling (SEM)	The quality of the restaurant's food, the attentive service and the sophisticated decorative atmosphere

Author(s)	Tourist Destinations	Sample Characteristic	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Findings
Saerom Wang (2016)	South Korean	Tourist who had shared food experience	Qualitative (in-depth semi-structured interview)	Thematic data analysis-transcribed and coded	all lead to positive satisfaction and thus trigger positive electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) spread from customers The five factors that drive visitors to share food photos on social networking sites are building social relationships, projecting personal social status, gaining positive emotions, recording personal experiences, and sharing information.
Seongseop (Sam) Kim and Ja Young Choe (2017)	Hong Kong	Korean audience in different age groups	Quantitative (Online survey questionnaire)	Exploratory Factor analysis (EFA) + Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)	Gen Y members who are more familiar with Web technology pay more attention to the food value of the video than non-Gen Y members and were attracted to the food and thus visit the destination
Chung-En Yu (2019)	Macau, China	Most popular accounts in	Quantitative (content	Correlation + Descriptive	Electronic word-of-

Author(s)	Tourist Destinations	Sample Characteristic	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Findings
		Instagram + Macau residents	analysis) + Qualitative (semi-structured interview)	statistic +Thematic data analysis-transcribed and coded	mouth consisted of reviews on social media platforms plays a key role in the decision-making process of tourists. Respondents discoverd obscure restaurants by following foodie accounts on social media. Content posted on social media should be attractive and make good use of hashtags to attract attention
Morteza Soltani and Nima Soltani Nejad (2020)	Rasht, Iran	Foreign tourists	Quantitative (survey questionnaire)	PLE-SEM + covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM)	Social media influencers have a positive effect on both food tourism destination images and tourists' attitudes toward destination cuisine
Yi Bu (2020)	China	Mobile social media users who had travelled or planned to travel for food	Quantitative (Electronic survey questionnaire)	Partial least square structural equation modelling (PLE-SEM)	Digital marketing on social media is more engaging than traditional TV ad marketing. Destination marketers

Author(s)	Tourist Destinations	Sample Characteristic	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Findings
Yi Li and Xiuxiu Xu (2020)	Cheng Du, China	Users' comments on short videos of Chengdu food on TikTok	Quantitative (ROST Content Mining 6)	Content analysis	<p>should create interesting digital marketing content on social media and reinforce food tourism-related interactions with target travelers and stimulate their willingness to visit through positive electronic word-of-mouth.</p> <p>Short food videos on social media platforms have contributed to potential visitors' cognitive image of Chengdu's cuisine, leading them to pay attention to the city's cultural and culinary flavor profiles. Positive-oriented reviews of short food videos created positive affective images of the destination and increase potential travelers' intention to</p>

Author(s)	Tourist Destinations	Sample Characteristic	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Findings
Suci Sandi Wachyuni (2021)	Jakarta, Indonesia	Tourist who uploaded photos on social media	Quantitative (Online survey questionnaire)	Descriptive statistic	visit Restaurants and street food were the most uploaded photo content topics by respondents. The main motivations for visitors to upload photos on social media are to capture happy moments, marketing and promotion, commemorate food, relax, and provide references for others.
Jin-young Kim and Johye Hwang (2021)	Seoul, Korea	Tourist	Quantitative (Online survey questionnaire)	Estimation technique	Positive e-WOM was positively correlated with satisfaction, while negative e-WOM was negatively correlated with satisfaction. Bad e-WOM has a greater impact on potential visitors than positive e-WOM. The decisive factor for e-WOM was the taste of the restaurant, followed by the authenticity of

Author(s)	Tourist Destinations	Sample Characteristic	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Findings
					the content and the value of the food

From the table, we can easily see that the majority of the studies in the field of social media promotion of food tourism are concentrated after 2016, which may be due to the fact that social media has received a spurt in recent years and its influence on tourism is growing increasingly. The object of the researcher's attention has also evolved from text and pictures at the beginning (Y. H. Kim et al., 2009; Wachyuni & Yusuf, 2021; Wang et al., 2017; Yu & Sun, 2019) to video platforms (Y. Li et al., 2020c; S. (Sam) Kim et al., 2018). Through social media platforms, tourists can have a perception and impression of the types of destination's cuisine and taste characteristics through words, pictures, and videos, learning about the local culture and tourism facilities. At the same time, this content also attracts potential tourists to generate motivation to visit the destination (Y. Li et al., 2020c). Initially, the motivation for some tourists sharing photos on social media was to record good times, demonstrate social status, recommend and share information, etc. (Wang et al., 2017). The researcher used a two-dimensional plane to understand the motivations for posting travel experiences, with one "benefit-seeking" (psychological vs. functional) line intersecting with another "expected direction" (self vs. others). Visitors posting food-related content on social media platforms focused on functional benefits while also seeking psychological values. The intended beneficiaries are both themselves and other users of the social platform. That is, the sharer has both an egoistic and altruistic mentality.

Some restaurant and travel marketers have used appetizing videos or images, or compelling text content, to get more attention and visit, this has given rise to digital marketing. Marketing on the Internet is extremely convenient. It is not limited by time and space, and can interact with customers to communicate with them (Y. H. Kim et al., 2009). These are more entertaining than traditional advertisements and also attract more attention and interaction from visitors. In social media, an interactive communication platform, users self-express spontaneously to provide information to other users. The social connection users feel with each other also makes it easier for them to agree on information and opinions and to be influenced by others. Researchers have proved that digital marketing has been much more successful than traditional TV advertising, print ads, or radio stations (Bu et al., 2021). The new generation with a better understanding of Internet technology, especially females, are more receptive to marketing strategies on social media. Social media is already a necessity for millennials to meet their personal needs (Wachyuni & Yusuf, 2021).

As the number of food destinations and restaurants successfully known by public by utilizing social media marketing continues to rise, more and more restaurant and destination marketing organizations was trying to explore a new ways to promote themselves on social media (Wachyuni & Yusuf, 2021). In the meantime, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has come into the public's eye, becoming an important reference factor for tourists in choosing destinations and restaurants. When restaurant customers share their dining experience, customers who have not been to the restaurant could have a preliminary understanding of the restaurant's service, environment, prices, etc., and reduce the risk of expectations of the restaurant's cuisine. When tourists are satisfied with the flavor, value, and authenticity of a restaurant, they are more likely to leave positive e-WOM on social media. Research has confirmed that positive e-word-of-mouth is very essential for a restaurant. Positive e-WOM helps restaurants create a positive image and enhances tourists' purchase intentions.

Meanwhile, service quality was found to have the greatest impact on generating positive electronic word-of-mouth for customers (Jeong & Jang, 2011). However, restaurants should pay more attention to negative e-WOM. Kim has found that negative e-WOM from a terrible dining experience has a stronger impact on visitors. The impact of an unpleasant experience through negative e-WOM is not balanced with the impact of a pleasant experience through positive e-WOM. Once negative e-WOM is generated, it cannot be compensated by positive e-WOM. Therefore, in addition to increasing social media outreach, providing satisfactory facilities and services is one of the most important concerns for restaurant and destination marketers. At the same time, the authenticity and content value of e-WOM has also proven to be an important factor in the effectiveness of publicity (J. Kim & Hwang, 2022). As more and more people become “food bloggers” on social media, the impact of these social media influencers on visitors' destination impressions and behavioral intentions has come under scrutiny (Soltani et al., 2021).

4.3. Findings, discussions, and future research related to social media platforms for promoting gastronomic destinations

Based on the review of the literature, it is easy to see that the existing studies have mainly examined the relationship between social media platforms as a new marketing tool for the promotion of food tourism from a quantitative perspective. Moreover, Existing studies have primarily focused on the relationship between social media platforms as a new marketing tool for promoting food tourism, utilizing a quantitative approach. This approach generally evaluates the effectiveness of campaigns, user interactions, and the impact of social media on tourists' interest in visiting specific culinary destinations. For instance, quantitative studies often measure metrics such as likes, shares, and comments as indicators of promotional success, as well as the correlation between the intensity of social media promotions and the increase in tourist numbers. While quantitative approaches provide a clear picture of the statistical impact of social media on food tourism, they fall short in offering an in-depth understanding of how social media content actually influences tourists' perceptions and experiences. However, there is a notable lack of research that has explored and elucidated, from a qualitative perspective, how content on social media platforms—particularly video content—shapes the creation of destination images and culinary images of those destinations. This qualitative perspective is essential as it offers richer insights into how tourists interpret and respond to visual messages conveyed through videos on social media. Video content is often considered more engaging and has the ability to spark the imagination of potential tourists compared to static images or text. Videos possess the power to bring the atmosphere to life, showcase the visual details of food, and provide a deeper narrative about the unique culinary culture of a place. Consequently, video content on social media can significantly shape tourists' perceptions of a destination's culinary appeal, creating a strong image that influences their decision to visit. Qualitative studies have the potential to explore how tourists interpret the visual content they encounter on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. For instance, a video showcasing the uniqueness of local cuisine at a destination can evoke curiosity, offer a virtual sensory experience, and build a positive image regarding the quality and authenticity of food in that location. By understanding this process, qualitative research can uncover the intricate dynamics between visual experiences on social media and the formation of culinary destination images in the minds of tourists.

However, few studies have explored and explained from a qualitative perspective how does content on social media platforms, especially video content influence the creation of

tourists' destination images and culinary images of the destination? What features of these videos attract the attention of potential tourists better? In this interactive communication platform, the video and the user watching the video will collide with what kind of sparks. How does the content of the video resonate with the users, thus making them like and comment on the video, making the video more valuable for communication? How does e-WOM influence visitors' behavioral intentions? Why do some destinations successfully use social media to build a good brand and develop an attractive tourism marketing strategy, while others are frustrated by social media platforms? What is the communication code for promoting food destinations on social media platforms? How can social media platforms be better used to develop destination promotion and marketing strategies? These questions, which have not been mentioned in previous studies, will be the explore direction of future research on the use of social media platforms to promote gastronomic destinations.

5. CONCLUSION

With the continuous development of online information technology, social media has become a new venue for promoting food tourism. Motivated by recording good times, demonstrating social status, recommending and sharing information, tourists are willing to share text, photos, and video information about their destinations, especially about food, on social media platforms. This behavior also generates a lot of views and discussions on the social media platform. Social media platforms are interactive communities where users express themselves and generate information, and where they consume information generated by other users. The entertaining and socially connected nature of social media converges users' messages into homogeneity, and this consistency and compliance of messages allows for better spread of electronic word of mouth.

Many restaurants and destination marketing organizations have joined the initiative and attempted to use social media platforms to promote destinations and build appealing food images and destination images. According to existing studies, restaurants and destination marketers need to utilize this powerful promotional tool and focus on food taste, value, service, and tourism facilities to achieve the goal of promoting food tourism destinations in a sustainable manner. The influence of social media influencers on visitors' interests also cannot be ignored. Social media influencers have become a new tool for promoting destination images. The conclusion is that future studies will explore the direction of research on the use of social media platforms to promote gastronomic destinations.

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